



**A STABLE LAMP
IS LIGHTED**
Advent Study Guide



ELCA World Hunger

All of us at ELCA World Hunger bring you warm Advent greetings!

We are thrilled to invite you and your community to learn together this Advent with our new, short video documentary “Intersections: Justice Ministry With ELCA Partners.” The film is designed to introduce people concerned about poverty — people such as you — to some of its overlapping causes, through stories told by ELCA World Hunger companion ministries that are supported by your generosity.

This is a three-session study. Each session focuses on one segment of the video, following a different ELCA partner as it fights hunger at its roots. We welcome you to gather family, neighbors and church members to join in, but you can use the study on your own too. All sessions include:

- A biblical passage appropriate to Advent and the respective video segment.
- A short introduction to the “Intersections” clip and reflection theme.
- Questions for reflection and discussion. We recommend that you prepare by reading the biblical passage, introduction and questions before watching the clip.
- Resources for action and further learning. Let your learning inspire ministry with your community!

The welcoming space you create for reflection will also deepen your discussion. In the spirit of the season and our ELCA World Hunger Advent theme, “A Stable Lamp Is Lighted,” we invite you to make your study environment more hospitable. Share food, welcome crafts and warm things, and meet in a place where people feel comfortable. This study offers you a chance to rest, learn and grow together before going into the world to do God’s hard gospel work of loving the neighbor.

Finally, we want to recognize the gifts of our church’s partners in creating this video. We had production support in Cambodia from Ashlyn Rhyne and Phourn Yu. The ELCA’s own Brett Nelson led shooting on the ground in Mexico City. At [Hephatha Lutheran Church, Delaney Doersch](#) captured the interviews and B-roll footage. [Cetera Jacobs](#) shot Angela Galbraith’s presentation at [the Dwelling](#) in Winston-Salem, N.C. And our producer and editor, [Mikayla Irle](#), put it all together.

Blessings to your hearth and home this Advent season,

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P.S. All resources will be linked on our landing page, [ELCA.org/WHAdvent](https://www.elca.org/WHAdvent).

SESSION ONE

How Do ELCA World Hunger Partnerships Work?

Theme Verse: Isaiah 2:1-5

DISCUSSION

Isaiah 2:1-5 is often (and rightly) understood as a call to end violent conflict, but it also establishes a different vision of human society. This is highlighted by the words “law,” “judgment” and “nations,” all ways in which humans think about civil society. In other words, the writer of Isaiah is calling us to think about how we order ourselves in community.

ELCA World Hunger does not impose our values on other people, especially people experiencing intense economic hardship. Instead we walk alongside people with whom we have relationships, supporting communities through mutual partnerships (usually in the global Lutheran church) and enabling their visions of a just world to flourish. Lutheran Hope Cambodia Organization (LHCO), introduced in the first segment of the video, is one such partner.

As you watch the clip from “Intersections,” consider how your own community has chosen to prioritize various values and lifestyles. Also consider how the communities highlighted in the video have chosen to develop their own cooperatives.

1. The success of LHCO and its cooperatives across Cambodia is driven by the organization’s genuine relationship with its communities and desire to see them thrive. How did you see that commitment to mutual community growth play out in this clip?
2. Through the ELCA’s accompaniment model of justice ministry, we hope to learn from our partners about the root causes of poverty, especially as these causes appear in their contexts. What is one thing you learned from the Cambodian farmers interviewed?
3. The agricultural cooperatives supported by LHCO develop communities by giving them knowledge and supplies. The communities themselves are responsible for determining their development priorities.

- a. What development priorities did the community featured here identify?
- b. What are the development priorities of your community — good or bad?

Recommended Resources for Action and Learning

- To learn more about the filming of this segment and the work of LHCO, see our interview with Ashlyn Rhyne, an alum of Young Adults in Global Mission, on the [ELCA World Hunger blog](#). Rhyne worked closely with LHCO for a year and supported the development of “Intersections.”
- LHCO’s story is one of many throughout the Lutheran church’s global community. We invite you to recruit an intergenerational community of learners to hear and share these stories with our [ELCA World Hunger VBS resources](#).
- ELCA World Hunger’s partnerships are one way our church does God’s work of justice and mercy in the world — locally and globally — as a church. When you and your congregation give to ELCA World Hunger, you participate with millions of other Lutherans in our shared vision for what our world can be. Throughout the season, consider joining this ministry alongside your community by visiting [ELCA.org/WHAdvent](#).

SESSION TWO

What Is Intersectional Justice?

Theme Verse: Matthew 3:1-11

Discussion

Today’s clip from “Intersections” explores how various types of injustice overlap. When confronting an issue, we may have trouble disentangling the many injustices at play. Taking the time to reflect on such entanglements can be more challenging when we feel the urgency proclaimed by John the Baptizer in Matthew 3:1-11: God’s “wrath” is imminent, our roots are about to be cut, and Jesus’ “winnowing fork is in his hand.”

The work of gospel justice is regularly pulled back and forth between two facets of the same issue: we are called to listen with genuine care to our neighbors’ stories of suffering while also recognizing that they needed justice even before they experienced pain.

The present-day story shows Hephatha Lutheran Church in Milwaukee ministering at the intersection of race-based poverty and incarceration, environmental harm and housing insecurity. Hephatha's ministry also intersects with the patience of a congregation embedded in its community for good and that same community's demand for life and dignity.

1. When you are called to repent for the inequities in which you participate, how do you feel? How do you want to respond to that feeling?
2. How does Hephatha's story embody the tension between patient love for one's community and the urgency to do justice?
3. Where do you see injustices overlapping in this story, and how do you see the people of Hephatha talking about those overlapping injustices?
4. The term "advocacy" is used frequently by the storytellers in this clip. How do they understand that term?
5. What would your community (defined however you like) identify as an injustice it faces?
6. The people of Hephatha used their power, found in their collective voice, their network and their storytelling. What power does your community have that might enable it to make change?

Recommended Resources for Action and Learning

- Are you interested in learning how to unite your community to effect change? Check out the ELCA's [Organizing for Mission Network](#) and the organizing trainings it offers.
- The ELCA's advocacy ministry is active and powerful, and you can be part of it. Here are some ways to join:
 - Learn how to advocate on issues with the ELCA in our resource "[Advocacy 101 for Young Adults.](#)" It's not just for young adults!
 - Visit the [ELCA Advocacy Action Center](#) for ways to take action right now.
- Are you interested in learning more about your community? We recommend two resources in particular:
 - The "[Backpack Buddies](#)" guide gives you and your neighbors an entry point to do justice in your community.
 - The "[Know Your Neighborhood](#)" guide gives you tools to learn more about food insecurity and accessing food and housing in your community. This is another way for learning to activate your people.

SESSION THREE

Root Causes of Poverty

Theme Verse: Psalm 146:5-10

Discussion

Psalm 146 sets the bar for God's people by laying out precisely what God desires for God's eternal reign: justice for "the oppressed," "the hungry," "prisoners," those who are "blind" and "bowed down," "strangers," "the orphan" and "the widow." It reminds us not only who needs justice but also that their justice will come alongside a new reign that will last forever.

The imagery of an eternal reign calls us to recognize that when the oppressed are lifted up, all the forces holding them down will be reversed. Those structures are not named here, so we look to our Lutheran faith to fill in the gaps, to provide a bridge between the world's oppression and God's just future.

In that gap, we find intersectional justice ministry: ministry that addresses **root causes**, that effects lasting change, invoked by a promise that God will "reign forever." Providing relief to folks in immediate need is critical because that can move them into situations where they can change their life conditions. But meeting immediate needs is not a sustainable model of justice ministry, because (1) people need dependable, long-term solutions to their challenges, and (2) injustice perpetuates unjust conditions in the world.

As you watch this final clip from "Intersections," bear in mind that its stories arise from **patterns** of injustice: people are forced to migrate because of gender inequity; they leave home because their colonized countries lack the work opportunities of wealthier — and whiter — countries; climate change is making life more precarious and unaffordable in places where disasters are becoming more common.

1. Challenge yourself to identify "root causes" of hunger and poverty when you watch this clip. A "root cause" forces many people to live without basic needs, regardless of their lifestyle; it lies outside their control.
 - a. List three or more root causes of migration that are evident in this clip.
 - b. Compare your list with those of others in your group. Do the lists share any causes in common?
 - c. What root causes, especially those your group noted in common, could you begin confronting in your community?

2. Recall the MERGE justice categories (migrant justice, economic justice, racial justice, gender justice and environmental justice) from the previous session. How do some of these overlap in the stories recounted in this clip?
3. Immigration is a charged issue right now. Take time to talk about it.
 - a. Discuss with your group how this clip makes you **feel**. Make space for all people to speak freely and without interruption.
 - b. Next, take a few minutes to write briefly about what **causes** you to feel this way. Here are some prompts to help you reflect:
 - i. What values do you hold that these stories addressed? Maybe one of the people portrayed crossed an ethical line or excited you otherwise.
 - ii. Were your preconceptions challenged by the stories you heard?
 - iii. Do you have a story about migration, either your own or that of someone you know?
 - c. What feelings were expressed by those telling their own migration stories? How do you relate to those feelings?

Recommended Resources for Action and Learning

- ELCA AMMPARO (Accompanying Migrants with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities) has created a number of resources to help people in faith communities view migration as something experienced by God's children and as an issue with which citizens all over the world must wrestle.
- "[The Migrant Journey](#)." This guide educates participants about the factors driving people to flee their homes and about the obstacles they face.
- "[Words Create Worlds](#)." This guide explores the power of language to shape perceptions on migration and offers tips for analyzing words and their potential impact.
- The partners and ministries you have learned about this Advent are part of a global church we share. Your Advent generosity through ELCA World Hunger is one way we can continue to accompany communities near and far. With the gifts you have collected throughout this season, consider a donation to ELCA World Hunger.

A stable lamp is lighted
whose glow shall wake the sky;
the stars shall bend their voices,
and every stone shall cry.



ELCA World Hunger

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