

Living Our Baptism:

Focused activity centers to explore the five gifts of discipleship

The Nebraska Synod Assembly held a ministry fair for several hours one morning. Lisa Kramme, Director of Faith Formation for the Nebraska Synod, hosted a table with the following activities so that participants could explore the promises made in baptism and the affirmation of baptism. These activities could easily be adapted to a congregational event or to a specific age group.

Setting:

Two eight-foot tables were set up outdoors. They were covered with blue tablecloths and a battery-powered table-top fountain was at one end of the tables.

At the other end of the tables was a white board filled with “Living Our Baptism...Five gifts of discipleship” magnets (see ELCA website <https://elca.org/Our-Work/Congregations-and-Synods/Faith-Practices/5-Gifts> to download template), and the white board indicated that people could help themselves to a magnet.

Between the fountain and the white board were set the following activities. Each activity focused on one of the five gifts of discipleship and each was marked with a small table-top sign, briefly stating what to do.

Activities:

For “*live among God’s faithful people*,” there were strips of light blue paper and markers. Each person was asked to write the name of someone who influenced their faith journey on a strip of paper and staple it to a paper chain. A photo was taken of the chain when it was completed and posted it on social media.

For “*hear the word of God*,” there were two Bibles and several highlighters available. People were asked to highlight their favorite verse and write their first name next to it along with their church’s name. Favorite verses will periodically be posted on social media.

For “*proclaim the good news of God in Christ*,” people were invited to read their favorite Bible verse over a portable PA system. We had two battery-powered bullhorns available for this, and the invitation to share was periodically announced through a bullhorn (which always brought about smiles).

For “*serve all people, following the example of Jesus*,” each person was invited to put together a personal care kit for Lutheran World Relief. (Go to <https://lwr.org/personalcarekits> for information.) We had enough items to make 60 kits.

For “*strive for justice and peace in all the earth*,” people were asked to make a peace plate and write on the back a prayer for peace. It might have been a person or a situation for which they prayed. They could take the peace plate with them if they’d like. At this station there were watercolor paints, paintbrushes, bowls of water, paper plates, masking tape and markers.

Some observations:

The tabletop signs with simple explanations for each activity did not seem to be enough to help people walk through each activity. Instead, people seemed to respond to verbal instructions best. Having two to five people available to offer instructions and answer questions would be a good addition.

The putting together of the personal care kits for Lutheran World Relief took the most one-on-one instruction. Have one person dedicated to this station to make sure the kits are assembled as noted on the LWR instruction sheet. This activity alone could use one eight-foot table.

Because this was done at a large event's ministry fair, there wasn't an opportunity to give participants an overview of what to do at each station before they started. If this would be done by a smaller group, an overview could be given before people start at the stations.

Thanks for the ideas shared by colleagues in Nebraska: Pastor Breen Sipes of Tri-Saints Lutheran Parish, Deacon Claire Meyer of Bethany Lutheran Church, and Michelle Hickox of Alliance; and Brenda Smith of the ELCA churchwide expression.