

... equipping the saints for diakonia;
building up the body of Christ. – Ephesians 4:12

Program Overview And Course Descriptions



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diakonia

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Diakonia program overview

“Let the one who would be great among you be your servant.”
– Mark 10:43

What is Diakonia?

Diakonia is a two-year process of spiritual formation and theological education for baptized members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or anyone wishing in good faith to study these teachings. This process occurs in three basic ways:

- By thorough grounding in practical, systematic, historical, and biblical theology.
- By identifying particular skills and aptitudes in ministry, and encouraging their use in daily life.
- By providing spiritual growth through worship, retreats, and a supportive community of students, mentors, and instructors.

The Diakonia program began in 1977 in New York, and almost 1,600 people have completed the program since. The program was founded by the Rev. Stephen Bouman, who developed Diakonia to train lay people to be servants of the Lord – as he has frequently said, “to take the message of the font and the table (altar) out the front door of the church into the community.” The program came to the Greater Milwaukee Synod in 2006, and more than 125 students in the GMS have graduated since then.

What is the emphasis of Diakonia?

The purpose of the Diakonia program is to provide participants the opportunity to discover their God-given gifts, and strengthen their faith and their abilities. Through the Diakonia educational experience, students' understanding of theology and their relationship to God are allowed to blossom and bear fruit as a light of Christ in society.

How is Diakonia structured?

The Diakonia curriculum consists of twelve courses, six per academic year, all graded on a pass-fail basis. Each course lasts five weeks, with a three-hour classroom session each week. All of the courses are introductory in nature, and each includes weekly readings and assignments. Typically, students average approximately three to five hours of study per week in addition to class time. Unfold this brochure to find course descriptions.

Is Diakonia right for me?

Diakonia emphasizes the baptismal vocation of all Christians to serve as did our Lord Jesus. Participants are often already leaders in their parishes and have a high degree of commitment to the ministry of the Church. They want to deepen their life of faith and ground their commitment to serve in fulfillment of their baptismal promises: to live among God's faithful people, to hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper, to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, to serve all people, following the example of Jesus, and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth. They are committed to serve through the Church in a variety of ways: teaching, administration, liturgical leadership, action for social justice, evangelism, visitation of the sick, community organization, youth work, ministry among the elderly, and the like.

How much does Diakonia cost?

Tuition: Tuition is \$360 per year (for the two-year program), or \$60 per course. Students may pay the total upfront or pay per course, with \$60 due the first day of each course. Books and materials generally do not exceed \$30 per course, and students have the option of purchasing used books or, in many cases, borrowing them. Financial assistance is available for tuition. It is our goal to turn no one away because of financial need.

Retreats: We hold a daylong retreat for Diakonia students and graduates on a Saturday in February. The cost is minimal, and scholarships are available. Topics vary.

Fees: A non-refundable registration fee of \$25 is required at the time of registration. An additional fee at the conclusion of the program covers graduation expenses, including the presentation of a commemorative Diakonia cross.

How do I learn more or sign up for Diakonia?

Find enrollment and financial aid applications online at milwaukee.synod.org/what-we-do/education/diakonia. Learn more on the national website: www.diakoniusa.org.

diakonia

Course Descriptions
Two years of formation
12 five-session courses

Series A

Introduction to the New Testament

The goals of this course are to understand the gospel message as revealed in the New Testament; to explore the life and faith of the Christian church in the first century; to understand how the Bible came down to us in its present form; and to understand and use a variety of tools for interpreting the Bible. Throughout the course, students will reflect on how the New Testament Gospel has shaped our Christian lives.

Church History – The First 400 Years

The purpose of this course is to help students understand the doctrinal, liturgical, and organizational development of the Christian tradition in its first four centuries. The internal and external political, cultural, and religious forces which shaped our church and our statements of faith are covered. The course concludes with the unification of Christian thought in the Creeds.

Practical Ministry I: Biblical Images of the Life of the Church

In this course each biblical image (diakonia, koinonia, leitourgia, kerygma) is examined for its meaning and usage in the New Testament. Students will consider the implications for the life of congregations and their ministries. These concepts are related to the ongoing work of preaching, teaching, counseling, worship, social ministry, and acts of mercy carried out individually and corporately by the Church and her servants. They are studied in their interrelatedness, all centered in the “Great Commission” given to us by Christ. This course also introduces the idea of baptismal vocation, the priesthood of all believers, and that we all have gifts that may be used. Teachers may spend time helping students discern their own possible gifts for ministry and service to the church and world.

Lutheran Creeds and Confessions

The history and content of the Book of Concord are at the heart of this course. Emphasis is placed on the Augsburg Confession and Apology; the Catechisms and Smalcald Articles; and the New Testament books of Romans, Ephesians, and Galatians. Topics include God and Sin, Justification by Grace Alone, Church and Ministry, Sacraments, and others. Parish constitutions may be studied to show relation of confessional documents to modern Lutheranism.

Practical Ministry II: Visitation (the sick, the homebound, the grieving)

This course has two components. First, students will have the opportunity to make at least one supervised visit in an institution and/or to the homebound. Class sessions will deal with understanding the needs of patients and loved ones, as well as issues such as grieving and patients’ rights. Second, besides a sharing of practical issues relating to this ministry, this course will also provide opportunities to relate visitation ministry to the theology and worship life of the Church. The role of the Eucharistic Minister may also be explored. During this course, students may discern whether they have a gift for visitation.

The Daily Life of a Christian

This practical theology course will explore the meaning of Christian discipleship in daily life. The course will help students to balance their baptismal vocation and calling in Christian life with family and personal life, church-related service, and the world of work. Special attention will be given to the theology of sanctification, the Reformation and Luther’s understanding of baptismal vocation, the relation of the justified life of faith to good works, financial stewardship, and the disciplines that support discipleship, such as daily prayer.

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Series B

Introduction to the Old Testament

The aims of this course are to give students an overview of the structure and theology of the Hebrew Scriptures and present the varieties of forms used to communicate the truth of God’s Word contained in them. Special attention will be given to the covenant theology and to relating Old Testament theology and history to our understanding of the New Testament.

Christian Doctrine

This course has several main objectives: to introduce students to Systematic Theology, present a vision of the coherence of Christian beliefs to each other, help identify foundational doctrines, give an understanding of orthodoxy and heresy, gain an understanding of the communal and historic nature of doctrines and their spiritual foundations, and to help students understand and express why disciplined thought and faithful confession is crucial for church leaders.

Faith in the American Context

The purpose of this course is to provide an overview of the history of the Lutheran church in America over the last 385 years, comparing past struggles and themes with issues in our church today, paying special attention to themes of immigration and assimilation (inclusion/exclusion/language), mission and outreach, authority, and identity.

Practical Ministry III: To Communicate the Gospel

This class will explore the role of the parish community of Word and Sacraments as the context for ministry, the source from which the Christian witness flows. Attention will also be paid to identifying 21st century situations where communication of the gospel is essential and how this communication may occur. The focus of this course is to look at opportunities within the parish for communicating the gospel (Bible studies, teaching, youth ministries, etc.) as well as in the community (various forms of evangelism, welcoming visitors and new members, etc.). Students will share personal ministry experiences of how they uniquely communicate the gospel in their lives, and reflect on them both biblically and theologically.

Christian Worship

This course surveys major aspects of the Sacraments, Lutheran liturgical worship, and the seasons of the church year, with special emphasis on the cultural settings in which worship occurs. The course provides a practical understanding of the words, actions, and items involved in the services by giving a close examination of what is in our service books. It also ties the content of the services to its biblical roots. This course also looks at the wide diversity of worship practices within the ELCA, including traditional and contemporary, multi-cultural differences, etc.

Themes and Issues in Christian Ethics

Students will reflect on the implications of the Ten Commandments for contemporary life. They will be introduced to concepts and systems by which the Christian tradition has taught personal and public morality, for example, the “Deadly Sins” and “Cardinal Virtues,” the “Just War” theory vs. Christian pacifism, human nature and human sinfulness, and Luther’s “Two Kingdoms” theology. The course provides opportunity for disciplined reflection on vexing ethical issues such as sexual ethics, sanctity of life, political witness, and economic justice. This course presents the opportunity to review and study some of the ELCA’s Social and Teaching Statements.

