

† BOLDLY LIVING IN CHRIST'S MISSION



EVERY CONGREGATION A MISSION OUTPOST.
EVERY PASTOR A MISSION DIRECTOR.
EVERY PERSON A MISSIONARY.



Southwestern Minnesota Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

We believe God is calling our synod...

- to trust in the Good News of our crucified Lord, Jesus Christ, who calls us to repent and brings us forgiveness, salvation and new life.
- to share God's story with one another, our neighbors and our world.
- to be a worshipping people gathered around Word and sacraments.
- to live as gracious followers of Jesus Christ, encouraging one another as we live out our vocations in joyful and challenging times.
- to pray regular as individuals and communities of faith.
- to focus on God's grace while working together to transform lives, churches and this world in Christ's name.
- to remember we are broken people, confident that our loving God can use us in spite of our sinfulness to be his faithful ambassadors.
- to be faithful stewards of all God has entrusted to us, inviting, encouraging, generously supporting one another.
- to continue to reform our life together in the light of God's Word as we seek to be faithful and fruitful Lutheran Christians.
- to humility in our relationships with God and with one another, striving to discern God's will, alert and open to God's surprising work.
- to respect and treasure all generations of the baptized people of God, discerning, celebrating and nourishing their unique gifts, needs, cultures and callings.

WALKING TOGETHER IN CHRIST'S MISSION...

The congregations and all the baptized who are the Southwestern Minnesota Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are claimed by this mission:

God places us in cities, farms and towns together under one prairie sky.

The Risen Christ surprises us with opportunities to plant God's Word in the world.

Walking together in confidence, we cultivate life-giving congregations, nurture partner ministries, and cooperate in the life of the ELCA.

By God's grace, together we have what we need.

ENGAGING LEADERS...

1. *We promote a spirit of collegiality among leaders.*
2. *We encourage lay and clergy leaders to use their gifts.*
3. *We connect leaders with fruitful evangelism resources and share best practices.*
4. *We will equip leaders to foster healthy relationships and work through disagreements for the sake of the Gospel*
5. *We equip leaders to facilitate reconciliation in a variety of relationships, in congregations, and in our world.*

Faith is deeply rooted in the written Word of God, therefore -

We help congregations read the Bible so we become a biblically-literate church by:

- equipping congregations to study the Bible together in a variety of ways
- encouraging home devotions as a practice to deepen the home as the first church
- inviting people to read a chapter of the Bible a day
- focusing energy on adults as well as children and confirmands
- supporting a task force to shepherd our synod's engagement with the Book of Faith initiative
- identifying resources that can deepen the insights of our Christian community

We are called and sent to make disciples, therefore -

We provide resources so congregations can focus on growing disciples by:

- supporting the disciplines of faith practices in daily life, such as Prayer / Worship / Inviting / Serving / Mutual Support and Encouragement / Bible Study / Giving

Worship is the heart of our gathered assembly gathered around Word and Sacrament, therefore -

We prioritize the worship ministry of our synod by:

- gathering leaders annually to enliven worship life
- providing opportunities for all worship leaders to learn new resources and discover best practices

The mission field of the synod is changing in population size, age, ethnicity, and different faiths, therefore -

We multiply our capacity for mission development, redevelopment, and growth by:

- helping congregations read and better understand their contexts, engage in missional planning, anticipate the future, and prepare to serve their new mission fields
- helping congregations evaluate their assets and identify their particular vocations
- equipping congregations to address racism internally and in their community context
- seeking people with the gift of vision and long-range planning to use their gifts for the sake of Christ's mission
- supporting the discernment and evaluation time of congregations who are in the call process

Communication technology is swiftly changing our culture and effective communication is essential to sharing the Good News, therefore -

We serve the Gospel and equip congregations to communicate in effective ways by:

- lifting up congregational best practices for internal and external communication
- opening Web doors to every congregation in our synod by creating a tech team to train congregational leaders

Every age group belongs in God's family, therefore -

We reach out to all ages in our communities, finding their interests and receiving their gifts by:

- engaging young adults, families, and singles to actively participate in the life of the community that gathers and serves in Jesus' name
- engaging elders and retirees through programs and parish nursing
- engaging more young men and women in congregational leadership

SERVING IN GOD'S WORLD...

1. *We will become known as an evangelizing synod, cultivating a culture in which we think of ourselves as missionaries sent into God's world.*
2. *We will deepen relationships with our Partner Synod, Companion Synod, ELCA churchwide partners, and ELCA global mission partners.*
3. *We will steward our public voice as Lutheran leaders, congregations, institutions, and synod.*
4. *We engage in missional planning to learn about, welcome, and invite our diverse neighbors.*
5. *We anticipate regular structural reformation and alignment to better serve our mission field.*

We are one body in Christ and act more effectively and creatively when we work together, therefore -

We promote a spirit of collegiality among leaders by:

- gathering together intentionally and regularly to learn, grow, challenge and encourage one another through the Fall Theological Conference, Synod Assembly, Conference Assemblies, monthly rostered and lay staff gatherings, text studies, annual youth leaders gatherings, geographic, and affinity gatherings (rural, county seat, lake, small membership, large membership)
- developing a strategy for congregational exchanges, partnerships, and companion congregations within our synod's life

God calls us to develop and strengthen leaders for Christ's church, therefore -

We encourage lay and clergy leaders to use their gifts by:

- training lay leaders for pulpit supply and assisting ministers to support their local congregation
- offering training opportunities in theology and ministry practice
- training people to serve where needed
- convening and forming cadres of leaders who support congregational ministries
- inviting people to consider rostered service
- maintaining a candidacy committee to oversee formation and vocational development

Christ commands us to reach out with the Good News, therefore -

We connect leaders with fruitful evangelism resources and share best practices by:

- learning from the Director for Evangelical Mission
- equipping teams to focus on congregational inreach and outreach
- developing hospitality ministers for every congregation

The Gospel is best served by healthy congregations, therefore -

We equip leaders to foster healthy relationships and work through disagreements for the sake of the Gospel by:

- hosting annual Healthy Congregations events
- gathering multiple-staff leaders to enhance staff health and effectiveness
- providing spiritual direction and pastoral care to church staffs in transition

We are called to humility and reconciliation in all relationships, therefore -

We equip leaders to facilitate reconciliation in a variety of relationships, in congregations, and in our world by:

- praying intentionally about our relationships
- building and strengthening relationships
- seeking ways to live together as the body of Christ without wounding one another and damaging relationships even when we disagree about difficult issues
- providing workshops, webinars and other resources for preaching and teaching

EQUIPPING CONGREGATIONS...

1. *We help congregations read the Bible so we become a biblically-literate church.*
2. *We provide resources so congregations can deepen their focus on growing disciples.*
3. *We prioritize the worship ministry of our synod.*
4. *We multiply our capacity for mission development, redevelopment, and growth.*
5. *We serve the Gospel and equip congregations to communicate in effective ways.*
6. *We reach out to all ages in our communities, finding their interests and receiving their gifts.*

God sends us to share the Good News in our local communities, therefore -

We will become known as an evangelizing synod, cultivating a culture in which we think of ourselves as missionaries sent into God's world by:

- developing local strategies to learn about our neighbors
- inviting and welcoming those who don't have a relationship with Jesus into our communities of faith
- engaging the unchurched
- starting and renewing congregations

God blesses us with many ministry partners and sends us to share the Good News to all the world, therefore -

We will deepen relationships with our Partner Synod, Companion Synod, ELCA churchwide partners, and ELCA global mission partners by:

- identifying and nurturing relationships with outdoor and campus ministries, institutions, agencies, and ecumenical, full communion, and para-church partnerships
- meeting together with our Partner Synod when possible at ELCA gatherings (churchwide, men's, women's and youth gatherings) and working together in disaster response
- encouraging congregations and conferences to develop relationships with our Companion Synod
- inviting churchwide leaders for preaching, teaching or speaking at synodical or congregational events
- lifting up ELCA Global Mission opportunities for global volunteers and Young Adults in Global Mission
- encouraging congregational support of missionaries

The Lutheran Christian voice has much to contribute in the public arena, therefore -

We will steward our public voice as Lutheran leaders, congregations, institutions, and synod by:

- speaking and acting on important moral issues in our society
- addressing the realities of racial, ethnic, culture, religious, age, gender, familial, sexual, physical, personal, and class barriers that often manifest themselves in exclusion, poverty, hunger, and violence
- defining our identity as Lutheran Christians by giving voice to our beliefs and convictions about how to best love and serve our neighbors
- identifying people who are allies in God's mission and inviting them to work for the greater good of our world

God's church is a multicultural church, therefore -

We engage in missional planning to learn about, welcome, and invite our diverse neighbors by:

- striving to help our communities grow in appreciation of cultural differences
- hosting synod, conference, and congregational trainings that enhance multicultural or cultural competency and address racism
- supporting the work of SMART— Southwestern Minnesota Anti-Racism Team
- developing leaders who reflect our communities by working with programs like TEEM – Theological Education for Emerging Ministries
- developing strategies to engage the subcultures within the dominant culture who have not connected with congregations

God sends us to serve the mission field that is and that will be, therefore -

We anticipate regular structural reformation and alignment to better serve our mission field by:

- exploring possible synod staffing strategies
- examining conference boundaries and structure in light of population and cultural change