

THEOLOGY GUIDELINES IN TRINITY CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

(2/4/17)

We each have freedom & responsibility to determine our personal theology (what we believe about God) throughout our lifetime. During our lifetime, we probably have intentionally studied – going to Sunday School, church, VBS, Bible Camp, adult Bible Study, read – and also been influenced by what we saw and heard about God from our parents, grandparents, friends and role models. Some of us can articulate the core of what we believe and others are not. But the fact is, we all have an underlying theology and it guides our words and influences the students in our groups.

Trinity is a Lutheran Church of the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church of America). When people choose our church/denomination, they want and usually expect it to adhere to the general theologies of that branch of Christian Community. It is important that we who are in roles of helping lead children and youth ministries understand what we teach here and are guided by it in these volunteer roles.

IF/THEN or BECAUSE/THEREFORE?

- **If** you do the good things the Bible tells you to do, **then** God will love you.
- **Because** God loves you unconditionally, **therefore** you are filled with gratitude and want to live in good response. (This is where stewardship of all we are and have comes from.)
- Lutherans believe the second.
- Start to really listen to yourself and others and you will begin to hear this in everything.

CAT OR MONKEY?

- Mother cats carry their babies by the skin on their necks.
- Baby monkeys hang on to their mothers.
- In this analogy, mother represents God and baby represents us.
- Lutherans believe the first – God is with us and loves us always and we didn't have to do anything. Lutherans are all about grace!

GOD'S GENDER

Lets work on not tagging God as male. God is so complete that God is both male and female or perhaps neither, both or a combination of both plus tons more good stuff – “gender-full!” And we are all created in God's image! (Most of us have grown up hearing male God language and this rolls off our tongues. We understand it will take a while to retrain ourselves, but let's commit to try.)

JESUS

The way we know God is through the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus as described to us in the Gospels. "Incarnate" – God became fully human in the person of Jesus.

HOLY SPIRIT

As present as our breath, the air and the wind – The Holy Spirit gives us faith that God is our Creator and Jesus is our Lord and moves us to serve God and others.

SACRAMENTS

In the ELCA there are two. In Baptism we become children of God forever. In Holy Communion God keeps nurturing us in faith, feeding us to remind us who we are. "Real Presence" is our term and it means Christ's Body is in the bread and Christ's Blood is in the wine. Real things are used in both sacraments – water, bread, wine – and together with God's Word help us see, taste, and feel God with us.

SAINTS AND SINNERS - We are both at the same time.

Sinner – When we act contrary to God's intentions that ALL people and the world are loved, respected, cared for, and fulfilled in purpose.

Saint – Forgiven sinner.

"Bringing the Bible to Life" by Eric Barreto & Michael Chan (Luther Seminary Camp Day, 6/3/15, JJ notes)

1. **The Bible is a Library not a book.**

The why is most important in the stories - more than the how.

2. **We always read the Bible from somewhere.**

We come with questions, concerns and our own state of mind and needs (what's going on in our lives at the time, our history, if we have been victims, etc.)

We come with a rich background and it's all different - we need to hear what everyone around the study hears/sees in the text. We are not experts - we are facilitators in helping others learn from the Living Word of God. (Let the Holy Spirit work) (Lectio practice)

3. **We cannot read the Bible by ourselves.**

Even if we are alone, our cloud of witnesses, gender, mood, God are always with us when we read. We need the presence of many others to get our full message from a text.

4. **The Bible is true in many ways.**

Parables - what do they tell us about God?

The Bible isn't always interested in giving us historical facts - sometimes it's written in poetic genre. "Once upon a time" tells us something about what we are going to hear.

Poetry, proverbs, parables, letters, fable --- i.e. "talking animals" (If it's not history or science, how might it still be true? What are the lessons for us? What does it tell us

about God?) Creation - God created the world in a way for us to thrive! In the end of the day, we are created in the image of God to continue the work/steward creation.

5. **The Bible does not say that everything happens for a reason.**

i.e. Job (perhaps the author meant to leave us with lots of different reasons/why? Perhaps our best response isn't to say anything to fix it or understand it (suffering), it's just to listen? Look to the cross where God absorbs suffering. Jesus participated in human suffering.

6. **The Bible says that God likes that we are different.**

In diversity lies the creativity of God.

Pentecost - God learns all our languages in all their weirdness and speaks to us in the way that's nearest to our hearts. Race, etc.

7. **The Bible was written by humans.**

Marvelous and frustrating

Through these culturally particular documents, God still speaks to us through these texts. Not always normative - but always revelatory

8. **The Bible was written by God**

God and God's Spirit inspired the writing and continue to inspire and speak to people as they read it. Divinely inspired

9. **There are different Bibles that Christians interact with - translations - God works through all of them.**

10. **The old & new testaments are equal in importance and all tell us about God's faithfulness.** (proven over many years and centuries)