

Module 4 Workshop Guide

What Does Economic Sexism Look Like, and How Can we Seek Equity for All?

Pages 62-74 in Faith, Sexism, Justice: Conversations Toward a Social Statement

<http://www.elca.org/womenandjustice>

Opening Prayer – *See Suggested Prayers by Pastor Connie Winter-Eulberg on the ELCA Sierra Pacific Synod website or see prayers on pages 22-23 of the study guide.*

Prayer: Fountain of wisdom, we know that women are strong and hard workers. It is frustrating and degrading that women make less money than a man at the same job. We cannot wait for decades in the future for women to earn a living wage. Our children are without food, shelter, clean water and health care now. Give us insight into how we can change our institutions and government that are full of racism and sexism. How long must we wait God? AMEN (Pastor Connie Winter-Eulberg, 2017)

Scripture Reading

God has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8)

I. WHAT ARE THE BASICS THAT WE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT SEX AND GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN THE WORKPLACE AND BROADER ECONOMY? (15 MINUTES)

“Sex discrimination involves treating someone ... unfavorably because of that person’s sex Sex discrimination also can involve treating someone less favorably because of his or her connection with an organization or group that is generally associated with people of a certain sex. Discrimination against an individual because of gender identity, including transgender status, or because of sexual orientation is discrimination because of sex in violation of Title VII.”¹

****(Note to leaders: Read the following three quiz questions out loud and ask people what they think are the correct answers.)***

1. How much income will an individual caregiver lose over the course of their lifetime due to lost wages and benefits? a. \$274,000.00 b. \$164,000.00 c. \$72,000.00 d. \$325,000.00
2. What percentage of minimum-wage earners are women? a. 66% b. 50% c. 35% d. 46%
3. What percentage of transgender individuals reported an adverse job outcome (being fired or denied a promotion) because of being transgender? a. 25% b. 35% c.18% d. 47%

The correct answers are:

1. Correct answer is a. \$274,000.00.¹ Answer d. is also correct if you count lost pension.
2. Correct answer is a. 66%²
3. Correct answer is d. 47%³

“In total, the impact of caregiving on the individual female caregiver in terms of lost wages and Social Security benefits over her lifetime equals\$274,044 ... as well as an estimated \$50,000 in lost pension income.”⁴

A survey of transgender individuals reports, “Forty-seven percent said they had experienced an adverse job outcome, such as being fired, not hired or denied a promotion because of being transgender/gender non-conforming.”⁵

“Median weekly earnings for women who usually worked full time in 2012 were 82.8 percent of what their male counterparts earned.”⁶

STATISTIC - “Women spend about four hours a day on unpaid work, while men spend about two hours and a half.” 7

(Divide into small groups, read one of these stories and discuss. You will find a handout for this exercise on the Synod website.)

Geri’s story: An underemployed and underpaid caregiver

I am 52 years old, and I work 30 hours a week at a large retail store. I have a 10-year-old daughter. A year ago my mother fell and sustained an injury that prevented her from caring for herself, so I cut my hours to part-time to help her. When I worked full-time, I was paid an hourly wage that covered our family expenses. I earned less than my male co-workers, but I did get health insurance for myself and my daughter. I lost our health insurance when I changed to part-time work.

My brother helps our mother too. But he doesn’t think cooking and cleaning are a man’s work. So I spend more time caring for my mom than my brother does. I devote about 15 hours a week to helping my mom. If I could get compensated – even a little – for assisting my mother, it would help me feel like I wasn’t so on the edge financially. And I could put some money away for my daughter’s education.

Reflect on Geri’s story: What assumptions about men, women and work do you hear in Geri’s story? What is your reaction to her brother’s belief that some duties are “women’s work,” and that women are better caregivers than men? How might your faith lead you to be a neighbor and act for justice for Geri?

Meg’s story: Gender and sex discrimination at work

I am 29 years old, and I work full-time at a computer consulting company that has about 40 full-time employees. I get along with most of my co-workers, and I enjoy the technical part of my work. But there is one thing I don’t like about my job. The company is really family centered. And by ‘family’ the owners mean a straight, married, heterosexual family with children. We have family-friendly parties at Christmas and the Fourth of July. But my partner, Amy, isn’t welcome.

She attended the Christmas party once, and some of the people I worked with practically refused to talk with her. They don't view my family as the right kind of family. I've stopped attending these "family" parties.

This may hurt me professionally. My employers also host family nights at sporting events. Two years ago, I did not attend a family night at a baseball game. I did not want to go without Amy, and she did not want to deal with my co-workers. Within 10 days, another employee from my division was promoted even though she has much less experience and technical skills than I do. She attended the baseball game with her family. I can't help but wonder if part of the reason that she got promoted instead of me is that she is straight, married and has kids.

Reflect on Meg's story: Where did you sense gender discrimination in Meg's story? How did Meg feel about the way Amy was treated by Meg's co-workers? If you were Meg's co-worker, what could you do to be a neighbor to Meg and support her at work?

What does justice look like? "Caring, serving, keeping, loving and living by wisdom – these translate into justice in political, economic, social and environmental relationships. Justice—in these relations means honoring the integrity of creation and striving for fairness in the human family. It is in hope of God's promised fulfillment that we hear the call to justice; it is in hope that we take action." (From the ELCA social statement *Caring for Creation*)⁹

II. HOW ARE SEXISM AND GENDER AND SEX DISCRIMINATION EXPRESSIONS OF PERSONAL AND SOCIAL SIN? (10 MINUTES)

**(Divide your group into small groups. The groups read the following paragraphs aloud and discuss one of the reflection questions.)*

In our current economic context, Christians must speak up and call sexism and gender and sex discrimination what they are – sin. While sin occurs—in our relationship with God, it also arises in creation when we sin against one another. Sexism and gender and sex discrimination are expressions of personal sin. When we think that others are of less value than we are because of their sex or gender, or when we believe that others do not bear God's image in the same way because of their gender identity or sexual orientation, we sin. We sin against the individual – who is the gift. And we sin against God – who is the giver.

In addition, sexism and gender and sex discrimination are also social or structural sin. This occurs when the very structures, rules, and policies of companies, institutions and communities discriminate against groups of people and individuals. Unfortunately, we often knowingly and unknowingly participate in these sinful structures. For example, we may work for, shop at, or invest in companies and institutions that have sexist or discriminatory policies and labor practices. In addition, our individual sexist beliefs may stop us from seeing structural sins.

The leadership gap and the wage gap between men and women is widely documented. But what about in the church? Perhaps sexist personal beliefs about women, work, men and leadership are supporting structural policies about education, employment and compensation that curtail economic well-being and make it difficult for women to assume leadership positions in the ELCA.

Reflection questions on the sins of sexism and gender discrimination

1. **Who does the household chores where you live?** Who does which chores in your household? Are household tasks based on any sex or gender stereotypes? Do you want to make any changes to the way these tasks are assigned? “American girls spend about two hours on chores a week more than boys, and are 15 percent less likely to be paid for them.”¹⁵
2. **Think about where you work.** What percentage of the employees at your work are male or female? Is there an equal balance of men and women in leadership? What do you notice about how individuals are treated in terms of gender and sex at your workplace? How are LGBTQ individuals treated where you work?
3. **Consider clergy inequity.** Why do you think that women who are clergy of all denominations still earn so much less than men who are clergy? Why did the ELCA have only nine bishops who are women out of a total of sixty-five in 2015? Where do you see personal or structural sin affecting clergy compensation or leadership equity?

But Genesis 1 offers the word that everyone bears the image of God

equally. Today, many biblical scholars and theologians suggest that being created in God's image means that (1) humans are co-creative creatures with God. And being in God's image also means that (2) as persons— like the persons of the Trinity – we are called to be in relationship with God, others and creation. As co-creative creatures we are called to use our talents and gifts to serve the neighbor in God's good world. Because all persons are in God's image and are of equal value, discriminating against someone (or a group) based on their race, sex, nationality, gender, religion, orientation, class or embodiment is sinful and unjust. When we strive for economic justice, and when we do this work in and with the Holy Spirit, we live into the biblical promise that everyone is made in God's image.

We are called to create welcoming communities where all of God's children are treated equitably.

There are several themes in the New Testament that can support us as we work for economic and workplace justice. If we employ a neighbor-justice reading, we can see two closely related promises that empower our work for economic equity. The first is Jesus' practice of expansive welcome, and the second is Paul's teachings about baptism.

Many times in his ministry, Jesus refused to treat people differently because of their national identity, embodiment, family background or sex and gender. He spoke with and ministered to Romans, Samaritans and to those who were sick. In one text, Jesus even refused to distinguish between his biological family and his followers. He said, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it" (Luke 8:21- 22). Empowered by the Holy Spirit we can follow Jesus and set aside cultural stereotypes about sex, gender, race, nationality, etc. And we can work toward justice for all by practicing Jesus' expansive welcome in our vocations, faith-families and places of employment.

"Median weekly earnings for women who usually worked full time in 2012 were 82.8 percent of what their male counterparts earned."¹⁵

As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ

Jesus. (Galatians 3: 27-28)

The second biblical resource that empowers us is the promise that through our baptism God has united us. Baptism into the body of Christ creates a unity that makes the distinctions of sex, economic class, status and nationality less important than each person's identity in Jesus Christ. God has made us each as we are, and Christ has made us one. Culturally determined stereotypes about women/men, poor/rich, resident/immigrant, slave/free, straight/queer or able-bodied/disabled must be rejected. This baptismal impartiality – like Jesus' expansive welcome – enlivens a radical vision of a social and economic community based on equity.

Statistics

“New national data reveals that women clergy earn 76 cents for each dollar earned by male clergy.”¹⁰

Within the ELCA, women clergy on average earn 86 cents for each dollar earned by male clergy.¹¹

“If the pace of change in the annual-earnings ratio continues at the same rate as it has since 1960, it will take another 45 years, until 2059, for men and women to reach parity.”¹⁴

The gender pay gap: A recent report shows that – compared to what a white, male worker earns

– Hispanic women earn 54 percent, African American women earn 64 percent, American Indian women earn 59 percent and Asian American women earn 90 percent. ¹²

“In 2009 ... women one year out of college who were working full time were paid, on average, just 82 percent of what their male peers were paid.”¹³

IV. HOW CAN LUTHERAN TEACHINGS ABOUT VOCATION HELP US ADVOCATE FOR JUSTICE IN OUR COMMON ECONOMIC LIFE? (5

MINUTES)

**(Note to leaders: Ask volunteers to read the following paragraphs aloud. If you have time, discuss the reflection questions on vocations in pairs.)*

As Lutheran Christians, we can draw on Martin Luther's teachings about vocation as a way of valuing and respecting each person's work. Luther taught that every person is called to serve God and the neighbor in creation. Lutheran theology teaches that almost any work, paid or unpaid, can be understood as a vocation, whether one is baking or banking, planting or parenting. Furthermore, we have several vocations at the same time (student or worker, family-member, citizen, volunteer, etc.). It is also important to celebrate and support those whose vocations call them to work that is unpaid but nevertheless is a vital contribution to community and neighbor.

So when we think about the difficult realities of sexism and gender and sex discrimination, we can argue that every person's work should be respected. Work can be an expression of an individual's creativity and vocation, and everyone should be equitably paid. Because there are many phases in each person's vocation and life journey, we should also honor the callings of those who are in situations (unemployed, underemployed, retired, etc.) in which they are not compensated for their work.

Reflection questions on vocation: (If you have time.)

1. Ask people to pair off and discuss what they view as their gifts or talents and how they use these gifts in the world to serve the neighbor.
2. Discuss how you would feel if someone in authority said you could not pursue your vocation (or your career) because of the assumptions that they made about you as an individual or as a member of a particular group.

Ending Prayer:

Guardian of our lives, we are filled with gratitude for the people gathered here who listen, share, and teach us. This conversation has brought up so many of our emotions. We know that you are by our sides to comfort and guide us. Help us to reach out and get help and

support when we need it and help us to listen and lift up others who are affected by sexism and injustice. Thank you God for blessing our time together. AMEN (Connie Winter-Eulberg, 2017)

****Have participants fill out the RESPONSE FORMS for Module 4. An abbreviated version of the response form is on the Sierra Pacific Synod website.**

Collect them, and send to ELCA in Chicago.

Questions? Contact

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Sierra Pacific Synod of the ELCA Women and Justice Process Builders