

# ELCA500

## 'With New Voices': Rostered ministers leaders guide

"With New Voices" is Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton's invitation to people of all ages to pick up and hear from new voices the Small Catechism as part of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation.

In the summer of 2017, Bishop Eaton extended her invitation by offering additional perspectives on individual components via short videos, allowing us all to more deeply explore the contextual and contemporary relevance of the Small Catechism.

Additionally, the African Descent Catechism (ADC) will be released in 2018 as a tool for congregational and small group exploration of this theological document using cultural lenses.

Rostered Ministers are welcomed and encouraged to incorporate both the "With New Voices" videos and the ADC sections into their congregational faith formation. The following guide provides just a few examples of how this can be accomplished – all of which can be modified to fit your needs.

All of the videos are online at [ELCA500.org/with-new-voices/](http://ELCA500.org/with-new-voices/). When ready, the African Descent Catechism will be online at [ELCA500.org/resources/catechism-and-other-educational-resources/](http://ELCA500.org/resources/catechism-and-other-educational-resources/).

### **Worship and adult forums:**

*As you think about incorporating "With New Voices" and the ADC into your worship experience, feel free to be creative and try new techniques to engage your congregation. Although these suggestions include using video in your worship service, if that capability doesn't exist, you could create them as an adult forum.*

- Use "With New Voices" video(s) as a point of reference for a shorter sermon and ask the congregation to form small groups to discuss what they learned. End with a prayer that incorporates what was learned and offers open hearts for growing in new, faithful understandings. You could use preaching prompts from [Sundays and Seasons](#).
- Incorporate video(s) into a children's time. Identify relevant, topical and specific examples from your community (or the world) that solidify new, faithful understanding to the corresponding lessons. Modify questions provided for the corresponding video to foster further conversation and learning.
- In your bulletin, invite the congregation to watch the "With New Voices" videos and mention the invitation during your announcements after your Welcome or Prayer for the Day.
- Invite a member of the [African Descent Lutheran Association](#) to speak or preach during worship. In your invitation, discuss with your partner from the association topics that may be relevant to your congregation.



### **Small group discussion:**

*"With New Voices" videos and the ADC are great resources for a small group discussion. In October, both are relevant and timely to explore as we approach the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation.*

- Create a series that uses the videos as the main source for guiding conversation. Use the set of questions provided for each video to foster conversation and learning.
- Establish a small group that explores, side by side, the similarities and differences between the Small Catechism and the ADC. Explore through conversation the similarities of each and the reasons for the differences.
- Offer an afternoon workshop to explore the ADC and invite a guest speaker from the [African Descent Lutheran Association](#) to explore the ADC and its significance for Lutherans of African descent.

### **Youth discussion:**

*Incorporating the Small Catechism into youth groups or study groups can be a much easier with a video. Using the videos and a component of the ADC to start a conversation can lead to a fruitful and relevant discussion, as youth are often very knowledgeable about what is happening in our world. Frame the conversation within the context of their world and their lives as Christians.*

- Use the videos to discuss the Small Catechism in a confirmation class, using the examples Bishop Eaton offers in each video to help understand each section.
- Create a youth-focused workshop based on the ADC, inviting youth to explore topics in the news that relate to each of the ADC components. Before each week, ask the youth to find news articles that relate to the topic to be discussed in the next class.
- Use a series of youth group times to explore the ADC and invite a speaker from the [African Descent Lutheran Association](#) to explore the ADC and its significance for African descent Lutherans.
- Use the Lutheran's Restoring Creation series with the videos to engage youth in an ecological response to the Small Catechism. Start with the videos, which provide a broader explanation, and then use the [Lutheran Restoring Creation resources](#) to explore how this applies to caring for creation.
- Use ELCA [Pastor Keith Anderson's blogs](#), which use technology along with the Small Catechism, to engage youth. You can start with the "With New Voices" videos, which provide a broader explanation, and then use Anderson's [blog on emoji theology](#).



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### Group questions

The following questions are discussion starters for the "With New Voices" videos. Each set of questions are by no means the only questions to be considered, but rather they speak to specific points made by Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton. You can modify or add questions to foster a deeper conversation with participants.

#### **Commandment #1: You shall have no other gods**

As Bishop Eaton suggests, there are two things she often experienced in teaching Small Catechism classes:

- Sometimes we don't understand that there are things that draw our attention away from God.
  - There can be confusion about fearing and loving God at the same time.
1. What draws your attention away from God, and how is your attention drawn away? What are some ways that we can find God at the center of these things instead of ourselves?
  2. What do you think about Bishop Eaton's explanation of fear meaning "awe or wonder"? Are there examples from your life where you have experienced this concept?
  3. As Bishop Eaton suggests, the Ten Commandments are not rules to follow; they are a way of life. How can we more clearly see them as an invitation to seek God's call for us in the world?

#### **Commandment #2: You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God**

1. As Bishop Eaton suggests, we might not be using the name of God the way it is intended. What has created this culture, and how can we work to honor God's name and be more mindful of its use?
2. Bishop Eaton talks about using the phrase "O.M.G." She notes that the phrase is so easy to use but is counter to how we are called to use God's name (prayer, thanksgiving, lament). How might you find more reverence, joy or power in using God's name? How could you use that thought or experience to only call upon God in purposeful and positive ways?

#### **Commandment #3: Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy**

As Bishop Eaton suggests, the Sabbath is an invitation intended for two things:

- A day of rest for all of creation
  - That we might hear God's word gladly and learn it
1. What do you think of when you read this commandment? Do you hear it as Bishop Eaton does: a joyful invitation to all of creation to rest, to remember we are finite and to hear God's word? Or do you hear it another way?
  2. Have you ever felt like the Duke University student in Bishop Eaton's story? If so, how? If not, why?
  3. Recalling that Bishop Eaton suggests that the Sabbath is a day to hear God's word and a time to expect something to happen, how might you reframe how you think about your Sunday in or out of church?

#### **Commandment #4: Honor your father and your mother**

1. As Bishop Eaton notes, our elders and our families are gifts and places where much-needed nurture and wisdom are passed on. How do you see the relationship between elders and families in our community? Is there strong respect for elders or not? How might this be helping or hurting our community? What could you do to improve these relationships?
2. St. Paul said, "Parents, do not provoke your children." Bishop Eaton notes that blind obedience should not exist. Rather, respect should be given when respect is due, while at the same time respecting those who are in authority and are serving wisely, with humility and with faithfulness. How do you discern the difference between earned and due, particularly with those in authority?

#### **Commandment #5: You shall not murder**

1. Have you ever been like one of the confirmation students Bishop Eaton mentions who thought they had never broken this commandment? What do you think about the ways Bishop Eaton notes that the catechism expands this commandment to include doing good for our neighbor?
2. Bishop Eaton notes that conserving resources is a way we can honor this commandment. What are some ways you or your community can better conserve resources?
3. Have you ever wished ill on another person? If so, what did you think about Bishop Eaton's explanation that this commandment is meant to protect us from ourselves? How does this commandment fit in with the concept that humans were given the commandments to help us create positive and flourishing communities?

#### **Commandment #6: You shall not commit adultery**

1. What did you think of Bishop Eaton's explanation of adultery? Is this a new way of thinking for you?
2. What does giving of your whole self and not asking for anything in return look like to you in your relationships? What does giving of your whole self in your relationships require of you (time, vulnerability or other)? What are some ways to implement this view of the commandment in your life?

#### **Commandment #7: You shall not steal**

1. Bishop Eaton suggests that this commandment is an opportunity to give our best so that our neighbor can give his or her best. How does this explanation differ from how you previously might have thought about this commandment?
2. How does Bishop Eaton's hypothetical situation (in which a store clerk gives too much change) offer an opportunity to give our best so that the clerk can give his or her best?



**Commandment #8: You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.**

As Bishop Eaton suggests, there are two benefits when we refrain from bearing false witness against our neighbor:

- We don't automatically fall into suspicion and anger and ascribe motive to somebody without first speaking to them.
- We give our neighbors the benefits of the doubt and explain what our neighbors are doing in the best possible light.

1. How does honoring this commandment potentially benefit relationships with your neighbors?
2. Have you ever spoken well of a neighbor and explained their actions to others in the best possible light even when you didn't want to? If so, how does that fit in with idea that the Small Catechism is intended to give us comfort and support when we face problems in our Christian life?
3. Bishop Eaton refers to cultural forces that divide us into groups and tribes. What are those cultural forces? How might we guard against them and contribute to a world that lives in peace instead of divisiveness?

*NOTE: Commandments #9 and #10 are presented together in one video. It is recommended you discuss both together.*

**Commandment #9: You shall not covet your neighbor's house.**

**Commandment #10: You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.**

1. In her explanation of Commandments #9 and #10, Bishop Eaton suggests that these commandments, although using antiquated in language, still have relevancy to Christians in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In what ways do they still apply to our lives?
2. Bishop Eaton suggests that coveting our neighbor's belongings can seem harmless but can drive us to live harmfully, gradually building in our motives. How is this inconsistent with our call to live? In what ways can we more intentionally live?
3. Are there key aspects of our modern times that contribute to our desire to covet a neighbor's belongings? If so, what are they and how can we ward against them to live more consistently with these commandments?

**"With New Voices" wrap-up conversation suggestions**

1. In what ways have our conversations differed from those you recall when first learning about the Small Catechism and the Ten Commandments?
2. How have our conversations together helped you think differently about the Commandments?
3. What new ways of living our call as Christians have you discovered for yourself?

