

## The Eastern Lay School of Ministry Statement of Purpose

We exist to equip laity for their work of ministry. We understand lay ministries will have two primary areas of focus:

- 1) within the lay person's local congregation, and
- 2) within the lay person's local community (i.e., work, neighborhood, helping agencies, social relationships).

As the church moves into the twenty-first century, we envision a paradigm of Christian "life together" that will encourage an ever expanding role of equipped laity in traditional and creative new ministries. We hope to provide both theological and practical training for those who serve congregations through evangelism, visitation, teaching, liturgical and other appropriate forms of service. We also envision one of the benefits of increased lay involvement will be to enhance the role of clergy to do what God is calling them to do.

The Lay School of Ministry is an offering of our synos. Participation in this two-year program is recognized by our synod as an important way to strengthen East Central Synod congregations. While we purposefully do not offer academic credit, our school does enlist three seminary professors as part of our teaching staff. One of the purposes of our monthly Friday-Saturday meeting is to entice students into self-study throughout each month. The pastor-mentor program is also designed as a tool to aid self-learning and personal growth toward the goal of doing enhanced ministries.

Finally, the Eastern Lay School of Ministry offers our church members an opportunity to experience theological education with some of our seminary's finest professors. We have discovered that this type of experience aids participants in discerning God's call to them. Many have had their ministries clarified. Some have sensed a call into ordained ministry.

Note: For the "double focus" of ministry see William Diehl's two books: *Thank God It's Monday* (Augsburg) and *Ministry in Daily Life* (Fortress). As a catalyst to envisioning the future shape of the church see Loren B. Mead's *The Once and Future Church* (Alban Institute).

The Lay School is underwritten by modest Synod funds and is basically self-supporting via tuition and student purchase of their own reading materials.

## The Central Lay School of Ministry Statement of Purpose

The lay school exists to equip and challenge adults for their work as Disciples of Christ, empowering them for service and ministry in their church and community.

- We understand lay ministries will have two primary foci: 1) within the lay person's local congregation and 2) within the lay person's local community.
- We understand that in order for the church to faithfully execute its Christ-given callings and vocations, it will need to draw from the gifts of the priesthood of all believers. To that end we will work to foster the spiritual development and growth of the participants, increasing their knowledge of their callings and gifts as laity as well as the needs within the church and community for which those gifts and callings were given.
- We will challenge the students to reflect on their faith, to think critically and carefully about God's work in the church.
- We will provide historical, theological and biblical insights as well as practical training for those that, with their pastor's blessing and encouragement will serve their congregations.
- We endeavor to educate the students as to their role in supporting and encouraging the ministry of their pastor and church.

This experience will aid participants in the discernment of God's call to them. Many have had their vocations, service and ministries clarified.