

***The Evangelical Lutheran Church
in America:
Our Witness***

Churchwide

What does our Churchwide organization do best?

- † **Leadership Development** - with seminaries, missionaries, youth, young adult, lay leaders and pastors. Churchwide can do things to support the development of leaders no other part of our body can.
- † **Support Global Missions and Global Relationships** – Mission trips and mission relationships can happen in other ways, but Churchwide is uniquely positioned to deepen relationships, understanding and around the world.
- † **New Starts and Redevelopments** – Many of the best places to do new starts are not in areas where Lutherans are many. The expertise and shared resources make mission happen in ways no other part of our body can.
- † **Representation at a National Level** – When someone asks what our church body thinks or when we need to speak to the issues of our time, our national church body has a unique role.
- † **National Ecumenical Relationships** – As God calls us to work with sisters and brothers in Christ, our national office carries the responsibility for initiating and sustaining relationships

Synod

What do synods do best?

- † **Support of Local Congregations** – through a variety of workshops, gatherings of leader and, sharing of resources
- † **Call Process Discernment** – As congregation's experience vacancies, synods serve as a key player in helping congregations in transition and leaders available for call. Our goal is opening the next chapter of vibrant ministry.
- † **Walking With the Next Generation of Leaders** – This journey is called Candidacy. God calls and the synod supports and helps individuals discern their call through the work of the Candidacy Committee.
- † **Reconciliation Ministry** – When the tension and conflict of our time strain and damage congregations or leaders, the synod staff works to identify assets and return the congregation to a focus on mission.
- † **Serve the Mission of Christ in God's World** – Through the men's, women's and youth ministries of the synod we connect people and deepen their mission. Synod has the gift of gathering.
- † **Equipping Congregational Leaders** – Leader training events empower congregational leaders for ministry

Congregations

What do congregations do best?

- † **Word and Sacrament Ministry** – Congregations exist to proclaim the Good News and gather around the sacrament. God's promises call, gather, enlighten and send us to serve in Christ's name in our many callings.
- † **Faith Formation of Adults, Youth and Children** – God grows Christians in the seedbed of congregations. Through Sunday School, Confirmation, Bible Studies, communal faith practices and other learning experiences God grows Christians deeper and God's church wider.
- † **Local Mission** – Congregations know local needs. Those closest to the issues of their communities are normally the ones who are best positioned to express care, proclaim the Good News, and to provide concrete care.
- † **Create and Share Community in Christ** – Fellowship is a human need and an important ministry of local congregations.
- † **Spreading the Good News** – Congregations are called to gather for worship, learning and fellowship, but then all the baptized are sent to live out the Good News and share it with others in Christ's name.

Institutions

What do our institutions do best?

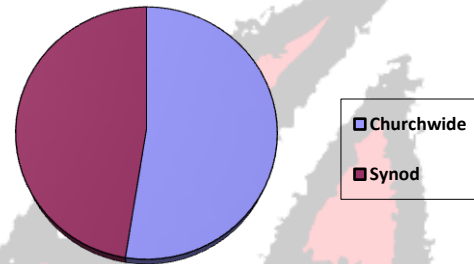
Based on our callings to love our neighbor, grow leaders and care for God's world our tradition has given birth to and sustains many institutions. They are an important part of our church body.

- † **Seminaries** – We have eight seminaries growing leaders to serve as pastors and in other ways in God's church.
- † **Social Ministry Agencies** - From nursing homes, housing for seniors, to hospitals. In our area Lutheran Services of America and Ecumen are both active.
- † **Church Related Colleges** – There are 28 colleges of the church. We relate to Gustavus Adolphus on our synod territory.
- † **Camping Ministry** – There are many camps in our church body, but we are grateful for our relationship with Green Lake Lutheran Ministries and Shetek Lutheran Ministries in southwestern MN. Many congregations also relate to Luther Crest in Alexandria.
- † **Lutheran Social Services** – Out of concern for our neighbors, Lutherans formed this organization that moves in a variety of ways to care for human need, including senior nutrition programs and counseling.
- † **Shalom Hill Farm** – This retreat and educational ministry serves the synod and many different church bodies.

Mission Support – The financial resources shared by your congregation with the synod are called “mission support.”

52.5% is shared with the Churchwide expression of our church body for the work of Christ in the broader country and world.

47.5% remains to serve the synod and local mission partners



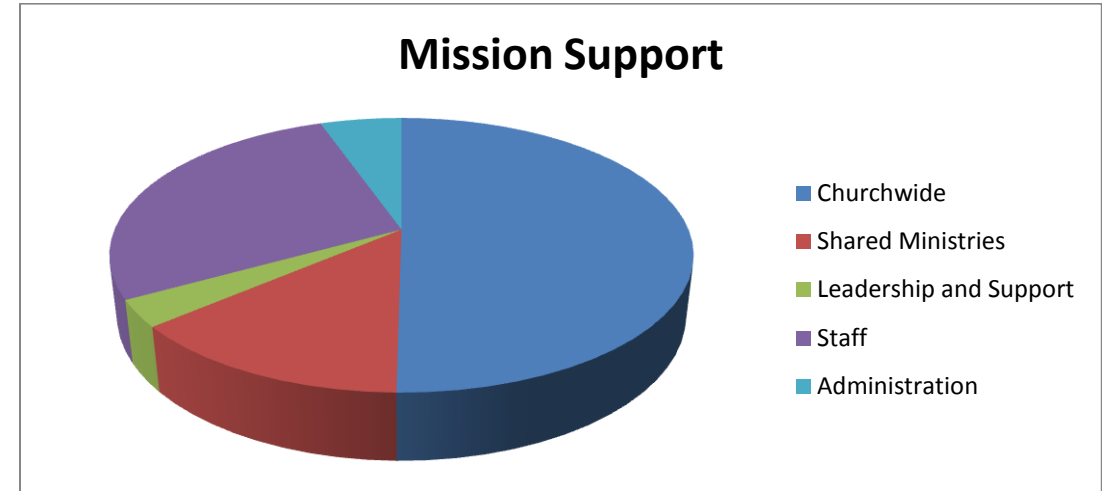
Impact of Inflation – The total dollars the synod receives today from congregations in Mission Support is roughly the same as the dollars received in 1985 when the ELCA was born. This means that when inflation is factored in the ELCA receives around 57% of the dollars we did in 1985.

Congregational Levels of Mission Support – Through this same period of time congregations have given a lower and lower percentage of their offerings to support the work of our church body. In 1991 it was the expectation of the synod that congregations would give 15% of their income to serve the mission of Christ in God’s broader work. In 2006 we passed a synod assembly resolution requesting that congregations tithe or give 10% of their income to serve the wider work of our church body.

The average for our synod is now 6%. Some congregations share little financial resources with their church body. Thanks to all of you who are carrying the weight with gifts beyond that level.

National Trends – This trend is often attributed to the impact of controversies in our church body. We certainly have had them and have them. But the same trends are happening in most church bodies, who do not always share our points of tension and struggles.

Designated Giving – More and more individuals and congregations want to give their resources in ways that they make decisions about where their funds go. Some resources are necessary to maintain the infrastructure of our church body and to support our sister congregations and Christ’s mission beyond our communities. We suggest that tithing mission support is a way to also teach tithing to your people. People learn from what we do.



We have already made revisions in our budget in June, like rescinding staff raises. In this difficult economic time we continue to under spend and manage financial resources very carefully.

