Each unit includes a leader guide.

**Unit One**  Living Faithfully  (The Ten Commandments)
**Unit Two**  Living Confidently  (The Apostles’ Creed)
**Unit Three**  Living Spiritually  (The Lord’s Prayer)
**Unit Four**  Living Freely  (The Sacraments)

*Connections is a resource for:*

- A small group ministry
- A Sunday morning adult group
- Adults who infrequently attend classes
- Adults who want to re-visit the catechisms in lifelong learning
- An outreach endeavor
- A new-member class
- Confirmation ministry mentors
- A follow-up group to a new member class
- A retreat setting
- A hybrid face-to-face and on-line group
- Parents of youth confirmands
- Adults who may feel isolated working at home
- A cluster of congregations, Lutheran or ecumenical
- A neighborhood group
- A workplace setting
- Adults who want to reconnect with the church and be refreshed in faith
- And more!

**Connections: Faith and Life**
If You Really Want to Get to Know People…

There is a saying that if you really want to know people you have to visit them where they live. This phrase is true about getting to know God’s people, and it may also be a way to describe the process of getting to know God.

This “visit them where they live” idea is also a way to understand the course you will be leading, called Connections: Faith and Life. Connections is a visit to the places where God lives:

● in your life
● in the lives of the Connections participants
● in the lives of congregational members
● in the lives of all God’s people

Connections is a visit to the worlds God is creating and redeeming today and throughout history. It is a visit to the homes, workplaces, neighborhoods, and places of recreation and volunteer activity where God is at work through the lives of group members.

Through this life-visiting course called Connections, you will get to know God and the members of your group in new ways. You will also get to know yourself better and recognize the many ways in which your life is a ministry.

The Goals for Connections

The goal of Connections is to help participants meet God in their everyday lives. The material is designed to help them connect faith and daily living by moving back and forth between God and self, self and others, world and Word.

The study connects the Christian faith with the worlds of everyday life. The word connect even means the same as the word religion (from the word religare, “to bind back together”). Both words imply wholeness.

If lives are torn apart by the rigors of everyday life, religion that is centered on God’s actions in the world ties God’s people together. If lives are torn apart by the differences between Sunday and Monday, Connections helps put them back together.

How does your Connections group of faith discern these connections?

● You pay close attention to faith tradition, cultural influences and each person’s life experience.
● You reflect and act.
● You trust in God.
● You talk with others.
● You engage in spiritual discipline and prayer.

Connections provides an arena in which your group can ask difficult questions and consider answers within the framework of Christian faith. The specific objectives of the program are to help participants to:

● See their worlds as God’s creation.
● Recognize Christ’s redemption in their lives.
● Discover that they are already in ministry.
● Be nurtured in their skills and gifts for ministry.
● Live out the call of their Baptism in their daily lives.
● Share their faith and life connections so that they can support one another.
● Be accountable in their callings to God and to one another.

Connecting

The name of this course, Connections, is an important element in what you’ll be doing here, because “connections” are what much of our lives are about. Think about it:

● We begin our lives connected to our parents.
● At Baptism, God connects us to forgiveness and salvation, to the whole Christian community and to a life-mission.

● We are all members of a larger family of some kind, as well as members of a variety of communities, connected in our common humanity to others, regardless of gender, race, class or role.
● We are linked politically, economically and environmentally to the entire world, its inhabitants and its elements.
● Whether we like it or not, we are linked to one another.

This study uses the phrases “connect with,” “make connections” and others to talk about ways the Christian faith is intertwined with the worlds of everyday life — how faith and life make sense. What those phrases mean is that the faith of God’s people is cemented to the challenges, joys and all the happenings of daily life. The realities of daily living — stress, competition, success, compromise, conflict, joy and relationships — are best understood in the realities of Christian faith: prayer, the presence of God, forgiveness and hope. This course presumes that the lives of God’s people on Sunday and on Monday are joined together in common purpose and in mutually dependent ways.

Many of the struggles and tensions in life are rooted in a lack of connection. Feeling that we’re all alone or don’t belong, operating at wit’s end, living life without a clear sense of direction, worrying that things are ready to fall apart — these are some ways to describe the uncomfortable feeling many people carry around inside of themselves. The symptoms are familiar: family conflict, problems at work, violence within our neighborhoods and international misunderstandings. These difficulties in life flow from an inability or unwillingness among some people to relate fully and deeply to one another. Sin and evil create these gaps, disconnects and dysfunctions between God and human beings and among human beings.

This study invites participants to find the connec-
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Connections already present in their lives, provides insights on how to deal with the gaps and discusses ways to support and equip each other and to grow spiritually. Through shared experiences, Connections participants are joined together with each other in bonds of mutual understanding and love. They see themselves as part of the whole Christian family, including their congregation, the whole Christian church and Christians in all times and places.

The primary connection in this course, though, is with God. In a very real sense, this connecting is not ours to do. We cannot connect with God because our deceitfulness distorts our perception and our willingness to live beyond our own selves. We lack even the capacity to start the connecting process with others because of our basic selfishness.

But God has already done the connecting — God has already woven the world together! The creation, even with its brokenness, is a universe — a oneness. Christ has come into our lives, and by his death and resurrection has forgiven and reunited us with God, bridged the gaps between us and connected us eternally. The Holy Spirit guides us each moment of our lives, whether we are aware of the Spirit’s work or not, and thus connects us to each other in the community of faith.

Learning together is a matter of discerning connections. The creating, redeeming and life-giving God continues graciously to reach out to us. God is teaching, but we have other teachers as well. The world in which we live shapes us. All that we do teaches profoundly. Teaching and learning is making a connection between the catechetical “What does this mean?” of God’s Word and the “What in the world does this mean?” of our own lives.

Through the life cycle, “What in the world does this mean?” is an ever-changing, but always present, question. Luther’s simple yet profound catechetical question, “What does this mean?” intersects with who we are and what we bring to this learning community at this present moment. That intersection is the place for dynamic learning.

Connecting is what Connections is all about. In fact, it’s what your whole life is about. Thank God that the first connections have already been made and that they continue in your own life!

Overview of Units

The four units in Connections follow the general sequence of Martin Luther’s Catechisms. Therefore, you will benefit from using the units in that preferred order.

Unit One Living Faithfully (The Ten Commandments)

Unit Two Living Confidently (Apostles’ Creed)

Unit Three Living Spiritually (The Lord’s Prayer)

Unit Four Living Freely (The Sacraments)

At the same time, the units are internally structured so that you can elect to use them singly or in a different order. Each unit can stand alone as well as function as an integral portion of the total Connections program.

Use the chart, Connections Overview or the description here to see how the units work together as a complete experience for participants.

Unit Two
Living Confidently
The Apostles’ Creed

The second unit acquaints participants with the life-connections of the three articles of the Apostles’ Creed. Session content centers on God’s nature and God’s work as Creator and Preserver, Protector and Defender, and Savior and Sanctifier, and the themes of death and life, the breath of the Holy Spirit and the Church.

Unit Three
Living Spiritually
The Lord’s Prayer

The concepts in this unit are derived from the individual petitions of the Lord’s Prayer, and include these themes: prayer and spirituality, power and control, God’s care for the world, forgiveness, dealing with life dilemmas and defeating evil.

Unit Four
Living Freely
The Sacraments

In this unit participants see how the sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion connect with their lives. Thematic content includes: new beginnings in life, bondage and freedom, intimacy, being the Body of Christ in the world, the power of confession and faith for life’s stages.
Participant Objectives

Six learning objectives help focus each session, two relating to mental growth, two relating to emotional growth and two for growth in skill for action for ministry.

Objectives help leaders in the planning process to think about the participants and their growth in faith. Connections uses very open-ended methods. More growth will happen than leaders will have planned for. At the same time, leaders using session objectives at the beginning and reflecting upon them after the session helps the whole Connections learning process improve week by week.

Overview of Session Components

Each of the six-session units includes workplace visits, devotional materials, extensive discussion of material from Luther’s catechisms, and between-session assignments. Each session offers time for shared learning among participants, participant questions and faith sharing. Extra biblical material, keyed to the session themes, is offered for between-session disciplines of Bible reading and prayer.

Each session of Connections consists of these components:

Going to the Heart of the Matter

This opening section sets the tone for the session. Two or three paragraphs describe the issues and identify the focus of the session.

Participants may read this online before they gather for the session. Or the leader or a participant may read it at the beginning of the session. This material can also be shared with the broader faith community regularly as a way to keep them connected to the activities of this Connections group. Sometimes there are thought-provoking questions that participants can reflect upon before and between sessions face-to-face or through electronic communication.

Beginning Where We Are

This is the initial activity for each session. Particularly at the beginning of each unit, it provides a way of becoming better acquainted with each other around the themes of Connections. Each session is a gathering time to reconnect, reflect on the previous session and focus on the current topic. The Leader Guide for each session will provide directions for these experiential learning activities.

Connecting With the Faith

Martin Luther’s The Large Catechism provides the structure for Connections. Discussion on the foundations of the Christian faith during this part of the session can be deep and invigorating. People new to the faith will learn about The Ten Commandments, The Creed, The Lord’s Prayer (and prayer itself), The Sacraments and Confession. Those who have been Christian all their life will have opportunity to encounter them again at this stage of their adult lives.

While Luther’s The Small Catechism is included, use of Luther’s The Large Catechism is what is unique to Connections. Some people will have used The Small Catechism in confirmation ministry classes when they were young; some memorized it. Other participants may be unfamiliar with it. The Small Catechism section can be read in the session by one person or all together as prelude to The Large Catechism and the questions.

Luther’s The Large Catechism, written for adults over 500 years ago, is a rare and rich resource for us today. Leadership points:

- Help The Large Catechism summary excerpt come alive in your midst by someone or a number of people reading it out loud.
- Use the Reflection Questions. They are not to be answered “agree” or “disagree.” They are open-ended to draw forth thought and more questions. Let the people go to the foundations of their faith: “What is it to have a god?” “How does God use you to provide bread for the world?” There will be more connections people discover than leaders could ever anticipate.
- As each session progresses through the other experiential learning activities and workplace visits, Luther’s words from the catechisms might connect in a new way. At that moment you might refer back to a quote from the catechisms.
Connecting with Daily Life

This part of the session provides one or more activities to engage people fully with their faith as it connects to the realities of their lives in the world. Participants explore Reformation concepts as they relate to issues today. Each unit includes two visits to participants’ workplaces, homes or other arenas of their daily lives. The Leader Guide for each session will provide directions for these experiential learning activities.

Experiencing Until Next Time

“Connecting” never ends; therefore this section provides opportunities for participants to be engaged in mission and ministry in the arenas of their daily lives and in the broader world between sessions. People then return to their Connections group ready to share their experiences and growth. The Leader Guide for each session will provide directions for these experiential learning activities. Participants may choose to keep in continuous connection responding to questions and reflecting on experience between sessions through social media.

Growing Together

This devotional time provides a fitting conclusion to the session. The group will find its own pattern of drawing closer to God and one another. There is often a Scripture verse and prayer and sometimes a hymn. The sessions provide some variation.

Participants may want to share leadership for this part of the session. There will be enough resources in the participant materials for either a brief or a longer devotional time, depending upon the group and the particular session. The more integrated spiritual growth becomes to the experiences of the session, the more participants will connect daily life with faith and worship.

Connecting With Scriptures

Accompanying Connections with its emphases upon Luther’s catechisms, are readings from the Scriptures. Participants will have the opportunity to study the fourth Gospel, the Book of John, throughout the four Units of Connections. Often they will be able to connect to the themes of the particular session, aided by the questions in the participant resource. Participants will also use The Book of Romans, the theological core of the Reformation revealing the nature of the human predicament and the unconditional grace of God in Christ Jesus. People will read the 16 chapters throughout the 24 sessions, focusing on some chapters more than once. Participants will also have the opportunity to journey with the Psalms, using one that particularly resonates with the spiritual issues of the session.

Here are some possibilities for using “Connecting With Scriptures.” You will no doubt think of more.

• Each participant covenants to read one or more of the three Scripture selections from John, Romans and the Psalms between sessions as personal devotions.
• Members pair up or as a group read from the Scripture selections and respond to the questions, keeping in touch between sessions electronically.
• Members of the congregation use this resource as a separate bible study.
• The Connections group extends its gathering time to include this Scripture study.
• Participants through social networking reach out to people beyond their Connections group using “Connecting with Scriptures.”

Martin Luther

Martin Luther was a medieval man, writing in his context. It is important to honor and befriend that distance. Luther was speaking to an entirely different age; still, he is amazingly relevant for our age.

Luther held deep grievances with the church of which he was a part. He critiqued the institution which he served and loved, and became one of the church’s foremost reformers. Here, too, Luther is relevant for our age, as we continue to be a reforming church.

Note that in almost every section Luther returns to the Word. Luther was grounded in the Scriptures, which means that his written thoughts go to core issues of faith and life such as idolatry, faith and grace. His work is unquestionably theological, and written so that we can connect with it in our languages of daily life.

In Connections Luther’s words from The Large Catechism are excerpted from the entirety, and summarized for brevity. The language of the excerpt summaries has been made inclusive.
The Educational Method

The life of the Christian takes place at the intersection of daily experience and the Word (the Christian message). Theologically and educationally, the process in Connections is contextual. The goal is to seek understanding through the church’s teachings, especially The Large Catechism and The Small Catechism. Each session starts with current events in the lives of participants. The activities move inductively from experience to understanding. Participants reflect on their daily living and look for the connections with the faith. They also think about their faith and look for connections with their lives.

Beginning with life experience and then applying the faith is not the usual procedure in most Christian education. Normally the theology is taught first and then life experiences are brought in to illustrate these doctrines. In the Connections process, participants are “doing theology.” That is, they are finding connections between the church’s teaching about God and the experiences of their lives.

In applying this kind of educational methodology to your situation, be alert for those occasional comments about a life experience that may be related to the topic only peripherally. Often the most serious elements of life are found in these comments. They can become prime learning material.

During the session always provide time for the Spirit to work. Allow the surprises to happen. Let some discussions roam free when they seem to be productive. Bring others back to the subject when they become repetitive or infertile.

This learning process affirms participants. By starting with their life experiences and capitalizing on the gifts of the group, you will affirm and support the participants as they support each other.

Adults are independent and active in their styles of learning. They are self-directed, problem-solving learners who appreciate the give-and-take of learning among members of a group. Connections relies on activities that involve participants during and after the session. The course presumes that adults will take responsibility for their own learning and for helping other members of the group grow as well.

The Group

One to two months before the program begins, recruit your group and make arrangements for the first meeting. Personal invitation is the most effective way to bring participants to join your group.

The ideal group size is 10 to 12 participants. This number provides enough people to ensure a variety of backgrounds and yet not so many members that interaction among them is limited.

The group should be as diverse as possible: women and men, older youth and adults of any age from a variety of occupations and settings. As you look for participants, persons to consider might be those who:

- Are looking for spiritual growth.
- Would like a thorough review of the church's teachings.
- Face unemployment, career changes or difficult futures.
- Are new members of the church or are considering the faith.
- Have been through other long-term studies, grown through them and want a similar experience with a new approach.
- Are not actively involved in congregational activities but are deeply involved in their occupation or community concerns.
- Have expressed interest in a small-group experience.

Connections is ideally suited for use in a new-members’ class. Connections is clearly Lutheran in orientation and will serve to strengthen Lutheran identity. The six chief elements of Luther’s catechisms — the Ten Commandments, the Apostles’ Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, Baptism, the Lord’s Supper and Confession — are common to other Christian traditions as well. This means that Connections can be used in an ecumenical setting.

The Leadership

Connections is usually led by a team composed of a lay person and a pastor or other theologically trained leader. Either member of the team can take the major part in planning and leading the course. The theologically trained person serves as a co-leader and resource for the team.

Key elements of the leadership team are:

- Support for each other: When another leader is guiding the process, take care to listen, observe, think, react and reflect. When you are leading, look to your co-leader for assistance and information as needed.
- Participation in the process: It is important that you and your co-leader do the assignments and engage in the activities along with the participants.
- Participation in leading: Co-leadership is not simply a matter of taking turns being up front or facilitating the process. It is ongoing and jointly shared guidance. Be present for the up-front leader, ready to assist as needed and alert to the dynamics taking place among participants.
- Flexibility and responsiveness: Your goal as a team is to help something happen that has not happened before. Often that “something” will be a surprise. Sometimes you need to wait in order
to move, or to listen in order to guide. Active listening is often more important than presentation.

- Knowledge of each other's leadership styles and gifts: When you begin Connections, watch the co-leader carefully. Learn from each other. Notice what is helping and what is hindering the learning experience for participants. Become familiar with what the co-leader is trying to do through silences, gentle remarks and open-ended questions.

- Planning: Take time with your co-leader regularly to talk about the ongoing leadership and the ways in which the team is functioning. Shared planning supplements each leader's reading of session materials, familiarity with the catechism content and personal reflection about the matters in which participants will engage.

Planning will doubtlessly involve choosing from among the activities of the session to fit participants' needs and strengths, and the time available for the group to engage in various kinds of activities.

- Respect for participants: In a sense, the larger leadership team is the entire group. Larger decisions should be made with this “team,” especially those that involve scheduling of visits.

Remember that the strength of shared leadership is shared gifts. Empowering and supporting one another benefits everyone.

**The Schedule**

The material in each session is designed for about 1 ½ hours. (It can easily be 2 hours.) The sequence of components forms the session plan. You will probably need to bring conversation on a particular segment to a close before participants have completely exhausted the topic. You and the group can set your own time pattern depending upon your setting, but do include the full range of session parts.

The units of Connections are highly adaptable for different needs and settings, including a weekend retreat. For example, you could use Session One on Friday night, Sessions Two through Five on Saturday and conclude with Session Six on Sunday morning.

While face-to-face learning is important for the experiential learning activities. The Connections group could be a hybrid with “Connecting with Scriptures” being done on-line. Likewise conversations on questions for “Beginning Where We Are,” “Connecting with the Faith” and “Experiencing Until Next Time” could be carried on over the Internet or through social media.

If the Connections group meets on a Sunday morning, the Visits could be made at another time during the week. If time constraints limit the group to meeting 50 minutes between services, leaders could plan to extend a Unit over more than six weeks.

Use the materials and adapt the schedule in a way that serves your group. Whatever your plan, the group can help by being mutually accountable in keeping commitments to one another for the time frame you have chosen together.

**The Visits**

During each unit of the study, participants make visits to the worlds of other participants. This is a unique feature of Connections. The purpose of these visits is to see the worlds that the Creator is creating around each participant and to see God’s ministries of redemption and sanctification in those worlds.

Participants host the group in one of the places in which they spend a good deal of their time: their workplace, their community, their recreation setting or their home.

In each visit, group members learn about the host’s work or participation in that setting, and the joys and frustrations the host experiences in that place.

The group also talks about what God is doing in each place:

- **How God is creating in that setting**
- **How Christ brings forgiveness and new life to the situation**
- **How the Holy Spirit is making that place “holy,” and making “community” there**

Participants look for indications of God’s will for that world, notice how that place provides for life’s necessities (daily bread), acknowledge what must be forgiven or compromised there, what deep evils might exist and what languages of faith are spoken.

The visits pull the group out of theoretical discussions into real life, where theology must go to work. The visits are designed to help participants:

- **Move away from the pictures, furnishings and language of the church building into an environment where connections between the words of faith and daily lives are to be seen.**
- **Move away from abstract talk about morality and piety into discussions of the common, concrete daily works of God.**
Connections: Faith and Life, Introduction

- Recognize the particular world God is making around each of them.
- Know each other and each other's worlds.
- See the church in the world, and know that they are the church in the world.

In this approach, the church is being invited into the world to see God at work there. This is very different from seeing the church's mission as only a mission to the world. Instead of the church inviting the world into its midst, in these visits the world is also inviting the church into its life.

One discovery participants will make is that the church already is in the world through the lives of its members. Another discovery is the number and variety of worlds represented in the church by the members as they gather for worship. The church is in the world and the world is in the church, for God is in both.

Encourage participants, whatever their setting, to host a visit. A visit can gain the group's support for a participant's life and work, affirm the ministry carried out in a particular world and provide support for crosses being borne.

Each unit includes plans for two visits. More visits may be planned by the group if desired. In fact, more visits will benefit everyone. Plan the visits well in advance of the sessions in which they are scheduled. Further details on the plans for the visits are given both in the Leader Guides and the participant resources, particularly in Unit One.

The Learning Setting

The place for a Connections group might be a participant's living room or family room, a room in the church fellowship hall, a retreat center, a community meeting room in a library, a mall or other facility in your locale. If the Connections group is a hybrid, many of the learning activities will take place face-to-face in a convenient location and some of the conversations will continue online.

One way to describe the learning setting is to think of it as a “trustworthy learning environment.” This means that the setting encourages participants to be:

- Emotionally safe: This means that participants can openly share their beliefs, doubts, fears and hopes. The group will have to covenant about confidentiality.
- Intellectually trustworthy: The space allows for a variety of levels of conversation focused on shared experiences rather than levels of intellect. Here a group can respect its members' experiences, questions and insight.
- Spiritually healthy: Although personal sharing takes place at a deepening level, Connections is not a therapy session. Spiritual depth will come from shared experience and shared faith.

Connecting With the Congregation

The counterpart of the world visits is the contact with the congregation. Each unit describes at least one way to connect with congregational members. More may be added by you or the participants.

The function of the contacts with the congregation is to have participants:

- Strengthen their bonds with the entire congregation. Keeping the congregation informed about the Connections experience will encourage others to participate and help members begin to see their lives as ministry.
- Share some of participants' discoveries with other congregational members. Connections can help participants and members alike recognize how they follow Christ in their daily activities.
- Support, affirm and encourage the ministry of participants and congregational members.
- Place brief reports and quotations from participants on the congregation's website.
- Hold each other accountable. God's people are accountable not only to God but to one another.
- Recognize and tell others about the nature of the church. The congregation's ministry is not just directed inward to its service and organization. It is also, more importantly, directed outward toward equipping and strengthening members for their ministry and mission in the world.

The contacts with the congregation may take many different forms, such as:

- Informal conversations with individuals about Connections.
- Reports to the congregation council and appropriate committees.
- Articles in the church bulletin, newsletter and on its website and in the local newspaper and on the synodical website.
- Prayers at worship services.
- Walking with another: Each Connections participant walks with another member of the congregation (either actually or in imagination) in order to become more aware of the varieties of ministry in day-to-day life and to recognize the importance of support for that ministry.

The method of making contacts should vary according to the individual and the group.
Using Films and Books
One of the ways participants understand themselves and their world is through entering the imaginative worlds of films and books. They may evoke discussion and help participants understand and confront faith issues of many kinds. Participants’ involvement with the characters in a story may focus more deeply their own concerns and dilemmas.

When using films or books (or television programs and plays) as means for in-depth sharing and discussion, consider these questions as effective ways to elicit participants’ thoughts:

- What’s happening here?
- What are the different dimensions of the narrative?
- What images are seen in the narrative?
- What conflicts and forces are at work, between and within persons?
- What way of life is presented?
- What masks are worn? Which ones are removed?
- Who changes? How? Why?
- Who in the narrative most resembles you?
- What feelings did you experience as you experienced the narrative?
- What was God doing in the narrative?

The specific films and books listed here are only a beginning. Consider others, including plays in your community, as springboards for group discussion and sharing.

Suggested Films


Babette’s Feast (1987). Two sisters and the entire congregation of the small Danish village are treated to a sumptuous dinner. Themes: self-sacrifice, hospitality.


The King’s Speech (2011). Historical drama of the relationship of George VI and his speech therapist who mentors the king about his stammering. Theme: understanding and learning from others.


On the Waterfront (1954). The mob controls the docks of Hoboken, New Jersey, until one worker determined to fight the system. Theme: justice.

Schindler’s List (1993). The story of a German businessman who saves more than 1000 Jewish refugees by employing them in his factories. Theme: vocation.

Slumdog Millionaire (2008). A young Indian boy keeps on winning money on a television show while others doubt his competency. Themes: honesty, love.


The Soloist (2008). A true story of a musician who develops schizophrenia, becomes homeless and is helped by a journalist. Both are changed. Theme: serving one another.


The Wizard of Oz (1939). Musical fantasy of the adventures of a young girl as she travels to the Emerald City. Themes: leaving and returning home.

Participants may also be aware of current movies which are interesting and entertaining, and which also have the depth to elicit ideas on important matters.

Suggested Spiritual Autobiographies

One of the ways Christians may be strengthened for their faith journeys is through understanding the pilgrimages of others. Reading the spiritual autobiographies and devotional writings of others may give inspiration, insight and hope. Five such writers are:

Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Letters and Papers from Prison.
The German Lutheran pastor’s reflections on faith while imprisoned under the Nazi regime.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Life Together.
A description of the nature of the Christian community.
Dag Hammarskjold. Markings.
The diary of the former United Nations Secretary-General published after his death which documents how he attempted to put his faith into action.

C.S. Lewis. The Screwtape Letters.
In this humorous exchange between two devils, the author explores questions about good vs. evil, temptation, repentance and grace.

Kathleen Norris. Dakota: A Spiritual Geography.
A writer’s journey to her homeland and her experiences of struggle and joy.

All people in ministry are called to identify the suffering in their own hearts and make that the starting point of their service.

Suggested Novels
Fictional writing is rich in possible material for personal reflections and faith connections. Among the novels and short stories that may benefit participants are both classic and recent fiction such as these:

Maya Angelou, I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings
Paula J. Carlson and Peter S. Hawkins, eds., Listening for God (a collection of short stories of contemporary authors, with study guide and videotape)
Charles Dickens, A Tale of Two Cities
Fyodor Dostoevsky, Crime and Punishment
George Eliot, Silas Marner
Nadine Gordimer, July’s People
Graham Greene, The End of the Affair
Khalid Hosseini, The Kite Runner (also a film in 2007)
P. D. James, Original Sin
Norman Maclean, A River Runs through It (also a film in 1992)

Flannery O’Connor, Everything That Rises Must Converge
Alan Paton, Cry, the Beloved Country
Marilynne Robinson, Gilead
Walter Wangerin, The Book of the Dun Cow

Other Resources
You may want to explore some of the themes featured in Connections, or examine some of the basic texts from which course material has been derived. Use the following annotated list to begin the process of deeper searching for meaning that you have begun in this course.

A resource for both individuals and congregations to connect Sunday and Monday. Brief, with questions for reflection at the end of each chapter.

This brief work develops Luther’s concept of call as rooted in the forgiveness of sins. It helps leaders and participants grow more firm in their sense of vocation as ministry in daily life.

This volume moves the theoretical and doctrinal bases of ministry in daily life into practical matters familiar to congregational leaders. It is derived from the author’s experience with his congregation, and his years of work in this area of the church’s life.

This comprehensive guide to educational ministry in the congregation has specific chapters on setting a trustworthy learning environment, how to use a variety of methods, characteristics of the adult learner, how to connect faith in daily life, and connecting the learning community with vocation in the public world.

This is a good summary work for the subject of ministry in daily life, its dimensions and theological bases. It defines mission as “God’s people working in the world.” It includes reflection sections suitable for group or individual study.

Bradley Hanson, Teach Us to Pray: Overcoming Obstacles for Daily Prayer, Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, 1990.
An easily read and practical book, aimed at the most basic — and most personal — elements of a life of prayer. A good supplement for Unit Three. Chapter titles include “I Don’t Pray Enough,” “My Mind Wanders” and “I Ask, but Nothing Happens.”

Theological reflection is the discipline of exploring our experiences in relationship to our faith. Various approaches to reflection are described.

Although the participant resource includes summary excerpts, participants and you will want to read
Luther’s work in its entirety. By having The Book of Concord in the meeting place, participants may become interested in reading other parts as well, such as the Augsburg Confession.


A new translation of the basic Lutheran documents including The Large Catechism and The Small Catechism.


In this gem, Luther develops the core paradox of Christian freedom that we are freed from subservience for servanthood. This background helps leaders — and participants who care to read further — see the relationship of salvation to daily life and ministry.


Language-updated quotes from this devotional book based on The Large Catechism are used throughout the sessions. Participants may wish to use the entire little volume for their devotions.


Niebuhr’s classic is used in Unit Three, Session Two. Leaders and some participants can find the book useful for more fully understanding various answers to the perennial question of the possible relationships between Christians and the worlds in which they live and work.


A meditation on finding one’s true calling by discovering the gifts God has given each of us.


The book describes concrete ways of discovering the sacred at work and exploring such topics as competition and compensation.


This volume not only contains the complete texts of the catechisms but also provides a rich understanding of their historical contexts.

Works cited in the Participant Resources

(in order of appearance)

All Units


Unit One

John Nicholas Lenker, ed. and trans., “Luther’s Church Postil,” in The Precious and Sacred Writings of Martin Luther. Minneapolis: Lutherans in All Lands Company, 1905.

Unit Two


Unit Three


Unit Four


