



Northern Illinois Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



diakonia™

Hello I'm Douglas Wood, chairman of the Northern Illinois Synod's **diakonia™** Steering Committee. Over the past several months, many of the lessons being preached have pointed out the following to all of us "Have you not seen, Can you not hear, Come and See." This is what these classes can bring to you. A whole new world opens up the Bible and the paths that our Lord wants us to journey on.

If you are looking for answers or to strengthen your faith and move into leadership roles in your congregation as well as the synod's, these courses will help you get a greater insight. If you are contemplating going to seminary, these courses could help you make that decision. We have many rostered ministers serving the Northern Illinois Synod who have been through the program and are serving as instructors for our classes.

Recent enhancements to the curriculum were rolled out in the 2023-24 season of the program. Pastor Kenn Storck and Trenton Ferro, who are on the National **diakonia™** Committee, have been instrumental in the development of the new curriculum. On the national level, we are currently working on introducing 6 new classes to the program.

The program is still a 2 year, 12 course, program made up of 6 Faith Formation classes and 6 Foundation classes. Each course is 5 weeks long, meeting for 3 hours one night a week, starting in September and ending in May. Currently all courses are via Zoom.

For the 2023-2024 year, the **diakonia™** program was offered 1 night via Zoom, meeting on Thursday nights - Year B Faith Formation. We had on average 8-10 students attending each class. The largest class that we had was Cultural Diversity/Anti-Racism led by Pastor Janet Hunt with 23 students. Many of those students included past **diakonia™** graduates as well as a couple of pastors. For the 2024-2025 year we will offer the Year A Foundation Courses. We are hoping to also offer more sites in the Synod and using a combination of Zoom and hybrid. Through the National Committee, we may be able to offer more class options with the other ELCA synods.

At the 2023 at Synod Assembly, a resolution was passed by the attendees recognizing **diakonia™** as a stepping stone for those wishing to serve to as Synod Authorized Minister (SAM) or discernment to Seminary and encouraging the program via a **diakonia™** Sunday. Pastors are also asked to lift up church leaders to participate. The over-reaching goal is to provide a community of learning and caring for one another as individuals deepen their faith and commitment to Christ. The program offers continuing education for graduates of the program, individuals who are currently serving as SAMs, and past graduates who wish to take new classes or retake to refresh their understanding of a certain course.

Additional special programs included a fall retreat, **diakonia™** Sunday, and a free book study program. The fall retreat at LOMC this past October had over 25 in attendance. Our keynote

speaker was Assistant to the Bishop Pastor Julie Monnard speaking on biblical story telling. We are gearing up in planning our next retreat in mid-October of this year.

On May 5th of this year, we celebrated **diakonia**TM Sunday. We made available to all congregations resources for that Sunday. We also asked that each congregation include their **diakonia**TM student or graduate in the service. Each congregation was encouraged to receive a freewill offering in support of **diakonia**TM. The Committee asked that the offering go to support one or more members, who cannot attend for financial reasons, to participate in the program.

The book study program will be offered again this year on July 11, 18, 25 “The World Is About To Turn: Mending A Nation’s Broken Faith” by Rick Rouse & Paul O. Ingram. This 3-night session will be led by Pastor Kenn Storck and will be offered at no cost apart from the book via Zoom.

You are invited to get more information at the Ministry Fair during Assembly. At last year’s Assembly, we had a drawing for a free **diakonia**TM class. We again will be having a drawing for a free class in the Year A Foundation.

If you are a graduate and feel called to serve and assist in the development of the program, please reach out. We are also looking for a pastor and a lay person to fill vacancies on the Steering Committee.

If you have doubts, what better way to find out answers to questions that you have on the Bible and your faith.

diakoniaTM Steering Committee:

Nancy Lillivold	Barbara Stark	Pastor Robert Stark	Trenton Ferro
Pastor Kenn Storck	Pastor Denise Rode	Donna Kelly	Carol Swenson
Jon Petersen	Pastor Julie Monnard		Douglas Wood

Respectfully Submitted,

Douglas Wood
diakoniaTM Steering Committee Chairman
Rockford Site Manager/Zoom Coordinator
diakoniaTM National Committee
301 School Street
Kings, Illinois 61068-4558
815-742-3901