

Lutheran Episcopal Advocacy Ministry of New Jersey
Weekly Witness | January 24, 2018

In the story of Jesus teaching in the synagogue from Mark's gospel this Sunday, we hear him directly rebuke the unclean spirit in a man. Those gathered are amazed at how Jesus was able to speak directly; he changes how teaching the faith happens. Throughout the gospels, we hear Jesus teach by drawing on the common life experiences of the people he met rather than derivatively by interpreting scripture.

By walking alongside common people, addressing their health concerns, and teaching, Jesus shifted the power base of knowledge away from the experts (i.e., scribes). By speaking in a language that anyone can understand, addressing ordinary experiences Jesus's actions confirms how God intervenes in ordinary life.

It was a different way of doing theology, it democratized the process. This was part of Martin Luther's understanding of the power of the Gospel -- God shakes up power structures and sets people free through the use of common experiences, common elements and common people like you and me.

How do we use our experiences of God in ordinary life to acclaim the power of God active in our communities? When we accompany others and build bridges, God is present and unleashes the power to set people free from evil.

This week, spend some time listening to those around you, and listening to how God is calling you in accompaniment. Reflect on how your congregation, family, or neighborhood can spread the good news that God is life-changing and cares more for people than bureaucracy. Below are a few upcoming opportunities to listen and learn with our partners in the state. For more events, be sure to like us on [Facebook](#).

- The [New Jersey Coalition Against Human Trafficking](#) and other advocacy organizations including LEAMNJ are offering training events to help citizens identify the signs of possible labor and sex trafficking in our communities. New Jersey is in the forefront of addressing this issue, and specific laws and actions have already been implemented. Join us to learn the tools available to be part of the solution. Presentations will be offered at the Episcopal Diocese of Newark's Convention this week and at the Anti-Poverty Network [general meeting](#) on January 31. Register for the APN training session [here](#).
- [Faith in New Jersey](#), a member of the [PICO National Network](#), is hosting a [Statewide Faith Leadership Summit](#) at Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple in New Brunswick on Sunday, January 28 at 5 pm. Join the effort to create a network of protection for all New Jerseyans. You can register [here](#).
- Saturdays in March, LEAMNJ is hosting "[Loving Our Neighbor: Doing Advocacy Locally](#)" events throughout the state. From 8:30 am until noon on March 3, 10, and 24, we will gather to listen, learn, and worship together. For more information and to register, [click here](#).