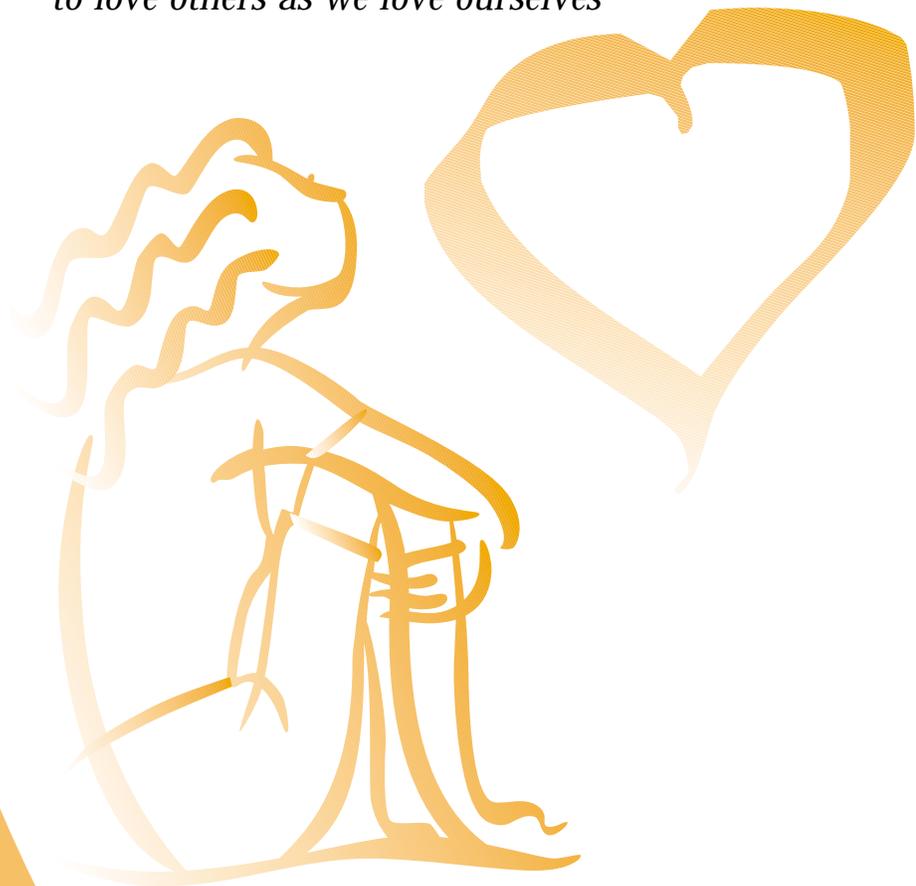




# *Called to* love as God loves —unconditionally!

*A program exploring the commandment  
to love others as we love ourselves*



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## *Purpose*

This resource is adapted from the *Embracing Self and Others* materials for leadership training events held between 1993 and 1999. Those events were designed to focus on God's desire for all God's people: that we love ourselves as beloved children of God, that we love our neighbors as ourselves, and that we support one another as God supports us.

## *Time required*

These three one-hour sessions work well as a half-day program, with a break after each session. Or you may make this a three-part study, using one session for each meeting.

## *To the leader*

Each session has a focus and contains discussion questions on several Bible passages, an exercise that either prepares the group for the session or encourages the participants to practice what they have just read and discussed, and a summary statement. If your group is large, divide participants into small groups for the discussions. Then come back together for sharing in the larger group.

You will need to read the resource; understand and embrace its purpose; assemble the materials; plan for small-group breakout areas, if needed; and facilitate the large-group discussions. You may also wish to secure volunteers for the Scripture readings before you begin each session.

The New Revised Standard Version of the Scripture passages is given in the resource, but if some participants have other versions of the Bible, encourage them to read their versions. Discussion of any differences among the versions can be a valuable part of the learning and sharing process.

## *Materials needed*

- One copy of the resource for the leader
- Newsprint and markers
- Bibles, copies of the handouts, and pens or pencils for each participant
- Hymnals (optional)

# 1

## loving myself *1 hour*



### opening

Open with prayer and, if you wish, an appropriate hymn.

### introduction

You may wish to begin with the following words, or use your own example:

*It is not easy to follow God's command to love ourselves. In particular, women often are not good at loving themselves. During a presentation of the leadership program Embracing Self and Others, a woman asked if the leader hadn't heard the expression SPS—"Self-praise stinks." The participant had been brought up with those words and therefore found it hard to praise herself, even in her mind.*

*We are not talking about bragging or an "I am the best" attitude. We are talking about loving ourselves because of who we are: people created by God.*

### biblical reflection

Distribute handouts 1, 2, and 3: "The Two Great Commandments," "Biblical Reflection," and "For Further Reflection."

**LEADER:** *There are two great commandments! And one of them involves loving ourselves. As we study these Bible passages, we will want to consider what happens in a society when we do not love ourselves as our Lord commands.*

Ask for four volunteers to read the Scripture passages on handout 1. After the reading, point out that Mark 12:28–31 is the foundation for all three sessions.

Now ask the participants to discuss their answers to the questions on handouts 2 and 3. (If the group is large, you may wish to divide the women into smaller groups of four or five to share their responses.)

### exercise

Distribute handout 4, "Planning an Orientation to Women of the ELCA." Read through the situation and instruct the participants first to complete their responses to the questions quietly by themselves and then to discuss their responses with the larger group (or in their small groups).

### summary statement

Following the discussion, read the summary statement at the end of handout 3.

### closing

Close with a prayer and, if you wish, a hymn.

**focus**  
Loving myself enough to be able to embrace my gifts and skills



## loving my neighbor *1 hour*

### opening

Open with prayer and, if you wish, a hymn. Have a volunteer read Mark 12:28–31 aloud.

### introduction

*Although it may be difficult to love ourselves, it is often much more difficult to love others because they are “so different.” And because we do not wish to appear racist, sexist, and so on, we often find it necessary to hide the difficulties we have with others. Instead of denying our differences, maybe we should admit the differences that bother us, look to the Bible for guidance, look to others for help with discernment, pray for grace, love, and compassion, and then go out and love God through loving the “other.”*

### exercise

Distribute handout 5, “Diversity Bingo.” Follow the directions for Diversity Bingo as given. Allow 10 minutes for people to circulate and get signatures on their sheet.

Then distribute handout 6, “Diversity Bingo: Process Questions,” and ask participants to answer the questions. You may wish to have participants discuss their answers in small groups before returning to discuss them with the entire group.

### biblical reflection

Distribute handouts 7 and 8: “A Diversity of Gifts” and “Biblical Reflection.”

What does the Bible say about diversity? Handouts 7 and 8 help us see that embracing diversity is one way we can show love to others and to God. Ask participants to read the Bible passages and discuss their answers to the questions. You may wish to have participants discuss their answers in small groups before returning to discuss them with the entire group. During the discussion in the large group:

- Note the incredible diversity in God’s creative acts.
- Note the similarity between Ephesians 4:7, 11–13 and Romans 12:4–6a.
- Note how 1 Corinthians 12:27–31 complements the Ephesians and Romans passages.
- Encourage participants to offer their favorite Bible passages that relate to love for one another and the diversity of God’s world. Record these on newsprint.

### summary statement *(See handout 8.)*

### closing

Close with a prayer and, if you wish, a hymn.

### focus

Loving others and acknowledging diversity as a gift

# 3



## supporting one another 1 hour

### opening

Open with a prayer and, if you wish, a hymn. Have a volunteer read Mark 12:28–31 aloud.

### introduction

*I'd rather do it myself: it takes too long to explain to someone what needs to be done. I can do it twice as fast. If I'm responsible, I need to know everything. When I do it, I know it will be done right.*

*Have you ever made any of those statements? Of course, we all have at one time or another. But doing it all ourselves is not good . . . it wears everyone out!*

### biblical reflection

Distribute handouts 9 and 10: "Empowering Others" and "Biblical Reflection."

Jethro, Moses' father-in-law and an "outsider," advises Moses, the first biblical workaholic, that his leadership style is "not good." Ask the participants to read the Bible passages and discuss their answers to the questions.

Now distribute handout 11, "For Further Reflection," which explores several different empowering environments in the Bible. Ask the participants to answer the questions about the five passages.

### exercise

In this exercise, "Diversity within Women of the ELCA," we will explore some differing personality styles that women will probably recognize in their own groups.

Distribute handouts 12–15. Ask participants to review them silently. Then ask questions like these: Which of these personalities is most like you? Which is most different from you? Which would you find easiest to relate to? Which would be most difficult for you to relate to?

Distribute handouts 16–19. Explain that these situations will help us to understand and support women with diverse personalities. Divide into four groups; each group will focus on one of the four women. Ask participants to read and discuss the situations, keeping in mind the personality profiles on handouts 12–15.

Bring the groups together and ask each group to report.

### summary statement

Read the summary statement at the end of handout 11.

### closing

Close with a prayer and, if you wish, a hymn.

### focus

Supporting one another as we share in God's work



## Session 1: Loving myself

# the two great commandments

### Mark 12:28–31

One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, “Which commandment is the first of all?” Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

### Luke 10:25–28

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.”

### Matthew 22:37–40

He said to him, “ ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

### Leviticus 19:18

You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.



## Session 1: Loving myself

# biblical reflection

There are two great commandments! And one of them involves loving ourselves.

As we study these Bible passages together, we will want to consider what happens in a society when we do not love ourselves as our Lord commands.

Consider the texts just read (see handout 1, “The Two Great Commandments”): Mark 12:28–31; Luke 10:25–28; Matthew 22:37–40; Leviticus 19:18.

1. What do these passages tell us about the way we are to love God? The way we are to love our neighbor?
2. Which phrase do the four passages have in common?
3. As you have read or heard these passages in the past, what part did you concentrate on?
4. What part has been emphasized most often in sermons you have heard?
5. Why do you think the Bible says so often that we are to love our neighbor *as we love ourselves*?
6. What does it mean *to you* to love yourself?
7. Do you find it easy or difficult to love yourself?



## Session 1: Loving myself

# for further reflection

### Read Romans 12:3.

*For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.*

1. Reading this verse by itself, out of context, what does it appear to mean?
2. Do you think that passages like this one have ever kept you from loving yourself?

### Let's take a look at the context in which Paul wrote the passage.

Paul is writing to the church in Rome. At this point in its history, the young church contained both Jews and Gentiles and was experiencing some tension between these two groups of believers. Because of this tension, Paul feels it is important to make it very clear that no one has an “edge” when it comes to approaching God—whether they live the right way, follow the letter of the law perfectly, or anything else. On judgment day all will be the same before God, and this is so because of God’s gift of God’s son, Jesus Christ, and the gift of new life that believers receive because of their faith in God’s gift. The message of the gospel is God’s grace!

3. Now, with its context in mind, what do you think the verse means?
4. In what situations in our church today might this verse be applicable?

### Continue reading in Romans 12, with verses 4–8:

*For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members of one another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: (continued)*



## Session 1: Loving myself

### for further reflection *(continued)*

*prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.*

Each of us has been given gifts that come from God. Each of us has been given different gifts. As we become comfortable with loving ourselves, we then look for those gifts of our skills and talents, acknowledge them, appreciate them, and recognize that they come from God.

5. Make a list of gifts not included in Romans 12:4–8.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. How are these gifts to be used?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. Make a list of your top ten gifts.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. How can these gifts be used in your community?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. “Underestimating yourself, putting yourself down, not liking yourself—all these hamper your ability to use the gifts and skills that God has given to you.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?

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### *Summary Statement*

Loving and valuing yourself, “warts and all,” allows you to recognize your gifts and skills and offer them to the community. God’s loving will for us is that we love ourselves and acknowledge our gifts—not for the increase of our own personal prestige, but for the benefit of the community.



## Session 1: Loving myself

# Planning an Orientation to Women of the ELCA: Identifying and Contributing Your Gifts and Skills

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**THE SITUATION** A new group of women has joined your group. They could be new members of a circle, new officers in the congregational unit, or newly elected members of the synodical board. You feel it is important to plan some orientation time with them.

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First respond to these questions yourself. Then share your answers with those in your group.

1. What would your two main goals for this orientation be?
2. What role would you like to have in the orientation, given the gifts and skills you believe you have?
3. What would you enjoy most about this orientation?
4. As you thought about your role in the orientation, did you find it easy to identify your gifts and skills?
5. Did you find it easy or difficult to tell everyone else? Why or why not?
6. Did you see a need for other people's gifts and strengths?
7. Think about and discuss the following statement:  
*Loving and valuing yourself allows you to recognize your gifts and skills and offer them to the community. It also allows you to receive the gifts and skills that others in the community have to offer.*



## Session 2: Loving my neighbor

# Diversity Bingo

Knows a good joke and will tell it.	Has received welfare	Is a single parent	Shops with coupons	Has a career
Is a divorcée	Is a person of Asian heritage	Has an outgoing child	Is a vegetarian	Earns over \$35,000 a year
Is a high school graduate	Likes a challenge	Is a homemaker	Has a biracial couple in the family	Is over six feet tall
Has a learning difficulty	Carries a highlighter in her purse or briefcase	Is a widow	Has a messy desk at work or at home	Has personal daily devotions
Is left-handed	Has held the same job for more than five years	Is over 60 years old	Owens a pet	Prefers to listen rather than talk

This activity may give you insight into your feelings about diversity!

- Each box on the chart above contains an identifier that may apply to someone in the group.
- Your task is to ask women to sign the particular box with the description that you think may apply to them. (You may *not* ask, "Where can you sign my sheet?")
- Obtain only one signature for a box.
- See if you can get "bingo" (five in a row—up, down, or diagonally), and also see how many signatures you can collect.
- *Remember, you must be specific when you approach someone to sign a box!*



## Session 2: Loving my neighbor

### Diversity Bingo: process questions

1. What were *your feelings* when you were instructed to ask a person directly for a signature for a specific box?
2. How did you approach this activity?
3. Were there any boxes you *avoided* asking someone to sign? Why or why not?
4. Which boxes were *easy* to ask someone to sign?
5. How many of the boxes *could* you have signed? How many of these were you *willing* to sign? Are there any that you *refused* to sign although you could have?
6. What does this activity tell you about your *comfort level* regarding issues of diversity or differentness?

## Session 2: Loving my neighbor



# a diversity of gifts

**Genesis 1:1–27** (To be read aloud.)

**Ephesians 4:7, 11–13**

But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. . . . The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.

**Romans 12:4–6a**

For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us. . . .

**1 Corinthians 12:27–31**

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

**Colossians 3:12–14**

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

**John 15:9–12**

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

**1 John 4:7–8**

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.



## Session 2: Loving my neighbor

### biblical reflection

What does the Bible say about diversity?

*Read aloud Genesis 1:1–27.* What a diverse environment God created!

1. What was God's purpose in creating differences?

2. How does diversity enrich our human experiences?

3. How does diversity divide God's people?

*Think about your family, workplace, congregation, community, nation, and world.*

4. What are some differences that create conflict?

5. What are some differences that create joy?

*Read Ephesians 4:7, 11–13; Romans 12:4–6a; and 1 Corinthians 12:27–31.*

6. What do these three passages have in common?

7. Why do you think certain types of diversity are listed again and again by the writers?

8. If you were to rewrite these passages in today's context, what would you write?

*(continued)*



## Session 2: Loving my neighbor

### biblical reflection *(continued)*

*Paul's letter to the Colossians (3:12–14) speaks to them of their new life in Christ. As God's chosen people, they are called to "bear with one another" in the love of God.*

9. When you think of yourself as "clothed with compassion," is there an effect you can identify in your relationship with your neighbor?

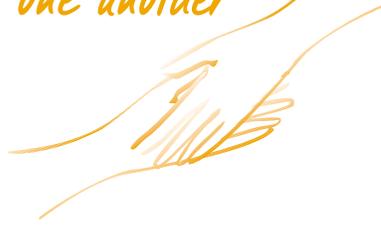
10. What does John 15:9–12 say is the best outward symbol of our abiding love in Christ?

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### *Summary Statement*

As God's people, we are called to love one another as we love ourselves, to respect the richness of our diversity, and to build one another up in love. Loving one another shows that we are "born of God and know God" (1 John 4:7). God used diversity to create a world that God called good! God meant diversity to be good, not threatening and scary. When it is understood and embraced, diversity makes our families, workplaces, congregations, communities, and the world more interesting and more nurturing places. Through an appreciation of diversity we are able to love others and show our love to God.

## *Session 3: Supporting one another*



# empowering others

## Exodus 18:13–26

The next day Moses sat as judge for the people, while the people stood around him from morning until evening. When Moses' father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, "What is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone, while all the people stand around you from morning until evening?" Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God. When they have a dispute, they come to me and I decide between one person and another, and I make known to them the statutes and instructions of God." Moses' father-in-law said to him, "What you are doing is not good. You will surely wear yourself out, both you and these people with you. For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone. Now listen to me. I will give you counsel, and God be with you! You should represent the people before God, and you should bring their cases before God; teach them the statutes and instructions and make known to them the way they are to go and the things they are to do. You should also look for able men among all the people, men who fear God, are trustworthy, and hate dishonest gain; set such men over them as officers over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. Let them sit as judges for the people at all times; let them bring every important case to you, but decide every minor case themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. If you do this, and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all these people will go to their home in peace."

So Moses listened to his father-in-law and did all that he had said. Moses chose able men from all Israel and appointed them as heads over the people, as officers over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. And they judged the people at all times; hard cases they brought to Moses, but any minor case they decided themselves.

## Session 3: Supporting one another



### biblical reflection

Jethro, Moses' father-in-law and an "outsider," advises Moses, the first biblical workaholic, that his leadership style is "not good." He encourages him to share tasks and empower people to take responsibility.

The lesson for us: Create the environment for people to succeed as we *share* in doing God's work.

*Read Exodus 18:13–26.*

1. What does Moses try to do for the people? Why?
2. What is Jethro's counsel? What happens?
3. What is Jethro's role in Moses' life? Why might Moses listen to Jethro's advice?
4. Does relationship have any bearing on whether you might listen to someone and heed his or her counsel?
5. Can we relate this story to our own lives? Share with your group a time when you might have modeled Moses' initial leadership style. What was the result? Did anyone care enough to give you counsel?
6. How can you create an "empowering environment" for family, friends, co-workers, fellow committee members, and colleagues?
7. How are you empowered when you delegate or "let go"?



## *Session 3: Supporting one another*



# for further reflection

In the following passages a loving, empowering environment is provided. What is the situation? What is provided? Consider how different each response is depending upon the person's style and the need that is presented.

1. Mary of Bethany (John 12:1–8)
2. Elizabeth and Mary (Luke 1:11–45)
3. Saul/Paul (Acts 9:1–18, Saul's call)
4. Peter (John 21:15–19, Peter's "reinstatement" after his denial of Jesus; note the differences in the ways that Peter and Saul are approached!)
5. Thomas (John 20:24–29)

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## *Summary Statement*

Support one another by creating space for all God's people to take responsibility and succeed!

## Session 3: Supporting one another



### Convincing Chloe

Some basic characteristics of Chloe

- usually noisy, happy, and positive
- good at influencing and persuading people
- expresses ideas in a charming but direct way
- wants to know *who* can do the best job

Some words to describe Chloe

- creates a happy environment
- is a people person
- is very articulate
- has lots of enthusiasm and creates it in others
- is the ultimate cheerleader and coach combined
- loves being in front of a group, loves performing
- likes to help
- is gregarious
- is generous
- shows emotion easily
- volunteers for many things
- participates

What Chloe appreciates

- popularity
- social recognition
- freedom to express feelings
- lack of complications
- few entanglements
- a casual approach to life, work, and relationships

What Chloe fears

- disapproval and rejection
- arguing and negativity

How Chloe likes doing things

- "Let's have fun while we're doing this!"

## Session 3: Supporting one another



### Factual Fiorella

Some basic characteristics of Fiorella

- prefers an atmosphere where people have a strict work ethic
- is quite reserved
- is usually subtle in dealings with people
- wants to know *why* something needs to be done

Some words to describe Fiorella

- enjoys detail
- pays close attention to the task
- is diplomatic
- does her work accurately
- is a critical thinker
- complies with authority
- is correct and precise
- is analytical
- believes in quality control
- likes order
- dislikes conflict
- tends to be very conscientious

What Fiorella appreciates

- a quiet atmosphere
- things being done properly and in the way that has been agreed upon
- freedom to work and concentrate with little or no interruption
- quality and accuracy
- feedback and support for ideas

What Fiorella fears

- criticism of her work
- situations that get out of control

How Fiorella likes things done

- “What a question—there is only one way to do something, and that is the proper way!”

## Session 3: Supporting one another



### Loyal Lorena

Some basic characteristics of Lorena

- likes a safe, secure place to work, play, and be
- is quiet (you may not notice her in the room)
- expresses her ideas often through other people
- wants to know *how and when* something will happen

Some words to describe Lorena

- truly believes in teamwork
- is patient
- is loyal
- is a good listener
- is calm
- is the ultimate team player
- likes the status quo
- does not easily accept change
- is easygoing
- is not very demonstrative
- is a peacemaker
- can be too giving

What Lorena appreciates

- stability
- security
- quiet
- teamwork
- sincere appreciation for work done
- having things go smoothly

What Lorena fears

- loss of stability
- being overloaded
- competition instead of cooperation

How Lorena likes things done

- "Let's do things that have worked well before."

## Session 3: Supporting one another



### Powerful Prunella

Some basic characteristics of Prunella

- likes to take charge
- you know she is around and that she has taken charge
- has no problem expressing her ideas and does so very directly
- wants to know *what* needs to be done and then wants to get on with it

Some words to describe Prunella

- causes action
- likes immediate results
- is a risk taker
- is adventurous, daring
- questions the status quo
- makes quick decisions
- likes to manage trouble
- likes to assume authority
- likes to solve problems
- can wear people out!
- likes variety and change
- tends to be assertive and outspoken

What Prunella appreciates

- power
- challenge
- variety
- freedom
- direct answers
- the freedom to do and be and try

What Prunella fears

- not being in control
- being taken advantage of

How Prunella likes things done

- "I like things done my way, because, in reality, that is the best way."

## Session 3: Supporting one another



### diverse women we encounter in Women of the ELCA

## Chloe

Chloe is a new member of your congregation. She's outgoing, enthusiastic, and responsive to other people's ideas. She seems very innovative in her approach to life. She has been so enthusiastic that she has been put in charge of your circle's social events.

Two events have been held: an all-church family potluck dinner before Lent and a tea to welcome new members to the church. The potluck dinner went okay (mostly because the old faithfuls pitched in). The tea, however, was a complete flop. Invitations were late and unclear; no one was assigned to plan either the food or the decorations.

It seems difficult for others to follow through on the ideas Chloe presents. Frequently they do not get enough information to complete the task, and occasionally they find that Chloe has made promises that were contrary to church policy. Some members wonder if she is just unaccustomed to rules and processes. Although everyone likes Chloe and enjoys her for a while, women are resigning from her committee.

1. Restate the situation as you understand it.
2. What does Chloe seem to have difficulty with?
3. What do you appreciate about Chloe?
4. How could you contribute your own gifts in a way that complements Chloe's?



## Session 3: Supporting one another



### diverse women we encounter in Women of the ELCA

#### Fiorella

Fiorella is the treasurer of the synodical board—what a gem she is! Her work background includes accounting positions, and she is currently working toward becoming a tax preparer. Fiorella is very thorough, conscientious, and orderly. She has kept precisely detailed, accurate, and up-to-date records and has required the other officers to be thorough in their work as well.

Fiorella sometimes receives reports from other board members that she considers sloppy and incomplete. Often they are tardy. Some of the board members have language differences and skill levels lower than hers.

Fiorella is normally a pleasant, friendly, and patient treasurer, but she openly criticizes the board members whose performance does not meet her expectations. She often complains to the president behind everyone's back and gives fairly strong nonverbal signs during meetings toward those she feels are incompetent.

1. Restate the situation as you understand it.
2. What does Fiorella seem to have difficulty with?
3. What do you appreciate about Fiorella?
4. How could you contribute your own gifts in a way that complements Fiorella's?

## Session 3: Supporting one another



### diverse women we encounter in Women of the ELCA

#### Lorena

Lorena is the president of your circle. She is patient and takes time to listen to the problems of the women. Lorena usually builds warm relationships throughout the church and is very uncomfortable with interpersonal conflict when it occurs. Lorena praises good performance enthusiastically, and she encourages women to come to her with suggestions and problems as well as with their personal news.

Recently there has been a conflict regarding programming in the circle. A longtime member insists that the annual Mother's Day celebration (normally a banquet) have a theme around hats. The participants will wear hats and decorate hats at the banquet, and the featured speaker will talk about fashion. A new and younger member of the group is also on the planning committee. She believes that this theme is too shallow. She wants to teach the women about advocacy and thinks the Mother's Day celebration is a good opportunity to do that.

One committee meeting has been held, and a deadlock occurred. Lorena is unsure about what the outcome should be. Other committee members are concerned. Time is running out for a decision to be made, and morale is low. Committee members have asked Lorena for another meeting. She keeps putting the meeting off and is starting to avoid the women.

1. Restate the situation as you understand it.
2. What does Lorena seem to have difficulty with?
3. What do you appreciate about Lorena?
4. How could you contribute your own gifts in a way that complements Lorena's?

## Session 3: Supporting one another



### diverse women we encounter in Women of the ELCA

#### Prunella

Prunella is hard-driving and assertive, and she likes to be in charge. She was just asked to plan a social ministry event for your synod. Her challenge, which she enjoys, is to make this the most successful event (raising the most money) that the Women of the ELCA has ever held in your synod. She has found, however, that there is little time to prepare.

In Prunella's opinion, in order to make the event happen, she must commit a \$300 deposit for a retreat site. This more than stretches your treasury. She needs to have the money immediately and is willing to risk the possibility of not having enough registrants to pay for this ideal site. The relationship between Prunella and the rest of the board is disintegrating because the more the board recommends investigating other sites, the harder Prunella tends to push.

Prunella is on a fast track professionally as an ad manager for a magazine. She is also a young mother and could influence some others her age to be a part of Women of the ELCA.

1. Restate the situation as you understand it.
2. What does Prunella seem to have difficulty with?
3. What do you appreciate about Prunella?
4. How could you contribute your own gifts in a way that complements Prunella's?

# notes





## *Called to Love as God Loves—Unconditionally!*

is one program in the Listen, God Is Calling series produced by the Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to help women's groups explore together what God is calling them to be and do.

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