

A Renewed Vision for Mission in the Eastern Synod 2006-2010

A Church in Mission for Others

The gospel calls the church to be in mission for others, not for ourselves. Recognizing this, we of the Eastern Synod intend to design and implement mission plans based on the gospel's call to meet the needs of others. We will encourage congregations to engage in a similar programme of mission planning and evaluation. We will likewise encourage our members to more fully claim their daily vocations as being avenues for ministry within the wider community.

A Plan for Strengthening Our Mission

In order to strengthen our mission focus and direct it to serving others the Eastern Synod will:

- Encourage each congregation to have a congregational mission plan.
- Create appropriate vehicles for church-wide reporting and review of congregational mission initiatives.
- Promote the use of such programmes as Natural Church Development, Transformational Ministry, etc.
- Identify congregations to examine and test new mission models and initiatives.
- Include training for mission plan development in the First Call programme.

In addition we will routinely evaluate all Synod Council work, and the work of the synod committees in light of the following six mission priorities:

1. We will strive to be a synod that is passionate about our relationship with God, in Christ.

As a synod, we will encourage one another to be diligent in studying and living out God's word, sharing our faith with others and seeking new ways and opportunities to worship and pray with one another. We will encourage and equip our congregations to bring renewed energy and passion to their services of worship and proclamation of the Word.

Some of the things we might do to help this happen:

- Engage in bible study at Synod Council meetings and at Synod Assemblies.
- Renew the emphasis on faith sharing programmes offered through the Ministry of Learning and Witness and Evangelism.
- Encourage congregational use of programmes such as Natural Church Development.
- Assist conferences in planning large festive worship experiences.
- Identify and promote devotional and study materials for church councils.
- Use The Eastern Synod Lutheran as a vehicle for individuals to share faith stories.
- Encourage participation in the synod's spirituality conferences for lay and clergy and in Luther Hostel.
- Work with the Ministry Director of Worship Ministries, the National Program Committee for Worship and Waterloo Lutheran Seminary to develop resources and training to equip our congregations to renew their corporate worship.
- Include worship and spirituality training as part of the First Call programme.

2. We will strive to be a synod that nurtures leaders who encourage and equip other leaders.

Challenges are evident in all expressions of the church's life. To be effective, our synod's ministries need to identify, call, mentor, and equip the leadership we require to meet these challenges. Moreover, we ought to take seriously the Priesthood of all Believers and the role of the laity in our church's life. To this end, our synod needs to take greater responsibility for providing training that is appropriate to our tasks.

Some of the things we might do to help this happen:

- Include leadership development training in continuing education programmes such as First Call, synod sponsored conferences, and Luther Hostel.
- Review recruitment and candidacy materials to ensure we are developing leaders with the gifts we need.
- Invite Waterloo Lutheran Seminary to reflect on this as part of their curriculum review.
- Learn from the training models developed by ELW Inc.
- Consider establishing a system of mandatory continuing education requirements and credits.
- Provide assistance to help ineffective rostered leaders improve their skill levels, and if necessary, to explore other vocational opportunities.

3. We will strive to be a synod that works in partnership with others.

As a mission focused synod, we will work to strengthen our existing partnerships and develop new ones within and beyond our synod. This includes partnerships with congregations, conferences, other synods, the ELCIC, as well as ecumenical, interfaith and community organizations.

Some of the things we might do to help this happen:

- Encourage Synod Council members to become more involved in the life of the conferences.
- Develop interpretive materials to assist in sharing synodical ministry stories.
- Consider developing a new logo for the Eastern Synod.
- Identify and promote models for congregations to use in intentional dialogues with other faiths.
- Consider appointing an Anglican representative to the Synod Council.

4. We will strive to be a synod that reflects the diversity of our society.

We recognize that our synod's congregational membership does not always reflect the demographics of the communities in which we live. We commit ourselves to be proactive in reaching out to our communities, inviting all people to be involved in the worship, work and service life of our congregations and the Synod.

Some of the things we might do to help this happen:

- Develop a congregational profiling tool with a study guide to help congregations look at their community demographics and adjust their mission plan accordingly.
- Become more intentional in considering diversity in our synodical appointment processes.
- Develop an intentional approach for congregations to use in seeking out lapsed members.

5. We will strive to be a synod that is generous.

As a generous synod, we will faithfully share our resources of time, talent and treasure in partnership with the ELCIC, our Companion Synod the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guyana and other partner churches. We will strive to allocate resources in ways that provide evidence of our commitment to being in mission for others. We will encourage our congregations and general membership to become more generous in sharing their resources both with and beyond the synod.

Some of the things we might do to help this happen:

- Strengthen our relationship with our Companion Synod, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guyana.
- Encourage generous support of the Global Hunger and Development Appeal.
- Consider implementation of a church-wide apportionment system (congregation, synod, national church) that is based on sharing a percentage of annual congregational income.
- Publicize stories of existing examples of exceptional generosity within the synod.
- Identify and promote stewardship education materials for children and youth.
- Include stewardship education as part of the First Call programme and other continuing education events.

6. We will strive to be a synod that is engaged by challenging questions.

As a synod we will promote a spirit of reflective and respectful deliberation on significant questions of life and faith. We will regularly and critically evaluate the programmes and structures of the synod to assess their relevance to those questions. Although the engagement of these questions might change us, we will faithfully explore them and modify our mission in light of them.

Some of the things we might do to help this happen:

- Encourage clergy clusters and congregations to have discussions around questions that are challenging to life and faith.
- Make the discussion of difficult questions a focus at continuing education events sponsored by the synod.
- Include the discussion of such questions as a regular part of the Synod Council agenda.
- Encourage the role of seminary faculty in assisting the synod in exploring these questions.
- Include training for engaging such discussions as a part of the First Call programme.