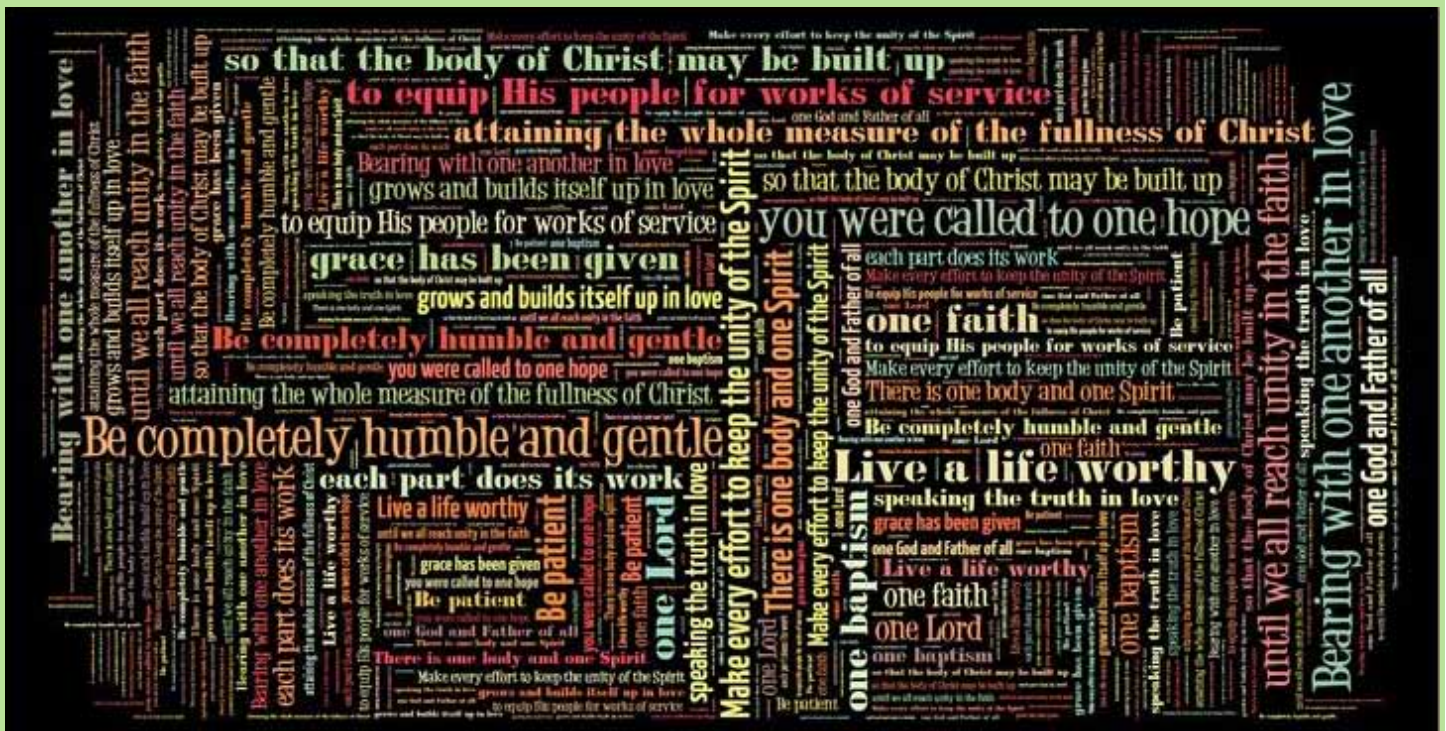


# Week of the Laity

## Resources

January 29 - February 4, 2017



**Everybody  
Has  
A Part**



**Ephesians 4:1-16**

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## General Introduction

In Sunday School classrooms and sanctuaries, during visits to the homebound and those in the hospital, and in committee and board meetings, members of the laity share their time and talents leading the church as the ongoing mission of Jesus Christ moves forward in rural communities, cities, suburban, and urban areas. Born in a time of religious awakening when lay leaders were exercising new and significant roles within the church,<sup>1</sup> the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has always emphasized the ministry of the laity. This is clearly seen in the early teaching of one of our founders, Alexander Campbell whose anticlerical stance might be considered a component of his anti-institutional views. Mark Miller-McLemore writes “[Campbell] clearly upheld a set-apart ministry but focused on how it related to the needs of congregational life. Elders and deacons served within the established churches, evangelists from established churches started new congregations and served until elders were ready to take their role of leadership.”<sup>2</sup> While structural changes and new understandings of what it means to be church have resulted in a greater emphasis on the ministries of ordained and commissioned ministers, the emphasis on the ministry of the laity continues in today’s congregations when we speak of the priesthood of all believers. It is seen in the empowerment of the laity to administer at the Lord’s Table, to teach, to preach, and to hold key leadership offices at all levels of the church.<sup>3</sup> It is seen in ministries of elders, deacons, trustees, board members, Sunday School teachers, and others that are vital to the health and vitality of our congregations. McLemore states, “Our understanding and practice of lay eldership deserves attention and honor in our constructive thinking. It should not be abandoned or neglected, but incorporated in our best thinking about who we are.”<sup>4</sup> This statement can be generally applied to the leadership of the laity in general.

For these reasons, it is appropriate that each year we set aside an intentional period of time to lift up and celebrate the ministry of the laity. In 2017, the week of **January 29 through February 4** has been set aside to highlight the

work of the laity and to express appreciation for spiritual gifts that these individuals share throughout the entire year. In his concluding remarks to the Philippians the apostle Paul states, “Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me – put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you” (Philippians 4: 9). His words remind us that the faithful life is a life of practice as we use our God given gifts and resources. During the 2017 Week of the Laity, we will be focusing on how **We All Have a Part** as we seek to live more fully. This resource will include a Bible study, and worship resources including a service of rededication for the laity.

### Thoughts About Planning For Laity Sunday

The Week of the Laity is a time to highlight the work of the laity that is already occurring and to encourage and empower members of your congregation in offering their time and talents as they grow as God’s stewards and Christ’s disciples. First, The Week of the Laity is not a time to simply ask people to take on roles of others. It is a time to recognize the unique ministries of your congregation and to help individuals identify how they are called and equipped to partner in those ministries. Second, The Week of the Laity should not be presented as the only time when the laity leads the ministry of the congregation. It is time to recognize the importance and ongoing nature of the ministry of the laity that takes place throughout the church year. Finally, Laity Sunday should not be viewed as a day-off for the pastor (as this will only reinforce some people’s mistaken understanding of the role and ministry of the pastor). Rather, Laity Sunday is a time to recognize ways in which the pastor receives the gifts of the laity and partners with the laity in lifting up the vision and fulfilling the mission of the congregation. The following are suggestions on what might be helpful as you plan for the Week of the Laity.

- Remember the goal is to inspire, equip and challenge the congregation as you celebrate how the laity functions within your congregation.

- Begin planning for the Week of the Laity early. Set a timeline to assure that participants have time to pray, think and compose what they will be saying. Do not “over script” your service as this denies the unique inspiration and giftedness of participants.
- Make an effort to make space for the voices of emerging leaders and to ensure that your celebration reflects the congregation’s diversity.
- Make planning a team effort of laity and pastor. Remember that the Week of the Laity is a time to draw on the gifts of all in your congregation.



### **Background on Ephesians**

While tradition has held that Paul wrote the Letter to the Ephesians, most scholars today would agree that the author is unknown. This is based on the lack of personal greetings, mention of associates as co-senders of the letter, and the lack of specific details between the apostle and the recipients all support anonymous authorship. Having said this, it does seem that while there was no personal relationship between Paul and the Gentiles who received the letter, the recipients of the letter did know of Paul’s ministry and his teachings.

The letter seeks to strengthen a communal identity that is rooted in God’s plan of salvation as revealed through Jesus Christ. The author speaks to the community’s sense of powerlessness, instability and lack of resolve. To do this, the church is identified, as the Body of Christ comprised of individuals who are uniquely gifted for the functioning of the whole body. Rather than confining this image to a specific community, the author of Ephesians writes it large presenting a cosmic vision of the church as the dwelling place of Christ. This cosmic picture of the church united with the risen Christ has earthly implications. Christians are uniquely gifted and are to use these gifts to build up the church until all reach maturity in Christ.

The Letter to the Ephesians presumes that a Christian identity is seen in living a moral and ethical life. Conversion is the beginning step in becoming holy and blameless in love (Ephesians 1: 4).

### **Group Session:**

#### **Opening Prayer**

#### **Read Ephesians 4: 1 – 16**

## **Contents**

### **Bible Study on Ephesians 4: 1 – 16**

### **Worship Resources**

- Call to Worship
- Suggested Scripture and Sermon Theme
- Service of Rededication
- Music Suggestions

# **Everybody has a Part**

### **Bible Study Small Group Use**

#### **Scripture Text**

Ephesians 4: 1 – 16

## Discussion Guide

This passage is part of a larger section that provides ethical guidelines for the Christian life. It begins by reminding the recipients of the letter that they have been chosen and therefore should live lives worthy of that calling.

- How would you describe your calling as a Christian? To what are you called?
- What does Ephesians 4: 1 – 6 say about our calling?
- Read the sidebar GOD WORKS.

### GOD WORKS

“to enlighten the heart of men, straighten out in front of him all the paths of justice and truth, establish in his heart respect for all the precepts of God; it is a spirit of meekness, of patience, generous compassion, eternal goodness... potent wisdom which trusts in all the deeds of God and depends upon his abundant mercy... of generous compassion with all the sons of truth.

*Rule of the Community  
Qumran Cave 1  
Dead Sea Scrolls*

What does this say about our calling?  
Rewrite this passage from the Rule of the Qumran Community as a rule for your community.

A Christian congregation is a company of praying men and women who gather, usually on Sundays, for worship, who then go into the world as salt and light. God’s Holy Spirit calls and form this people. God means to do something with us and he means to do it in community. We are in on what God is doing, and we are in on it together.

Eugene H. Peterson in *The Jesus Way: A Conversation on the Ways that Jesus is the Way* 2007.

- Read the Peterson quote. What does this say about our calling? What do you believe that God is calling us to do in community? What do you think that Peterson means when he says, “We are

in on what God is doing, and we are in on it together”?

Ephesians 4: 7 speaks of grace. In this context grace refers to the power of salvation that is expressed in individualized gifts and acts. Read Romans 12: 3 – 8. In this passage (verse 6), the gifts of an individual are associated with the grace that is given to the community. God gives the community grace to the extent that its members exercise their gifts.

- What first comes to mind when you think of grace? What do you believe is the connection between grace and our gifts? What does it mean for your community that the gifts of your members are signs of God’s grace?

A spiritual gift is a divine, supernatural ability given by God to enable a Christian to serve and to minister.... A spiritual gift is a special tool for ministry.

Kenneth Cain Kinghorn  
Discovering your Spiritual Gifts

- Read Kinghorn’s definition of spiritual gifts? What is your reaction to that definition?
- While natural talents and spiritual gifts can be related they are not necessarily the same thing. How are spiritual gifts different from natural talents or abilities?
- In Romans, Paul warns about false estimation of one’s gifts. False estimation might include an overestimation or an underestimation of one’s gifts. Why might someone underestimate his or her own gifts? How might we help others recognize their gifts? How might we gain better understanding of our own gifts?
- What are the consequences when we do not fully exercise our gifts?

In Ephesians 4: 11, the discussion of gifts continues. Here gifts are linked with functions within the community and suggests that these functions are related to nurturing and maturation of the community. The gifts identified function within the local congregation and beyond the local

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congregation (i.e. evangelist). The list is not meant to be exhaustive but serve as examples.

- Maturity in this passage is not limited to the individual but refers to the maturity of the entire community. What are the characteristics (qualities) of a mature community? What do you believe it means to reach fullness in Christ?

Spiritual gifts are spoken of throughout the New Testament. Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesian 4 include lists of spiritual gifts.

### ***Romans 12***

1. Prophecy (preaching)
2. Service
3. Teaching
4. Exhortation (encouraging)
5. Giving
6. Leadership
7. Mercy

### ***1 Corinthians 12*** adds

8. Wisdom
9. Knowledge (studying)
10. Faith
11. Healing
12. Miracles
13. Discernment of spiritual matters
14. Tongues
15. Interpretation of tongues
16. Apostle
17. Helps
18. Administration

### ***Ephesian 4*** adds

19. Evangelist
20. Pastor

While not mentioned in Romans, Corinthians or Ephesians the following are also identified in the Bible as spiritual gifts.

21. Celibacy
22. Voluntary poverty
23. Martyrdom
24. Hospitality
25. Missionary

Not every individual or every community has every spiritual gift.

- How are these gifts demonstrated within the Body of Christ today? How do they function to help a community grow and mature?
- Think of the leadership roles within your congregation. Consider what spiritual gifts might be helpful in performing the functions of that role. Think of the mission of your congregation. What is it? What gifts are needed to carry out this mission?
- How are spiritual gifts identified and nurtured in your community? How can identification of spiritual gifts assist the community? What spiritual gift(s) are you using at this time?

(**GOING DEEPER:** Books and online resources are available that would assist individuals in identifying their spiritual gifts. You may want to have your group complete a Spiritual Gift Inventory and discuss their results. This can be done at the end of the session or as a follow-up session. An online assessment is available through the United Methodist Church at

<http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/spiritual-gifts-online-assessment> or the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America <https://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Congregations-and-Synods/Faith-Practices/Spiritual-Renewal/Assessment-Tools>)

## **Closing Prayer**

## **Worship Resources**

### **Note to the planning team**

Laity Sunday provides us with the opportunity to highlight the connection between worship and the ministries of transformation that we engage in throughout the week.

Be creative as you highlight and celebrate the ministries of your congregation. Prepare displays of photos of what you have accomplished over the past year.

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## Suggested Outline for Worship

Below is a suggested order of worship for Laity Sunday including a Service of Rededication for the laity. Both may be adapted to fit the needs of your community.

### Gathering

Gathering Music  
Call to Worship  
Gathering Prayer

### Service of Word

Sharing of Joys and Concerns  
Prayers of the People  
Scripture Reading  
Sermon  
Invitation to Discipleship  
Song of Discipleship  
Service of Rededication  
Song of Rededication

### Service of Table

Invitation to Offering  
Offering  
Doxology  
Invitation to Communion  
Communion Song  
Words of Institution and  
Communion Prayer

### We Depart to Serve

Benediction  
Sending Song

## Call to Worship - Based on Psalm 67

One Voice: Let God grant us grace and  
                  bless us;  
          Let God make his face to shine  
                  on us

**Many Voices: May God's way be known  
                  upon the earth  
          May God's salvation be known  
                  among the nations.**

One Voice: People of God, say thank you to  
                  God.

          People of God, praise God's  
                  mighty name.

**Many Voices: We will celebrate and shout  
                  with joy.**

**We will thank God for all  
                  things.**

One Voice: Our God blesses us.

          Our God draws near and God's  
                  mercy and love is revealed  
                  to us.

**Many Voices: We will thank God today,  
                  tomorrow and always.**

## Service of Rededication

*For this service, you may want to create a point of visual focus in your worship space. As this service will ask individuals to remember the promises of their baptisms, it is suggested that your worship center incorporate baptismal symbols. Cover a table with a white tablecloth; have a large glass bowl filled with water, and a large candle. It is also appropriate to include shells and a container of oil.*

*An additional or alternative suggestion is to have members come forward for communion. At that time give each member a small white candle stating: "Remember you are filled with the light of Christ which you are called to share."*

## Statement of Purpose

*Pastor: Each week, an invitation is extended for those who wish to respond to Jesus' call for discipleship for the first time or who wish to formerly offer their time, talents and resources joining our community and working with us as we seek to find fullness in Christ.*

*Today, is a day when we intentionally thank God for the gifts of our members and for the opportunities for service that God gives us to practice those gifts. It is appropriate that on this day, in addition to saying thanks we join in covenant with God and one another to faithfully put those gifts into action.*

## Presentation of Elders

At this time I would ask the elders of the congregation to please stand.

Each of you has been examined by the members of this congregation and have been identified as an individual who is gifted to lead the church. As an elder you are responsible to:

- teach and express the nature of the church;
- to give wise counsel;
- to share in holding up the vision of the congregation's ministry and mission;
- to guard in all things the holiness, unity, and peace of Christ's holy church
- as you serve as colleagues of the minister representing the reconciling work of Christ.

Do you reaffirm your promise to a life of discipleship and commit to the well-being of the church serving as an elder of this community.

## **Elders: With God's help I do**

### ***Presentation of Deacons***

Pastor: At this time I would ask the deacons of the congregation to please stand with the elders, who will remain standing.

Each of you has been examined by the members of this congregation and have been identified as an individual who is gifted to lead the church. As a deacon you are responsible to:

- serve with the elders as they preside at the Lord's table;
- serve as a liaison between the minister(s) and elders and the community keeping the minister(s) and elders aware of the personal and spiritual needs of the community

as you serve in the reconciling work of Christ.

Do you reaffirm your promise to a life of discipleship and commit to the well-being of the church serving as a deacon of this community.

## **Deacons: With God's help I do**

### ***Presentation of the Sunday School Teachers, Youth Volunteers, and the Members of those who oversee the Christian Education of the community.***

Pastor: At this time I would ask the Sunday School Teachers, Youth Volunteers, and those who oversee the Christian Education of the

congregation to please stand with the elders and deacons, who will remain standing.

Each of you has been examined by the members of this congregation and have been identified as an individual who is gifted to lead the church. As Sunday School Teachers, Youth Volunteers, and those who oversee the Christian Education you are responsible to:

- demonstrate the love of God as you nurture and support the growth of all individuals within our congregation as they seek to grow and mature as disciples of Jesus Christ

as you serve in the reconciling work of Christ.

Do you reaffirm your promise to a life of discipleship and commit to the well-being of the church serving as a Sunday School Teacher, Youth Volunteer, or one who provides oversight of the Christian Education of this community.

## **Sunday School Teachers, Youth Volunteers, and those who oversee the Christian Education: With God's help I do.**

### ***Presentation of those who serve in the Music Ministries and those who plan and lead in the worship in the community***

Pastor: At this time I would ask the individuals who oversee our music ministries and who assist in the planning and leadership of our worship to please stand with the others, who will remain standing.

Each of you has been examined by the members of this congregation and have been identified as an individual who is gifted to lead the church. As music minister or one who provides oversight in the worship of the community you are responsible to:

- understand the essential aspects of worship and to plan and lead corporate worship each Sunday and on the festival and special occasions of the church year to celebrate God's promise and presence in our midst;
- to provide music that leads the

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congregation in praise of God as you serve in the reconciling work of Christ.

Do you reaffirm your promise to a life of discipleship and commit to the well-being of the church serving as a music minister or one who provides oversight of the worship of the community.

## **Those oversee the Music Ministries and those who provide oversight in the Worship of the community: With God's help I do.**

### ***Presentation of Those who Provide Oversight in the Stewardship and Administration of the Community***

Pastor: At this time I would ask those who provide oversight in the Stewardship and Administration of the congregation to please stand with the others, who will remain standing.

Each of you has been examined by the members of this congregation and has been identified as an individual who is gifted to lead the church. As one who provides oversight in the Stewardship or Administration of the congregation you are responsible to:

- promote generous and joyful giving and good stewardship of the resources that are placed in the care of the community;
- to oversee and provide leadership in the daily functioning and governance practices of the community

as you serve in the reconciling work of Christ.

Do you reaffirm your promise to a life of discipleship and commit to the well-being of the church serving as one who provides oversight in the stewardship or administration of this community.

## **Those who provide oversight in the Stewardship and Administration of the congregation: With God's help I do.**

### **Presentation of Evangelists and Those**

## **engaged in Outreach Ministries of the Community.**

Pastor: At this time I would ask the Evangelists and those engaged in Outreach Ministries to please stand with the others, who will remain standing.

Each of you has been examined by the members of this congregation and has been identified as an individual who is gifted to lead the church. As Evangelists and those who oversee our outreach ministries you are responsible to:

- to share the good news of Jesus Christ as you faithfully live out the great commission to make disciples to the ends of the earth,
- to see that those who are marginalized and who have not had a share in God's justice are valued and treated with dignity as we care for them and about them

as you serve in the reconciling work of Christ.

Do you reaffirm your promise to a life of discipleship and commit to the well-being of the church serving as Evangelist and as one who has oversight for the outreach ministries of this community.

## **Evangelists: With God's help I do.**

**(Before going on to the next section, add other leadership groups that are a part of your community and have them reaffirm their commitment to their function within the community)**

Pastor: At this time, I would ask all members of the congregation who are not already standing to stand. Each of you has heard the call of God in your life and has responded by accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. In the waters of baptism you received the gift of the Holy Spirit and were empowered for ministry. In light of your calling, do you reaffirm the promises that you made on the day of your baptism?

**All: With the help of God, I do.**



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Pastor: Do you commit yourself to a life of discipleship, including prayer, study of scripture, active participation in the life of the community as you seek to grow and mature in your faith?

### All: With the help of God, I do.

Pastor: Do you commit yourself to the well-being of the church and to fulfill a servant ministry of care and concern as you share your gifts for the building-up of the community?

### All: With the help of God, I do.

Pastor: Let us pray. Holy and gracious God, you call us into partnership to be stewards of your world and to care for your people. We thank you that you provide each community with the gifts that are necessary to answer your call to love you with heart and soul and mind and to love others as we have been loved. May we always remember the promises of our baptism and seek, with God's help, to faithfully fulfill them. Strengthen our desire to live in covenant with you and with your people as we seek to demonstrate a spirit of goodness, meekness, patience, and wisdom. We celebrate with thanksgiving the shared responsibility for Christ's ministries that is ours as the church. Praise be to the Creator, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## Sermon

### Scripture : Ephesians 4: 1 – 16

**Sermon Theme:** Through God's grace, we receive spiritual gifts to use in community so together we may reach fullness in Christ.

## Music Suggestions

### *Chalice Hymnal*

*Gathering Song*

*The Church's One Foundation* CH 272

*We Gather Together* CH 276

*Here, O Lord Your Servants Gather* CH278

*Song of Discipleship*

*Holy Wisdom* CH 258

*Alleluia! Hear God's Story* CH 330

*I Have Decided to Follow Jesus* CH 344

*Song of Rededication*

*Accept, O God the Gifts We Bring* CH 379

*Come, Celebrate the Call of God* CH 454

*Communion Song*

*We Come As Gifts Invited* CH 386

*Take Our Bread* CH 413

*I Come with Joy* CH 420

*Sending Song*

*Here I Am, Lord* CH 452

*You Have Called Me* CH 455

### *Contemporary Music*

*If We Are the Body* by Casting Crown

*Testify to Love* by Avalon

*Until the Whole World Hears* by

Casting Crown

*I Give You my Heart* by Hillsong

United

*We Fall Down* by Christ Tomlin

*10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord)* by

Matt Redman

*Here for You* by Maranatha! Music

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<sup>1</sup> *A Handbook for Today's Disciples in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Kindle Electronic Edition, Location 1108 – 1278.*

<sup>2</sup> Mark Miller-McLemore, "Ministry: how Disciples Understand It" in *Chalice Introduction to Disciples Theology*, Peter Goodwin Heltzel, editor, (St Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2008), Kindle Electronic Edition Location 2485 of 5718.

<sup>3</sup> Location 1108 of 1278.

<sup>4</sup> Miller-McLemore. Location 2592 of 5718.

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The Reverend Dr. Beth Rupe is the CCIW Interim Minister of Women's Ministries and the Livingston McLean Regional Elder. She has served congregations in Kentucky while attending Lexington Theological Seminary and in Illinois. Prior to going to seminary, she was an Outpatient Therapist at a community mental health center. She received a BS with honors in Psychology from Western Illinois University (1988) and a MS in Clinical/ Community Mental Health Psychology from Western Illinois University (1990). Beth received her MDiv from Lexington Theological Seminary (2002). She was ordained in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) by the Christian Church in Illinois Wisconsin. She received her DMin from Lexington Theological Seminary (2014).



Beth is a member of the CCIW Ethic's Investigation Team, Long Range Vision and Planning Committee, and the Study and Discernment Task Force and is Co-Chair of the CCIW Pro-Reconciliation Anti-Racism Committee/ Team. She served as the Worship Coordinator for the 2010 International Disciples Women's Ministries (IDWM) Quadrennial. She has written study materials for the IDWM and has published book reviews in The Lexington Theological Seminary Quarterly.

Beth is married to Mark. They have two children, Sarah (Aaron) and Benjamin, and two granddaughters Chloe and Emilia. She enjoys reading and learning new things especially computer skills. Her other hobbies include knitting, quilting and listening to all genres of music. She enjoys cooking, especially for her family and friends. Beth and Mark love to travel. She finds strength in contemplative prayer and studying scripture. She feels called by God to work for justice.

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