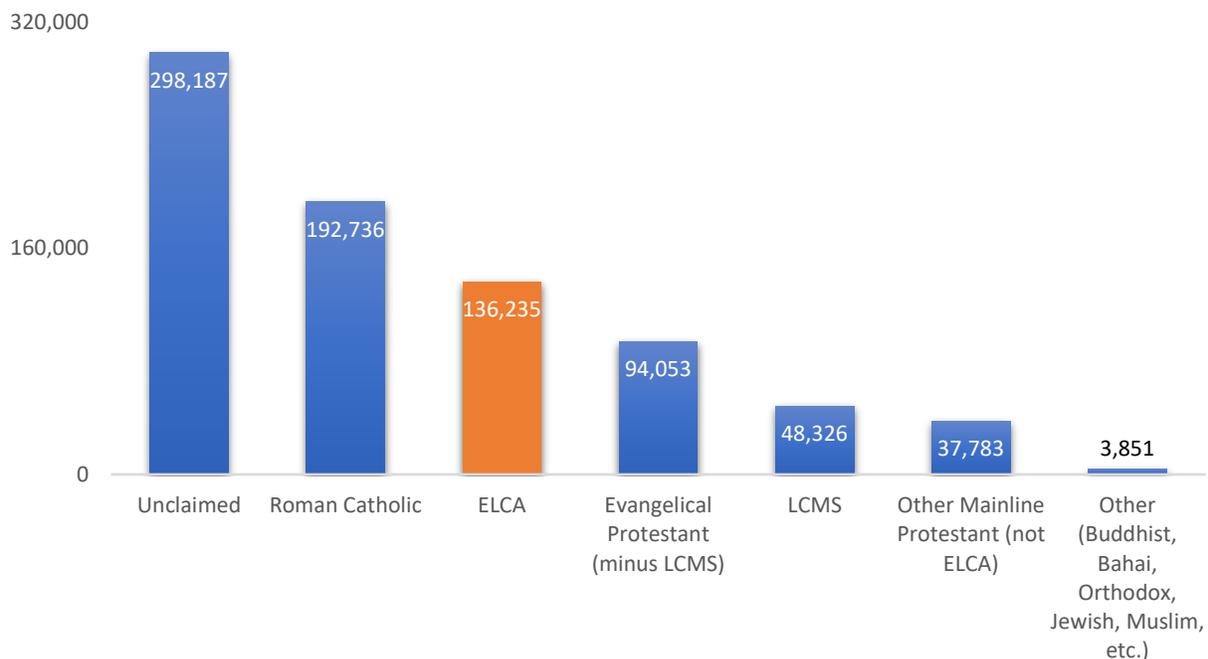


**Religious Adherence in Southwestern Minnesota
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
March 2020**

The bar graph below shows the number of people claimed by the various denominations in the Southwestern Minnesota Synod. There are almost four times as many baptized ELCA members in Southwestern Minnesota than all other mainline denominations combined. The ELCA is second only to the Roman Catholic Church in terms of members. This shows that the ELCA has a prominent place in the culture/society of the area.*

In addition, people unclaimed by any religious tradition comprise 37 percent of the total population of the region. If just five percent of the people unclaimed by any religious tradition became involved in the life of an ELCA congregation, that would increase participation in the synod by 15,000 people. Since “reaching out into the community”, “inviting new people to church” and “getting to know more about our neighbors” were comments that appeared frequently in the open-ended elements of the questionnaire distributed to the synod in the spring of 2021, this population of people would be the ones that could be invited without the detriment of being “stolen” from another tradition. It would also follow that if these unclaimed or non-attending folks wanted to see God at work not only in their lives, but also the lives of their loved ones and their communities, they would be attracted to the ELCA and the message of being freed by the transformative life of Jesus Christ to service for our neighbor.

Religious Adherence in the Southwestern Minnesota Synod¹



* To compare, in the Metro Chicago Synod in 2010, there were 96,773 baptized ELCA Lutherans and 2,687,817 Roman Catholics.

¹ https://www.thearda.com/rcms2010/r/j/ELCA-3F/rcms2010_ELCA-3F_judicatory_name_2010.asp This is 2010 information. The 2020 data is not available yet. According to the congregational report summary, the baptized membership of the ELCA congregations in the Southwestern Minnesota Synod is 104,698.