

A study guide for multicultural congregational renewal: an initiative of the ELCA Region 1 Latino Outreach Strategy

Welcome

Congratulations to you for preparing to better reach out to diverse neighbors! Complement your interest with plenty of time to engage the possibilities and challenges of outreach. Involve a broad array of persons, participants and friends of the ministry, to enrich your learning. These three things, **commitment, time, and broad participation** set the tone for your efforts!

Each session of the study guide opens with **biblical reflection** followed by **guided conversation** for the ministry group and **closing prayer**. A two-hour period is suggested, though more time is encouraged. Multiple conversations around any session are another possibility. Plan according to your ministry setting's interests and practices.

Helpful tools for the process

We learn and grow by doing. Practicing influences our thinking and perceptions, even more than enriching our minds changes our actions. "Doing" the three practices described below during each of the sessions will shape our openness to God's voice. With practice **Respectful Communications Guidelines, Mutual Invitation, and Community Bible Study**¹ will become a natural way for us to interact with one another.

Respectful Communication Guidelines

Guidelines for conducting our conversations together reduce participant anxiety and encourage fuller involvement (see box above). Introduce these guidelines at the first session by posting them on newsprint and reading them together aloud. Remind one another of your shared commitment to them at beginning of each session.

Mutual Invitation

This study guide aims to deepen personal and shared understanding, and develop positive feelings for cross cultural outreach. The more each person participates the more significant the learning. Sharing by mutual invitation encourages every person to exercise listening skills, and allows each to be invited and to invite.

The process

The facilitator shares, then invites another person to share who after sharing invites the next person and so on. A person may pass but still invites the next person

Introduce the practice at the first session as a way to learn names and a little something about who is gathered. A sample question is provided for each session.

R	<i>take RESPONSIBILITY for what we say and feel without blaming others</i>
E	<i>EMPATHETIC listening</i>
S	<i>be SENSITIVE to differences in communication styles</i>
P	<i>PONDER what we hear and feel before we speak</i>
E	<i>EXAMINE our own assumptions and perceptions</i>
C	<i>keep CONFIDENTIALITY when it is requested</i>
T	<i>TOLERATE ambiguity, we are not here to debate what is right or wrong</i>

¹ From Eric H. F. Law, *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1993. Used with permission.

Community Bible Study

Biblical reflecting is at the heart of our identity as Christians, as evangelical Lutherans!, and at the center of our calling to evangelical outreach.

Step A: Each person listens for a word, phrase or image that stands out for them as the passage is read aloud.

After the reading concludes, hold a moment of silence, then the identified person shares a word or phrase, without discussion, then invites the next person and so on, by mutual invitation.

Step B: After everyone has shared, the facilitator may offer brief background on the text for 2 or 3 minutes.

Step C: Invite someone to read the passage aloud again while the small group members consider the questions prepared for the specific session.

After a momentary silence, the last person to share in the first round may invite the first sharer for this round. Each shares without discussion.

Step D: Invite a third person to read. Ask participants to listen for how the text communicates what God is inviting them to do or to change.

After a momentary silence, share without discussion.