**INTRODUCTION to the Growing in Faith/diakonia program**

**What is the Growing in Faith/diakonia™ program?**

Growing in Faith/diakonia is a one or two-year process of spiritual formation and theological education. This process occurs in three basic ways:

* By learning about texts, doctrines, history and practical applications of the Bible and its teachings.
* By identifying one’s spiritual gifts and learning how to share them in the parish and the world.
* By growing spiritually through worship, retreats, and a supportive community of fellow students, pastor-mentors and instructors.

GIF/Diakonia uses these tools to help equip God’s people for service in parish and neighborhood ministries. “Let the one who would be great among you be your servant (Greek: *diakonos”*) (Mark 10:4)

**What is the emphasis of Growing in Faith/diakonia?**

GIF/diakonia emphasizes the baptismal vocation of all Christians to serve as Jesus served. Participants may be leaders in their own congregations or simply Christians who are seeking to grow in their faith and learn more about the church or looking for the opportunity to serve the church in a variety of ways: teaching, administration, worship leadership, action for social justice, evangelism, visitation of the sick and homebound, community organization, youth work or ministry among the elderly. The diakonia Program helps participants to grow closer to the image and example of Christ the Servant.

**How is Growing in Faith/ The diakonia program structured?**

The GIF/diakonia curriculum consists of six Foundation Year courses, and six Practical Year courses. Courses may be held in person or virtually. Each course is five sessions in length and meets weekly for three-hour sessions. Weekly assignments and readings vary, depending on the class, and seek to relate the subject matter to daily life as well as providing a solid background on the topic. Students work at their own level, and assignments reflect the understanding that students are already busy in their families, jobs and congregations. In addition to class time, students, typically, average approximately 2-5 hours of study per week outside of class, depending on the course.

**Foundation Year:**

*This first year of study is required of all students and will provide a strong foundation which may be built upon in year 2 and subsequent study. Courses for the Foundation Year may be held in person in local churches with local instructors or virtually via ZOOM.*

***Christianity in a Lutheran Key***

***Introduction to Hebrew Scriptures***

***Introduction to New Testament***

***Living as a Christian in the World***

***Liturgical Worship***

***Lutheran Creeds and Confessions***

***Practical Year:*** *Students who choose to continue enroll in one of two ‘tracks’ Courses for the Practical Year will be offered primarily online via the ZOOM platform and open to students across the country. Course descriptions for these courses are currently being developed.*

***Road to Service Track:***

*(This track is suggested for those considering congregational leadership or synodically rostered leadership where offered.)*

***Healthy Congregational Dynamics*** *(Family Systems, Boundaries, Gifts)*

***Pastoral Care*** *(Visitation, Eucharistic Ministry, Grief)*

***Church History*** *(Overview of 1st – 21st Century)*

***Anti-racism*** *(in-depth training)*

***+2 Electives***

***Faith Formation Track:***

*This track is for those who are looking to deepen their personal faith in a more general manner.*

***Church History*** *(Overview of 1st – 21st Century)*

***Anti-racism*** *(in-depth training)*

***+ 4 Electives***