

Faith Seeking Understanding

What do Christians believe, and how does what we believe shape the way we live?



Light Wave

Acrylic painting with gold leaf on canvas by Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Inspired by John 3:14-21 • © A Sanctified Art LLC | Sanctifiedart.org

Linked-In Learning • Fall 2026

Study Guide

NASSAU PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Ways to Use this Guide

If you are leading or participating in a small group

- Begin by reading the introduction for an orientation to the theme for this study.
- Leaders of small groups can prepare by looking over the discussion plan to see how it will fit your group and the events of the day.
- Participants can best prepare by attending the adult education presentation or listening to it later on the Nassau Church website and by paying attention to the assignments in “Continuing the Conversation” at the end of each session plan.

If you are unable to attend a small group

- Attend the adult education presentations during the “Faith Seeking Understanding” series, or listen to the recording during the following week.
- Discuss the questions together as a family or couple.
- Gather three or four friends on Zoom to talk about “Faith Seeking Understanding”, using this guide.
- Reflect on the discussion questions as a spiritual practice or discipline.

While the book, *Faith Seeking Understanding, An Introduction to Christian Theology*, Fourth Edition, by Daniel L. Migliore is not required, you may find it helpful to read the chapters that accompany each presentation. Copies are available for purchase at the church on Sunday mornings. It is also available on Kindle.

However, and whenever, you enter into this study, bring your own questions as you grapple with this material in the presentations and the questions in this “Faith Seeking Understanding” study guide. May your faith increase as you explore a few areas from Dan Migliore’s *Faith Seeking Understanding*. Be open to the mighty power of the Holy Spirit.

Carol A. Wehrheim, October 2026

Introduction

It's October. It must be time for the Linked-in educational series at Nassau Presbyterian Church. We have covered many topics and sections of the biblical witness over these years. But there are some differences this year. With the retirement of Pastor Davis looming at the end of November and his desire to preach on texts from Romans, the weekly sermon will not be connected to Linked-in. But that leaves the lively connection between the presenters in adult education and the small groups.

This year our theme “Faith Seeking Understanding” finds its focus on selected chapters of a book, *Faith Seeking Understanding, An Introduction to Christian Theology*, Fourth Edition by Daniel L. Migliore, a beloved professor of theology at Princeton Theological Seminary and a faithful attendee in worship at Nassau Church until his death earlier this year. First published in 1991, this book was revised by him in 2023.

Four presenters will help us understand our role as theologians, each using a chapter (and maybe a bit more) from *Faith Seeking Understanding*. On October 25th, Mark Edwards, director of youth ministry at Nassau Church and lecturer in philosophy, ethics, and religion at Princeton University and The College of New Jersey, begins the series and will help us understand the task of theology (chapters 1 “The Task of Theology” and 2 “The Meaning of Revelation”). The next week, on November 1st, Tom Coogan—Nassau member, livestream operator, ruling elder, and an intrepid lay theologian—will tackle the doctrine of the Trinity found in chapter 4, “The Doctrine of Trinity”. On November 8th, Emily Dubie, who is associated with the Farminary at Princeton Theological Seminary, will take us back to Genesis 1 and the creation, including the current ecological crisis, taking us into chapter 5, “The Good Creation”. The series ends with Joyce MacKichan Walker, former minister of Christian education at Nassau Church and teacher par excellence. She will help us consider “The New Community” (chapter 12), a pertinent topic as we enter a time of considerable change in the community of Christ that gathers as Nassau Presbyterian Church.

If you are unable to be present for the programs on Sunday mornings, the recording of the adult education presentation will be available by Monday afternoon on the Nassau Church website.

If the times and places for the small groups don't fit with your schedule, don't let that stop you from listening to the adult education presentations. Use this guide to focus your own thinking on these subjects. Pray for the leaders and the small groups who are stepping into these theological arenas.

Week One

What's Theology and Who's a Theologian?

Various theologies (biblical, philosophical, historical, practical) are pursued by scholars and lay people alike. However, systematic theology is the one that will be explored in “Faith Seeking Understanding”. What, then, is systematic theology? How should we view the Bible as a part of it? What in the Christian faith can be understood and what needs simply to be taken on faith? These questions lead us to the question of who is a theologian in the first place. Answering this question is important in the Reformed tradition where we rely upon an educated and thinking clergy and laity.

Approaching the Conversation

Consider these questions, answering them with the first word or phrase that comes to mind:

- What feeling does the word *theology* evoke in you?
- Who do you think of when you hear the word *theologian*?
- When were you first aware of something called *theology*?
- What comments about the content of the presentation by Mark Edwards do you want to make as we begin?
- What questions from the presentation do you hope we can discuss?

Joining the Ongoing Conversation

Read this statement about the task of theology from Migliore's book (“A Letter to My Readers”, p. xxx):

When true to its task, theology exists to test and assist the proclamation of the good news of the gospel by engaging in fresh study of Scripture and the church's central teachings, by asking how they speak to our present existential crises, and by encouraging the practices of Christian worship and service that contribute to the building of new communities marked by justice and peace which, while never identical with the coming reign of God, may, by the grace of God, provide intimations and foretastes of it.

Consider the quote above section by section. Look for connections with the adult education presentation.

- What could it mean “to test and assist the proclamation of the good news of the gospel by engaging in fresh study of Scripture and the church’s central teachings”?
- What could it mean “by asking how they speak to our present existential crises”?
- What could it mean “and by encouraging the practice of Christian worship and service that contribute to the building of new communities”?
- What might be the hallmarks of “new communities marked by justice and peace which, while never identical with the coming reign of God, may, by the grace of God, provide intimations and foretastes of it”?

Christian faith asks questions, seeks understanding, both because God is greater than our ideas of God, and because the personal and public worlds that faith inhabits confront it with challenges and contradictions that cannot be ignored (p. 4).

Quotes like the one above and many more in Chapter 1, “The Task of Theology” emphasize the questioning nature of this task. Doing theology is not the memorization of dusty doctrines but using the biblical witness alongside theological statements, both contemporary and historical, and one’s own lived experience to seek the understanding that grows our faith.

- How does this understanding of theology and the work of the theologian prompt you to consider theology in a different light?
- Throughout this series, you will hear the words “faith seeking understanding.” How have “faith” and “understanding” been related in your life?
- When or where have you simply had faith?
- When or where have you found understanding?
- While systematic theology differs from biblical theology, the biblical witness is one of the sources for doing theology. How has your relationship with or understanding of the Bible changed over the years?

Concluding the Conversation

After wrestling with these topics alone or with others, your head may be spinning. Pause for a moment and consider these questions:

- What part of the discussion was the most startling to me and how I understand my faith?
- How does the task of theology as presented here enter into my spiritual practices?
- What word, phrase, or concept do I want to ponder during the coming week?

Continuing the Conversation

The topic for the second week of “Faith Seeking Understanding” is the Trinity. To prepare for that session, consider this question: What does the Trinity or the triune God mean to my faith and daily practice of it? Also, listen to the three sermons on the text Romans 5:1-5 by Pastor Davis preached on October 11, 18, and 25, 2026, with an ear to learning about the Trinity. If you missed hearing the sermons in person, visit nassauchurch.org. Click **Watch Now** to view the full worship services, or select **Worship → Sermon Journal** from the menu to listen to the individual sermons.

O That I Had a Thousand Voices

O that I had a thousand voices
to praise my God with thousand tongues!
My heart, which in the Lord rejoices,
would then proclaim in grateful songs
to all, wherever I might be,
what great things God has done for me!

Let every power in me implanted,
arise, keep silence now no more;
put forth the strength that God has granted!
Your noblest work is to adore!
O soul and body, join to raise
with heartfelt joy our Maker's praise!

You forest leaves so green and tender
that dance for joy in summer air;
you meadow grasses, bright and slender;
you flowers so fragrant and so fair:
you live to show God's praise alone.
Join me to make God's glory known!

All creatures that have breath and motion,
that throng the earth, the sea, the sky,
come, share with me my heart's devotion;
help me to sing God's praises high!
My utmost powers can never quite
declare the wonders of God's might!

from *Glory to God* #16 Text: Johann Mentzer, 1704; trans. The Lutheran Hymnal, 1941, alt. © 1941 Concordia Publishing House; Music: attr. Johann Balthasar König, 1738; Harmonischer Liederschatz, 1738 Reprinted with permission under ONE LICENSE #A-730100. All rights reserved.

CREATION AND PROVIDENCE

16 O That I Had a Thousand Voices

1 O that I had a thou-sand voic - es to praise my
 2 Let ev - ery power in me im - plant - ed, a - rise, keep
 3 You for - est leaves so green and ten - der that dance for
 4 All crea-tures that have breath and mo - tion, that throng the

God with thou-sand tongues! My heart, which in the Lord re -
 si - lence now no more; put forth the strength that God has
 joy in sum - mer air; you mead - ow grass - es, bright and
 earth, the sea, the sky, come, share with me my heart's de -

joic - es, would then pro-claim in grate-ful songs to all, wher -
 grant - ed! Your no - blest work is to a - dore! O soul and
 slen - der; you flowers so fra - grant and so fair: you live to
 vo - tion; help me to sing God's prais - es high! My ut - most

ev - er I might be, what great things God has done for me!
 bod - y, join to raise with heart-felt joy our Mak - er's praise!
 show God's praise a - lone. Join me to make God's glo - ry known!
 powers can nev - er quite de - clare the won - ders of God's might!

The German original of this hymn contained too many stanzas to sustain a unified theme. The four selected here place humankind in the midst of creation and form an effective song of praise to the Creator. As the tune name suggests, the music was later composed for these words.

TEXT: Johann Mentzer, 1704; trans. *The Lutheran Hymnal*, 1941, alt.
 MUSIC: Attr. Johann B. König, 1738; *Harmonischer Liederschatz*, 1738
 Text © 1941 Concordia Publishing House

O DASS ICH TAUSEND ZUNGEN HÄTTE
 9.8.9.8.8.8

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WEEK TWO

Trinity, Matter and Time

The doctrine of the Trinity is simultaneously at the foundation of Christianity and endlessly mysterious. Robert South, a 17th century Anglican worthy, said, “He that denies this fundamental article of the Christian religion may lose his soul; so he that much strives to understand it may lose his wits.” As we ponder the doctrine of the Trinity, we will walk the tightrope between heresy and insanity while examining some of the most ancient ideas about the nature of the Trinity alongside some very modern ones.

Approaching the Conversation

Consider these questions:

- What image or symbol comes to mind when you hear the word “Trinity”?
- What surprised you, mildly or perhaps with a jolt, in Tom Coogan’s presentation?
- What other comments about the content of the presentation do you want to recall?

Joining the Ongoing Conversation

In *Faith Seeking Understanding*, Professor Migliore writes that “our knowledge of God and our knowledge of ourselves go hand in hand” (p. 98).

- Taking into account your knowledge of both yourself and God, which of the alternate terms (p. 516) that he presents for the Trinity best reflect your understanding?
 - Source, Mediator, Effective Power
 - God over us, God for us, God among us
 - Creator, Redeemer, Transformer
 - Lover, Beloved, Love Itself
 - Creation, Reconciliation, Sanctification
- What about the formulation you chose appeals to you?

In the last two decades a variety of formulations for describing the Trinity, such as those above, has been proposed, often to move away from the emphasis on God portrayed as male but also in attempts to find formulations that speak more clearly to this time and place. Migliore stresses that the biblical basis for the doctrine of the Trinity must be retained:

The biblical basis of the doctrine of the Trinity “is the pervasive trinitarian pattern of the scriptural witness to God, foreshadowed in the Old Testament according to the Christian reading of it, and found more explicitly in the witness of the New Testament to the presence of the one and only God in the saving work of Jesus Christ and the renewing activity of the Holy Spirit” (p. 72).

If the talk of the triune God is not to be wild speculation, it will always find its basis and its limit in the biblical narrative of the love of God that comes to the world through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit who has poured God’s love into our hearts (Romans 5:5) [p. 73].

- How does your preferred formulation of the Trinity meet the criteria in the first paragraph above?
- Why do you think this criteria is necessary?
- For the past three weeks, the sermon text has been Romans 5:1–5. What do you recall from any of those sermons that might reference the doctrine of the Trinity?

The chapter on the Trinity ends with questions that churches should address.

- In your experience at Nassau Church, “do the personal and corporate lives of Christians give evidence of commitment
 - to the triune God, the sovereignly gracious God
 - who has come to the world in Jesus Christ
 - and continues the work of personal and world renewal and transformation by the power of the Holy Spirit” (p. 98)?

Thus far the most basic understanding of the Trinity has been attempted.

- In what ways have the presentation and discussion provided clarity to your understanding of the Trinity?
- What other questions about the Trinity do you have?
- What relationships can you imagine between the doctrine of the Trinity and your personal faith and practices?

Continuing the Conversation

Next week chapter 5 “The Good Creation” will be the background material. To prepare for this session, read Genesis 1:1–2:4a. Spend some time contemplating Genesis 1:31.

The Play of the Godhead

The play of the Godhead,
the Trinity’s dance,
embraces the earth in a sacred romance:
with God the Creator,
and Christ the true Son,
entwined with the Spirit, a web daily spun
in spangles of mystery,
the great Three-in-One.

The warm mists of summer,
cool waters that flow,
turn crystal as ice when the wintry winds blow.
The taproot that nurtures,
the shoot growing free,
the life-giving fruit, full and ripe on the tree:
more mystic and wondrous,
the great One-in-Three.

In God’s gracious image
of co-equal parts,
we gather as dancers, uniting our hearts.
Men, women, and children,
and all living things,
we join in the round of bright nature that rings
with rapture and rhythm:
creation now sings!

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The Play of the Godhead

9



1 The play of the God-head, the Trin - i - ty's dance, em-brac-es the
 2 The warm mists of sum-mer, cool wa-ters that flow, turn crys-tal as
 3 In God's gra-cious im-age of co-equal parts, we gath-er as

earth in a sa-cred ro-mance: with God the Cre-a-tor, and
 ice when the win-try winds blow. The tap-root that nur-tures, the
 danc-ers, u-nit-ing our hearts. Men, wom-en, and chil-dren, and

Christ the true Son, en-twined with the Spir-it, a web dai-ly
 shoot grow-ing free, the life-giv-ing fruit, full and ripe on the
 all liv-ing things, we join in the round of bright na-ture that

spun in span-gles of mys-tery, the great Three-in-One.
 tree: more mys-tic and won-drous, the great One-in-Three.
 rings with rap-ture and rhy-thm: cre-a-tion now sings!

This text gives life to the theological term *perichoresis*, a mutual, encompassing interaction, sometimes called "the threefold dance of the Trinity." Stanza two notes various "natural analogies" for the Trinity (steam/water/ice; root/shoot/fruit) that have been found inadequate.

TEXT: Mary Louise Bringle, 2000

MUSIC: William P. Rowan, 2000

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PERICHORESIS

11.11.6.5.11.11

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Reflections

Prayers

Week Three

The Good Creation and the Ecological Crisis

The ecological crisis is regularly in the news. But how is this ecological crisis also a spiritual and theological crisis? What attitudes and practices underlie the human exploitation of the earth, and to what extent are these inherited from Christian scripture and tradition? How might we renew and revise our ways of thinking about God, creation and creatures? What might ecological conversations look like in our own lives if we paid attention to a theology of the creation and environment?

Approaching the Conversation

What we think about our relationship with all creation is important to bring to mind before discussing God's good creation.

- What attitudes and practices about nature and/or the environment have you inherited from your communities of origin (family, church, school)?
- What from Emily Dubie's presentation do you want to remember?

Joining the Ongoing Conversation

In *Faith Seeking Understanding*, Migliore provides five "deep-seated attitudes and practices that underlie this ecological crisis" (p. 102):

1. Anthropocentrism, which is "a view of the world as existing primarily to serve the needs and desires of humankind" (p. 102)
2. Power as Dominion, which assumes that the goal of science is "the subjection of nature to human will rather than corroborating with nature for the common welfare of humankind and other creatures" (p. 103)
3. Denial of Interconnectedness, which is the lack of "a consciousness of the delicate web of life and a respect for the existence and value of other creatures" (p. 103)
4. Assumption of Limitless Resources, when the assumption is that "modern science and technology will always be there to provide alternative resources" (p. 104)

5. Unchecked Consumerism, when “the inhabitants of some countries recklessly consume nonrenewable resources of the earth” and “millions of others lack even the basic necessities” (p. 104)

Consider:

- How have some of these ideas led to the ecological crisis in our world today?
- How have Christian doctrine and practices reinforced any of the attitudes?

In the imagining of a new doctrine of creation, Migliore posits five themes to be considered:

1. By calling God “creator” and everything that constitutes the world “creatures”, Christian faith affirms the *radical otherness, transcendence, and lordship of God*” (p. 108).
2. *...the world as a whole and all beings individually are radically dependent on God*” (p. 109).
3. *...in all its contingency, finitude, and limitation, creation is good* (which is not to say that it is perfect (p. 110). The inanimate as well as the animate world is God’s creation and has its place within God’s purposes and as such is to be honored (p. 111).
4. A fourth theme of the doctrine of creation is the *coexistence and interdependence of all created beings*....In other words, creaturehood means radical coexistence, mutual interdependence, rather than solitary or monarchic existence (p. 112).
5. *God the creator has a purpose and...the world God created is dynamic and purposeful*....It is an affirmation of faith, not an empirical observation (p. 113).

After reviewing these themes, consider:

- How would any or all of these themes counter the attitudes described earlier?
- Are there other themes that you would consider in rethinking the doctrine of creation?

While there are many other ideas to consider in defining a new doctrine of creation, an interesting one in this chapter is what Migliore calls a model of “creative play” (p. 119). “First, true play is always free and uncoerced activity....Second, there is free self-limitation in all artistic activity....Third, when artists express themselves, they bring forth something truly different from themselves, yet with their own image stamped upon it” (p. 120).

- What does “creative play” bring to the doctrine of creation?
- How does this idea add to your previous understanding of God the creator?

As to why creative play may be missing, Migliore writes: "...it may be due to theology's regrettable disregard of the significance of the Sabbath day of rest in the first creation narrative in Genesis. God's creativity comes to its conclusion in this story not in the making of humanity but in the rest, celebration, and festivity of the Sabbath. As the completion and crown of creation, the Sabbath is a reminder of the magisterial creativity of God the creator and a foretaste of the joy, freedom, and peace in community for which this world was created" (p. 121).

- How does making the Sabbath the completion of creation change your interpretation of the Genesis text?
- Where have you seen or do you see "a foretaste of the joy, freedom, and peace in community"?
- How might viewing creation in this way alter your daily habits?

Continuing the Conversation

Next week, the final week of "Faith Seeking Understanding", will center on "The New Community," chapter 12 in *Faith Seeking Understanding*. During this week, think about how you have experienced significant community in the church, Nassau or any other Christian group.

God, You Spin the Whirling Planets

God, you spin the whirling planets,
fill the seas and spread the plain,
mold the mountains, fashion blossoms,
call forth sunshine, wind, and rain.
We, created in your image,
would a true reflection be
of your justice, grace, and mercy
and the truth that makes us free.

You have called us to be faithful
in our life and ministry.
We respond in grateful worship
joined in one community.
When we blur your gracious image,
focus us and make us whole.
Healed and strengthened as your people,
we move onward toward your goal.

God, your word is still creating,
calling us to life made new.
Now reveal to us fresh vistas
where there's work to dare and do.
Keep us clear of all distortion.
Polish us with loving care.
Thus, new creatures in your image,
we'll proclaim Christ everywhere.

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CREATION AND PROVIDENCE

God, You Spin the Whirling Planets 23

Capo 1: (D) (G) (D) (G) (A) (D) (G)
 E^b A^b E^b A^b B^b E^b A^b

1 God, you spin the whirl-ing plan-ets, fill the seas and
 2 You have called us to be faith-ful in our life and
 3 God, your word is still cre-at-ing, call-ing us to

(D) (A) (D) (Bm) (G) (D) (G) (A) (D)
 E^b B^b E^b Cm A^b E^b A^b B^b E^b

spread the plain, mold the moun-tains, fash-ion blos-soms, call forth
 min-is-try. We re-pond in grate-ful wor-ship joined in
 life made new. Now re-veal to us fresh vis-tas where there's

(G) (D) (A) (D) (G) (D) (A)
 A^b E^b B^b E^b A^b E^b B^b

sun-shine, wind, and rain. We, cre-at-ed in your im-age,
 one com-mu-ni-ty. When we blur your gra-cious im-age,
 work to dare and do. Keep us clear of all dis-tor-tion.

(D) (Bm) (F#m) (G) (A) (D) (G)
 E^b Cm Gm A^b B^b E^b A^b

would a true re-flec-tion be of your jus-tice,
 fo-cus us and make us whole. Healed and strength-ened
 Pol-ish us with lov-ing care. Thus, new crea-tures

(D) (G) (A) (D) (G) (Em) (D) (A) (D)
 E^b A^b B^b E^b A^b Fm E^b B^b E^b

grace, and mer-cy and the truth that makes us free.
 as your peo-ple, we move on-ward toward your goal.
 in your im-age, we'll pro-claim Christ ev-ery-where.

This text was written for the 1979 National Meeting of United Presbyterian Women, whose theme, "In the Image of God," is variously considered here as reflection, focus, distortion, and polishing for clarity. The words are well set to an anonymous 19th-century American tune.

TEXT: Jane Parker Huber, 1978
 MUSIC: American melody, 1830; harm. Richard Proulx, 1986
 Text © 1980 Jane Parker Huber (admin. Westminster John Knox Press)
 Music Harm. © 1986 GIA Publications, Inc.

PLEADING SAVIOR
 8.7.8.7.D
 (alternate harmonization, 717)
 (alternate tune: AUSTRIAN HYMN)

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Week Four

The New Community Here and Now

Nassau Church is in the midst of a time of significant change. In chapter 12, “The New Community,” Migliore writes, “...humanity is created and redeemed by God for just, loving, and peaceful communion that participates in and reflects the divine life” (p. 309). This session will explore what that looks like in our time and context, and how we might continue to seek to embody it with and for one another, marching in the light of God. What an appropriate topic to conclude “Faith Seeking Understanding” as we prepare to celebrate the ministry of the Rev. Dr. David A. Davis!

Approaching the Conversation

For many people, church--no matter the congregation size, denomination, ministries or programs—are thought of as family, as home.

- What characteristics of church might make it feel like home?
- For you, what sets the church apart from other organizations?
- What seemed especially relevant from Joyce MacKichan Walker’s presentation?

Joining the Ongoing Conversation

Migliore begins chapter 12 “The New Community” by stating strongly that a doctrine of ecclesiology, the church, has little to do with “the politics of organization and management” (p. 294). He then writes: “While flawed and always in need of reform and renewal, the church is nonetheless the real beginning of God’s new and inclusive community of liberated creatures reconciled to God, living in peace with each other, and called to the service of God’s coming kingdom” (p. 295).

- Given this statement about the church, which can be found in various wordings in this chapter, how might it help you think about these criticisms of the church:
 - The strong streak of individualism in our culture and God’s new and inclusive community
 - The bureaucratic organization of the church and called to service of God’s coming kingdom

- The actual practice of the church and the definition above
- The many denominations and factions of Christianity and living in peace with each other (See also Ephesians 4:4-6 for the basis of our unity.)
- Other criticisms of the church that you have heard

When Migliore considers these criticisms, he also sees that the nugget of truth and reality in them creates a problem as we ponder the new community. “Missing in the individualized, privatized, bureaucratic, and cosmetic forms of Christianity today is any real understanding of the interconnectedness of life that is expressed in all the basic doctrines and symbols of classical Christian faith” (p. 297).

- What do you recall about the interconnectedness in life from the presentations and discussion on the doctrine of the Trinity and of creation?
- What other theological doctrines or concepts would center on this interconnectedness?
- Every time we proclaim our faith using the Apostles’ Creed we say, “I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints...” What does “the communion of saints” mean to you? Name a time when you witnessed the church being a “communion of saints” for you or for others.

The discussion of interconnectedness or communion is a call to the church to live out this interconnectedness, a call that includes all of God’s creation. Another call stands alongside it: the call to mission. Migliore identifies four features of the mission activity to which the church is called (p. 314):

1. First, it will be missional activity that fosters just and inclusive community.
2. Second, it will be missional activity that expects and welcomes the ministerial gifts of all its members to be used for the well-being and peace of the whole.
3. Third, the church’s missional activity will be motivated by thanksgiving and joy rather than by fear or a sense of burdensome obligation.
4. Finally, in its missional activity the church will pray for, recognize, and welcome the presence of the Spirit in all areas of human activity—in the sciences as well as the arts, in politics as well as religion, in recreation as well as daily work—where life and peace are enhanced, and the common good is enlarged.

These features defining the call to mission are to be examined both in our personal or individual call to mission as well as the call to the church, the community, the body of Christ.

- What gifts for ministry do you see in yourself? Sometimes others see them more clearly in us than we do. Don't hesitate to ask someone to think about this with you.
- How do you see these features present in the missional activity of Nassau Church?
- Where do you see places for Nassau Church to increase the marks of these features?

Continuing the Conversation

Spend a few minutes looking at the art on the cover of this study guide. Created by the Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity using acrylic paint with gold leaf on canvas, it is titled "Light Wave".

- How do the colors, especially the gold leaf, touch on the topics and conversation during "Faith Seeking Understanding"?
- How does the movement and depth of the painting alert you to the reformulation and transformation in a "reformed and always in need of being reformed" theology?

In Christ Called to Baptize

In Christ called to baptize, we witness to grace
and gather a people from each land and race.
In deep, flowing waters, we share in Christ's death,
then, rising to new life, give thanks with each breath.

In Christ called to banquet, one table we share,
a haven of welcome, a circle of care.
Although we are many, we share in one bread.
One cup of thanksgiving proclaims Christ, our head.

In Christ called to witness, by grace we will preach
the life-giving gospel; God's love we will teach.
By grace may our living give proof to our praise
in costly compassion reflecting Christ's ways.

Unite us, anoint us, O Spirit of love,
for you are within us, around us, above.
Equip us for service with gifts you bestow.
In Christ is our calling. In Christ may we grow.

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THE CHURCH

In Christ Called to Baptize 297

1 In Christ called to bap - tize, we wit - ness to grace
 2 In Christ called to ban - quet, one ta - ble we share,
 3 In Christ called to wit - ness, by grace we will preach
 4 U - nite us, a - noint us, O Spir - it of love,

and gath - er a peo - ple from each land and race.
 a ha - ven of wel - come, a cir - cle of care.
 the life - giv - ing gos - pel; God's love we will teach.
 for you are with - in us, a - round us, a - bove.

In deep, flow - ing wa - ters, we share in Christ's death,
 Al - though we are man - y, we share in one bread.
 By grace may our liv - ing give proof to our praise
 E - quip us for ser - vice with gifts you be - stow.

then, ris - ing to new life, give thanks with each breath.
 One cup of thanks - giv - ing pro - claims Christ, our head.
 in cost - ly com - pas - sion re - flect - ing Christ's ways.
 In Christ is our call - ing. In Christ may we grow.

Written for use at the 1997 meeting of the Lutheran World Federation, this text about Christian vocation and ministry organizes the first three stanzas around verbs: baptize, banquet, witness. The final stanza is a prayer for the Spirit's gifts to empower all these callings.

TEXT: Ruth Duck, 1995
 MUSIC: Welsh folk melody; adapt. in *Caniadau y Cyssegr*, 1839
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Notes for Small Group Leaders

While the goal of our small groups is to increase knowledge about the church and the Bible, the primary goal is to deepen relationships among the participants as each one grows in relationship with God and Jesus and as Christ's disciple, sustained by the Holy Spirit.

Review the group covenant on the back page of this study guide together at your first gathering. It is important that each one is clear about the guidelines that make for a successful small group experience. Invite the participants to add to the covenant.

A simple process for each week, which you will adapt according to your group's desires and available time, could be:

- Ask the opening question (see below).
- Prayer by the leader or a participant.
- Read and discuss the questions in "Approaching the Conversation."
- Read and discuss the questions in "Joining the Ongoing Conversation."
- Encourage the participants to follow the directions in "Continuing the Conversation."
- Save at least five minutes to ask for prayer concerns and to pray together.

Opening Questions

To encourage the participants to become better acquainted, especially if someone is new, invite everyone to answer a question at the beginning of each gathering. This moment also helps the group make the transition from what has been uppermost in their minds to enter into the small group discussion. The questions below are suggestions; feel free to come up with your own. Only you know the comfort level of your group and whether they are acquainted or not.

- **Week One:** Complete this sentence: God is.... Or What is an image of God from your childhood?
- **Week Two:** When were you first aware of the Trinity? Or What about the autumn season informs your understanding of God?

- **Week Three:** Recall a time when you experienced God outdoors. What was it like? How has it affected your understanding of God? Or What in creation do you find particularly inspiring?
- **Week Four:** From your experience, what two adjectives best describe the church in your experience? Or Who do or have you known whom you think of as a saint of the church?

Give the group a moment to think about the question. You can set an example of the length of the answer by going first. Anyone may choose not to answer, but encourage each one to speak.

Closing Prayers

You are encouraged to close the time together with prayer. Invite participants to offer joys or concerns during a time of prayer. You or a group member you have invited in advance can pray.

If you wish to use them, a hymn text is suggested for each week. They can be used to begin the session, to mark “Entering into the Conversation” or to conclude the session.

Leaders have often commented about how much they grew in faith by preparing for and leading the small groups. May you find this to be true for you and remember that the Spirit of God will be present in and among you. May you and each member of your small group come to new understandings of these important theological issues and how they relate to your call as a disciple of Jesus Christ. **Thank you for being a small group leader.**

Group Covenant

- What happens in the group stays in the group. To build and maintain an atmosphere of trust, confidentiality is essential.
- Speak and make space for others to speak. Each voice is important. If you are usually quiet, make an effort to offer your thoughts. If you speak out easily, hold back for others to speak or invite someone who hasn't spoken to speak.
- Physically, be present at each gathering rather than treating attendance as just another option.
- Mentally, listen to others and participate.
- Focus on the ideas, not the person. If you disagree with the speaker, don't belittle the person.
- Speak from your own awareness. When offering an opinion, claim it as your opinion rather than make generalizations.
- Everyone in the group is a learner. In a small group, there are no experts. Learning is a lifelong process.