

The Mission We Share



A Mission Planning Resource
for the Congregations of the
Northeastern Minnesota Synod
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA



Table of Contents

The Mission We Share

Getting Started

An Introduction to mission planning
Why do we need to make a plan?
What is mission planning?

Gather

Forming a planning team
Organizing the planning team's work
Resources for mission planning
Books for mission planning teams

Gifts

Mission planning begins with listening
Listening to God
Biblical sources for the faith practices
Listening to the church
The constitution of the ELCA
The constitution of your congregation
Living out the baptismal covenant
The bishop's vision for the synod
Listening to the community
Community outreach
Conversations with our neighbors
Connecting to listen, listening to connect

Goals

Asset mapping
Faith practice conversations

Guide

Writing and submitting a mission plan
A written mission plan's content
An example of a written mission plan

Go

Plans in action: God's work. Our hands.



Getting Started

An Introduction to mission planning

The word *mission* is used in a variety of ways in the church. We talk about mission statements, mission support, mission investment, and a mission field. We have missionaries, partners in mission, and missional leaders. It can be a little confusing.

What do we mean by *mission*?

When we talk about mission, we're talking about God's work. We believe God has work to do in this world: the gospel work of Jesus. In baptism, God has called each of us to share in this mission, to be co-workers in the gospel. In our baptismal liturgy, the newly baptized are welcomed into the church by the assembly with these words: "We welcome you into the body of Christ and into the mission we share: join us in giving thanks and praise to God and bearing God's creative and redeeming word to all the world" (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship, page 231*).

The mission we share is our common calling as baptized Christians. It is our work together as God's people: to worship God, and to be God's witnesses to the good news of Jesus in all the world in our words and in our deeds, starting in our own homes, churches, and communities. Mission planning is the process of figuring out just what that means and what that might look like as we discern God's call.

Our bishop has challenged each congregation of the Northeastern Minnesota Synod to prepare and submit a mission plan by 2020. We have developed this resource to introduce you to the work of mission planning and to help you and your congregation in this process of identifying your local mission. We hope it will help you to organize your energy and resources around the important calling of worship and work.

Welcome to *the mission we share*.

Pastor John Dietz
Assistant to the Bishop
Director for Evangelical Mission



God's work.
Our hands.

We
welcome
you into
the body of
Christ and
into THE
MISSION
WE SHARE.



Getting Started

Why do we need to make a plan?

Trend reports and statistics describe what many of us can plainly see happening in our own communities, congregations, and families. Both church membership and worship attendance are declining.

More and more once-active members are choosing to “quit” church (the “dones”). It is not unusual for many of our friends and family members to be “spiritual but not religious,” or to claim no religious affiliation at all (the “nones”). Nearly one-in-five U.S. adults were raised as Christians or members of some other religion, but now say they have no religious affiliation.

Sundays compete with (and often lose out to) other events or pursuits. Attending worship once every six or eight weeks is fairly common even for many self-described “active” members. Using a broad definition of church attendance, classifying a regular attendee as someone who shows up at least three out of every eight Sundays, still only 24 percent of Americans would fit this category.

It’s not as if things were going along smoothly and then all of a sudden everything changed. Over time, little changes in our priorities, our values, and our expectations (of the members and of the church) came on gradually, but forcefully. And in the face of these changes, congregations across this nation and in every denomination have experienced a major shift in reality.

Many have begun closing their doors or are seeking out others to partner with in order to keep their doors open. Congregations are struggling to call a pastor, maintain their building and offer worship and some pastoral care for the members they have retained. We know this hospice chaplaincy model is discouraging to the members and leaders in these circumstances, and in the end, does not really address the changes or the challenges many of us face.

There are pastors and church leaders who are looking for ways to inspire hope and ignite change in their communities. They are asking not only how they can reverse or prevent the decline of their own congregations, but how they can be part of the renewal of the whole church. Synod bishops are encouraging congregations to make intentional plans to be partners in the mission we share. We are aware of the shift in reality, and are choosing to see it as an opportunity to strengthen our witness in the world. As people of faith in the resurrected Christ, we believe the church can rise up to the challenge of renewal. Creating a mission plan for the congregation will help us in this work.

"It used to be a cultural expectation to say you were going to church. We didn't have to do anything. We could just sort of coast. But we're not part of the establishment anymore. The rug has been pulled out under us."

*Presiding Bishop
Elizabeth Eaton*

The number of people who say they are Christian in the United States is shrinking, while Americans who claim no faith group is increasing rapidly. A full 23% no longer list a religious affiliation.



Getting Started

What is mission planning?

Mission planning is the process of discovering and defining how your congregation is already participating in God's work in the world in your very specific context - and how it may participate more intentionally and effectively in the future.

Congregations are invited to identify their gifts and discern how best to develop them in order to strengthen their commitment to God's mission. This process may lead to a clearer understanding of the congregation's purpose in the community. It may help the congregation develop new or transform already existing ministries. The planning process should lead you to form new cooperative relationships, not only within the congregation, but with the surrounding neighborhood.

A mission plan is the outcome of that process. It is a written document in which the congregation is able to articulate specific goals related to ministries, events, or characteristics or values they are committed to learning about, developing, and strengthening.

Mission plans should also lay out anticipated outcomes, criteria for evaluation, and the expectations of the congregation, committees, and staff to accomplish the goals. The mission plan may be very specific regarding budget, timelines, intended audiences, or it may be a more general guiding document. However detailed, the written plan will guide the congregation and help to keep it focused on its goals in an intentional way.

Each congregation of this church will, by definition, carry out many of the same ministries. But how they do so - given their own demographic, financial, and geographic circumstances - will be unique in every case. Just as there is no one way to do mission planning, there is no one way to write or use a mission plan. Each congregation will produce a plan that makes sense for the people in their context. The most important piece of the mission plan is that it helps the people of God to go into the world, doing God's work.



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.





Gather

Forming a Planning Team

As you begin the work of mission planning, your congregation will want to gather together a dedicated mission planning team. This group of people should reflect the diversity of the congregation in interests, age, gender, and station in life. Following are some suggestions for your congregation to use as you consider gathering a planning team of your own.

Your pastor and other leaders in the congregation should be intentional about organizing and developing this mission planning team. Ideally, a team would include eight to twelve people from a broad cross-section of the congregation. Consider who should be involved: a good mix of men and women, youth and young adults with new ideas, committed parents of students, faithful single people, middle aged and older members who bring wisdom of experience, members of various committees and groups in the parish like the parish choir, Women of the ELCA, the property committee, etc..

The pastor and other council members should select a core group for the planning team, helping to choose some of their key leaders. Specifically, a planning team should have a chairperson and a secretary. The chairperson will help facilitate the conversations and keep the team's work progressing, calling meetings and encouraging the members in their work. The secretary will be responsible for recording the minutes of the team's meetings. The secretary may also be helpful in reporting information to the team and to the congregation council. Perhaps your team will choose co-chairs, a recording secretary, and a liaison to the council. You will form the team that works for your congregation.

The pastor and congregational leaders who develop the team may want to appoint up to two-thirds of the members, allowing for another third of the team to be filled by interested volunteers from the congregation. Some communities may appreciate being able to select their planning team members by vote, much like they choose their congregation council members. However the team is formed, the congregation should be assured that, while the team is made up of a relatively small group and not everyone can serve on it, certainly everyone's input will be solicited and welcomed as part of the mission planning process.

Every congregation will gather a team that works for their context. Perhaps your team is a smaller group, reflecting the smaller size of your congregation. In some cases, the team may be made up of multiple smaller groups to represent a multiple-point parish. A number of congregation councils will attempt to do the mission planning work on top of their other council duties. That is fine, so long as they are as intentional about the planning process as they are their other responsibilities, and don't let the planning work go by the wayside. Regardless of how your congregation forms a team, the important piece is that a team is gathered and that you are planning for the mission we share.

According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building on it. Each builder must choose with care how to build on it. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:10-11

The duties of the Congregation Council shall include the following: To lead this congregation in stating its mission, to do long-range planning, to set goals and priorities, and to evaluate its activities in light of its mission and goals.

C12.04.a. Model Constitution for ELCA Congregations



Gather

Organizing the planning team's work

The pastor and council members should identify and define the planning team's purpose. The team should be given a clear mandate by the congregation council to help the congregation to develop a new mission plan or to renew or redevelop an already existing mission plan. The team should be given the authority by the council to do the necessary work; not needing to return to the council for permission to move forward at every new step. The pastor may wish to install the mission planning team for their work during a regular public worship service.

The council should commit some funds to be used to purchase some helpful planning resources or to cover the costs of hosting an outside speaker or facilitator. Giving the team the authority and mandate to do the planning work without the resources to do it would be counter-productive.

The planning team will need to organize their work together, committing to a regular meeting time and place. Some teams may find a monthly potluck meeting in the team members' homes conducive to their work together. Others might decide to meet at a convenient time in the church following a regularly scheduled parish meeting or event. Avoid meeting during the normal school and working hours of a weekday; this automatically excludes a number of people you want on your team from participating. However you decide to organize, consider starting your process with a group retreat where the initial work of the team can be freely discussed. Do what works for your context and for the members of your team.

As the planning team progresses in their work, they should keep in mind that they are accountable to the congregation council and should be making regular reports to the council and to the congregation regarding their ongoing work. Make frequent presentations to the congregation about the process every other month or so. Be clear and transparent. Consider using "temple talks" during the worship announcements and brief articles in the parish newsletters and worship bulletins. Keeping the whole congregation informed about your planning process should encourage more members to participate when the work moves deeper into the congregation and community.

Gracious God, as you have called workers to varied tasks in the world and in your church, so you have called *names* to the ministry of mission planning in this congregation. Grant them joy and a spirit of bold trust, that their work may stir up in each of us a passion for the mission we share: giving thanks and praise to you, O God, and bearing your creative and redeeming word to all the world. We ask this through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

As in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members of one another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

Romans 12:4-8



Gather

Resources for mission planning

As your team begins the mission planning process, you should explore some of the excellent missional resources that are available to you. There are a number of books and websites that would benefit the planning team in their work. A full list is available on the next page of this document.

Team members may especially want to read and reflect on Stephen Bouman's book *The Mission Table: Renewing Congregation and Community*. Stephen Bouman, former bishop of the Metropolitan New York Synod and current director of the Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit of the ELCA, has written this book as an introduction to the mission planning process, inviting leaders to listen to God, the church, and the world as we discern the mission we share. The book is available through Augsburg Fortress at <http://store.augsburgfortress.org/store/productgroup/597/The-Mission-Table-Renewing-Congregation-and-Community?c=285662>.

Your team should become acquainted with two other excellent missional documents: the constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the constitution of your own congregation at http://www.elca.org/About/Churchwide/Office-of-the-Secretary/Constitutions?_ga=1.146055350.360933299.1436153984.

Our bishop, Thomas Aitken, has written a Vision Statement for the Northeastern Minnesota Synod, in which he challenges us to “do long-term missional visioning, embracing risks and changes that may come.” That document is available here: <http://nemnsynod.org.php53-5.dfw1-2.websitetestlink.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/bp-aitken-vis-twked-4-23.12.pdf>.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is committed to helping congregations in the mission planning process. Find resources on the churchwide website that have been created by people from across the ELCA as well as by ecumenical partners to help you assess congregational vitality and create a plan that fits your gifts and context here: <http://www.elca.org/Resources/Mission-Planning>

Congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization of this church are interdependent partners that share responsibility for God's mission. We are in this work together! Your planning team should consider inviting Bishop Thomas Aitken or Pastor John Dietz, Assistant to the Bishop and Director for Evangelical Mission, to your initial meeting or team retreat. They are available to offer guidance and encouragement, to preach in worship, and to help introduce the planning process to congregations. Contact Bishop Aitken by email at thomas.aitken@nemnsynod.org or call him at 218-724-4424 extension 121. Pastor John Dietz is available at john.dietz@nemnsynod.org or at 218-724-4424 extension 125.



“In *The Mission Table* ... Stephen Bouman invites us—challenges us—to be a church with high expectations of the Holy Spirit. He assumes the Holy Spirit is not done with us yet. Through the good news of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit is at work making us new creations in Christ, reconciling the alienated, forgiving us and setting us free for lives of witness and service.”

Former Presiding Bishop
Mark S. Hanson



Gather

Books for mission planning teams

Bliese, Richard & Van Gelder, Craig, editors; *The Evangelizing Church: A Lutheran Contribution*; 2005, Augsburg Fortress.

Bouman, Stephen; *The Mission Table: Renewing Congregation and Community*; 2013, Augsburg Fortress.

Burtness, Eric; *Leading on Purpose: Intentionality and Teaming in Congregational Life*; 2004, Augsburg Fortress.

Butler Bass, Diana; *Christianity After Religion*; 2012, Harper Collins.

Cook Everist, Norma; *Open the Doors and See All the People: Stories of Church Identity and Vocation*; 2005, Augsburg Fortress.

Daubert, Dave; *Living Lutheran: Renewing Your Congregation*; 2007, Augsburg Fortress.

Foss, Michael; *Reviving the Congregation: Pastoral Leadership in a Changing Context*; 2014, Fortress Press.

Fryer, Kelly; *Reclaiming the "L" Word: Renewing the Church from Its Lutheran Core*; 2003, Augsburg Fortress.

Johns, Mark D.; *Our Context: Exploring Our Congregation and Community*; 2002, Augsburg Fortress.

Krey Duckworth, Jessicah; *Wide Welcome: How the Unsettling Presence of Newcomers Can Save the Church*; 2013, Fortress Press.

McCullough-Blade, Robin & John; *Our Mission: Discovering God's Call to Us*; 2002, Augsburg Fortress.

Nessan, Craig; *Beyond Maintenance to Mission: A Theology of the Congregation*; 1999, Augsburg Fortress.

Poling-Goldenne, David & Jung, L. Shannon; *Discovering Hope: Building Vitality in Rural Congregations*; 2001, Augsburg Fortress.

Rouse, Rick & Van Gelder, Craig; *A Field Guide for the Missional Congregation: Embarking on a Journey of Transformation*; 2008, Augsburg Fortress.

Tickle, Phyllis; *The Great Emergence: How Christianity is Changing and Why*; 2008, Baker Books.

Vaters, Karl; *The Grasshopper Myth: Big Churches, Small Churches and the Small Thinking that Divides Us*; 2012, New Small Church.



Gifts

Mission planning begins with listening

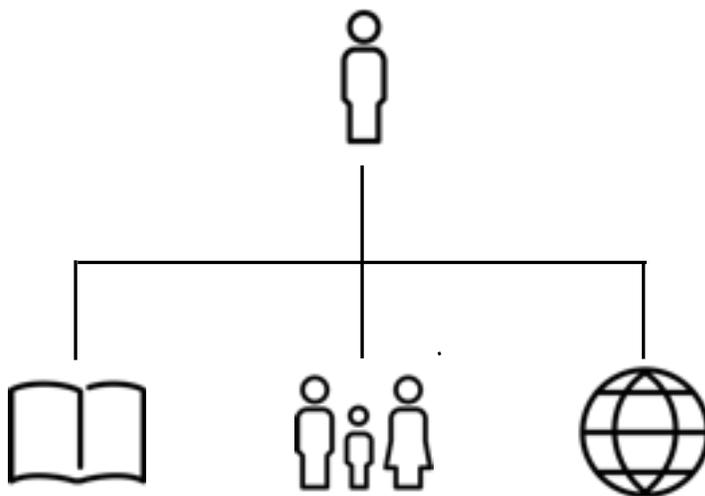
Mission planning is centered in intentional and active listening: to God, to the church, and to the world. This kind of listening requires patience, respect, and love. It is as much about building relationships as it is about gaining information. Participating in these three listenings may be the beginning of the renewal of your congregation.

Mission planning involves the entire congregation in these three great “listenings”:

- + listening to God and for God through scripture and preaching, worship and prayer;
- + listening to the members of the community of faith within our own walls;
- + listening to (and with) the community right outside our doors.

These listenings are already happening in our congregations. We are already in worship, reading and studying scripture, and praying. We are already having conversations among ourselves in fellowship halls and in council and committee meetings. We are already listening to the communities, even as we continue to live and participate in them. In this planning process, we listen with a particular focus: What is God calling us to? How might God use us - this church, right here and now - to participate in and help accomplish God’s mission in the world?

These listenings happen simultaneously. We may lay additional focus on one at a specific time (the pastor may preach a sermon series or lead a Bible Study on the faith practices during Lent, for example), but at the same time, the congregation can also be intentional about their missional conversations, and members can be engaging members of the neighborhood in meaningful discussion about their needs and perceptions. These “listenings” happen together.



To be your presence
is our mission here,
to show
compassion's face
and list'ning ear, to
be your heart of
mercy ever near,
alleluia!

To be your presence
is our mission bold,
to feed the poor and
shelter homeless
cold, to be your
hands of justice,
right uphold,
alleluia!

To be your presence
is our mission blest,
to speak for all the
broken and
oppressed, to be
your voice of hope,
your love expressed,
alleluia!

We are your heart,
O Christ, your hands
and voice, to serve
your people is our
call and choice, and
in this mission we,
the church, rejoice,
alleluia!

Delores Dufner, OSB
To Be Your Presence
ELW # 546



Gifts

Listening to God

All mission planning begins with listening to and for the voice of God. What is God asking us to do - here and now? God speaks to us in Word and Sacrament worship, through preaching, Bible study and prayer. Actively listening to the Word of God helps us to discern the will of God.

After Jesus was baptized and had returned from the desert wilderness of testing, he began his public ministry of proclaiming the good news of God. One of the very first things Jesus did was to call disciples. These followers were not only his students, but they were his co-workers in the gospel. Not as an after-thought, but intentionally and from the very beginning - Christ called people to share in his ministry - using their varied gifts to proclaim the good news. We believe that God will still use “our hands” to accomplish “God’s work” in the world. What is God’s work, and how can we be of service?

The mission planning team will want to frame their meetings in prayer and study, seeking the will of God for their own work, even as they explore the what God has in store for the congregation. However, the mission planning team is not the only group involved in listening to and for God in this process. The whole congregation should be involved. Following are some ways to include as many people as possible in this important listening.

Pastors and preachers may want to offer a sermon series on the mission of the church using key Bible verse or stories. A sample of scripture verses is available in this resource based on the faith practices. Leaders may share personal stories of how their own practice of these marks of discipleship have developed, or how God has used them to strengthen the mission of the church.

Congregations should consider holding Bible Studies focused on the faith practices of the church. Using the Northeastern Minnesota Synod’s *Discipleship Challenge* resources will generate deep discussions around these topics. You can link to them here: <http://www.nemnsynod.org/resources1.html>

Guest preachers/ speakers from the synod, the seminary, or pastors who have recently engaged in theological and missional education might help bring focus to your congregation’s discernment.

O God,
you have called
your servants to
ventures of which
we cannot see the
ending, by paths
as yet untrodden,
through perils
unknown. Give us
faith to go out with
good courage,
not knowing where
we go, but only
that your hand is
leading us and
your love
supporting us;
through Jesus
Christ our Lord.
Amen.

This is my Son, my Beloved; listen to him!

Luke 9:35



Gifts

Biblical sources for the faith practices

WORSHIP

I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul makes its boast in the Lord; let the humble hear and be glad. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exult his name together.

Psalm 34:1-3

Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.

Luke 4:8

STUDY

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Psalm 119:105

Give attention to the public reading of scripture, to exhorting, to teaching.

1 Timothy 4:13

PRAY

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Jesus said to them, "When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come ...

Luke 11:2

GIVE

Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.

Luke 6:38

In all this I have given an example that by such work we must support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, for he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

Acts 20:35

SERVE

For the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Mark 10:45

Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.

1 Peter 4:10

ENCOURAGE

Little children, let us love, not in word and speech, but in truth and action.

1 John 3:18

Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, as indeed you are doing.

1 Thessalonians 5:11

INVITE

But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim unless they are sent?

Romans 10:14-15

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

Matthew 28:19-20

LEAD

Think of us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries.

1 Corinthians 4:1

Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

1 Timothy 4:12



Gifts

Listening to the church

Lutheran congregations are communities of baptized people whose existence depends on the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. The purpose of these Word and Sacrament communities is to worship God, to nurture their members, and to reach out in witness and in service to the world. To do these things, congregations assemble regularly for worship and nurture, to organize and carry out ministries to their own people and neighborhood, and to cooperate with and support the wider church in striving for the fulfillment of God's mission in the world.

In order to develop a mission plan for the congregation, we must hear from the members of the congregation. Voices from outside our own congregation - but within the Church - are equally important. Synodical and churchwide leaders, together with the insights of ecumenical partners and others in the community might prove invaluable contributions to the missional conversation.

We listen to the entire community of faith - not just a select group. The voices of the long-time member and the newest member are important. What are the ideas of young people (Sunday School and Confirmation students), young adults, families, empty-nesters, and retired folks? How is the conversation about the church's mission enhanced when the opinions of single parents, the homebound, or unemployed members are intentionally sought out? The mission of the church is broadened by exploring possibilities with people at the core (very active members and volunteers) as well as people on the fringes (inactive members or those who only worship occasionally).

Planning teams should get as many people as possible in the congregation to be part of the conversation. Congregations might hold small group or large group sessions for people to make an inventory of their assets, to discuss possibilities of developing existing ministries, or to dream together about new possibilities. Take time at the beginning of already scheduled committee meetings; hold informal cottage meetings; take half an hour during fellowship; start each Bible Study, Confirmation class, or other gathering with a time set aside for mission planning.

The Confessions of the Lutheran Church, the constitution of the ELCA, your own congregational constitution, and other sources like the liturgies of the church will help you deepen the conversation about your congregation's specific goals.

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — Jews or Greeks, slaves or free — and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body.

1 Corinthians 12:12-20



Gifts

The constitution of the ELCA

The constitution of our church is a missional tool. Planning teams will benefit from using it as a guide in the planning process. Listening to the constitution will help us to define our purpose as witnesses to God's activity in the world. It also gives us a framework to use as we develop our congregation's ministries. Chapter four of the ELCA Constitution is especially helpful for mission planning teams to study and discuss as they listen to the wider church.

Statement of Purpose

- 4.01. The Church is a people created by God in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, called and sent to bear witness to God's creative, redeeming, and sanctifying activity in the world.
- 4.02. To participate in God's mission, this church shall:
 - a. Proclaim God's saving Gospel of justification by grace for Christ's sake through faith alone, according to the apostolic witness in the Holy Scripture, preserving and transmitting the Gospel faithfully to future generations.
 - b. Carry out Christ's Great Commission by reaching out to all people to bring them to faith in Christ and by doing all ministry with a global awareness consistent with the understanding of God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier of all.
 - c. Serve in response to God's love to meet human needs, caring for the sick and the aged, advocating dignity and justice for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, and standing with the poor and powerless and committing itself to their needs.
 - d. Worship God in proclamation of the Word and administration of the sacraments and through lives of prayer, praise, thanksgiving, witness, and service.
 - e. Nurture its members in the Word of God so as to grow in faith and hope and love, to see daily life as the primary setting for the exercise of their Christian calling, and to use the gifts of the Spirit for their life together and for their calling in the world.
 - f. Manifest the unity given to the people of God by living together in the love of Christ and by joining with other Christians in prayer and action to express and preserve the unity which the Spirit gives.

"The Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America reflect both the underlying theology of this church as well as its organizational principles and governance structures. They are ecclesial, legal, planning, and missional documents. Thus, they commit this church in each of its expressions - congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization - to the centrality of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ, carrying out Christ's Great Commission, serving the neighbor in response to God's love, worshiping God, nurturing members in the Word of God, and manifesting the unity given to God's people in living together in Christ."

*Former Secretary of the ELCA
David D. Swartling*



Gifts

The constitution of your congregation

The model constitution for congregations of the ELCA is a valuable tool for mission planning. Just like the ELCA Constitution, the model constitution for congregations helps us to define our purpose and organize and prioritize our activities around fulfilling that purpose. Chapter four of the model constitution lists common goals and functions shared by every congregation in the ELCA, but every congregation lives these out differently in their own context.

WHO WE ARE: GOD'S PEOPLE

Statement of Purpose

C4.01. The Church is a people created by God in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, called and sent to bear witness to God's creative, redeeming, and sanctifying activity in the world.

WHAT WE DO: PARTICIPATE IN GOD'S MISSION

C4.02. To participate in God's mission, this congregation as a part of the Church shall:

- a. Worship God in proclamation of the Word and administration of the sacraments and through lives of prayer, praise, thanksgiving, witness, and service.
- b. Proclaim God's saving Gospel of justification by grace for Christ's sake through faith alone, according to the apostolic witness in the Holy Scripture, preserving and transmitting the Gospel faithfully to future generations.
- c. Carry out Christ's Great Commission by reaching out to all people to bring them to faith in Christ and by doing all ministry with a global awareness consistent with the understanding of God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier of all.
- d. Serve in response to God's love to meet human needs, caring for the sick and the aged, advocating dignity and justice for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, and standing with the poor and powerless and committing itself to their needs.
- e. Nurture its members in the Word of God so as to grow in faith and hope and love, to see daily life as the primary setting for the exercise of their Christian calling, and to use the gifts of the Spirit for their life together and for their calling in the world.
- f. Manifest the unity given to the people of God by living together in the love of Christ and by joining with other Christians in prayer and action to express and preserve the unity which the Spirit gives.

HOW WE PARTICIPATE IN MISSION: MINISTRIES

C4.03. To fulfill these purposes, this congregation shall:

- a. Provide services of worship at which the Word of God is preached and the sacraments are administered.
- b. Provide pastoral care and assist all members to participate in this ministry.
- c. Challenge, equip, and support all members in carrying out their calling in their daily lives and in their congregation.
- d. Teach the Word of God.
- e. Witness to the reconciling Word of God in Christ, reaching out to all people.
- f. Respond to human need, work for justice and peace, care for the sick and the suffering, and participate responsibly in society.
- g. Motivate its members to provide financial support for the congregation's ministry and the ministry of other parts of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- h. Foster and participate in interdependent relationships with other congregations, the synod, and the churchwide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- i. Foster and participate in ecumenical relationships consistent with churchwide policy.



Gifts

Living out the baptismal covenant

We are welcomed into the church at baptism. And at the same time, we are welcomed into God's work: the mission we share as the body of Christ. The planning team may focus their discussions about mission planning around the church's liturgical resources for baptism - especially the affirmation of the baptismal covenant. What does it mean, not only for individuals, but for the whole congregation, to continue in the covenant of baptism together?

You have made public profession of your faith.
Do you intend to continue in the covenant
God made with you in holy baptism:
to live among God's faithful people,
to hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper,
to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed,
to serve all people, following the example of Jesus,
and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth?

I do, and I ask God to help and guide me.

The baptismal covenant draws us into deep relationships with God, with the church, and with all the people of the world. The mission planning process invites us to be very intentional about these relationships as we listen to God, to the community of faith, and to our neighbors near and far. These themes are revisited in the marks of discipleship: worship, study, pray, give, serve, encourage, invite, and lead.

Find more information about the baptismal covenant resources from the ELCA's faith practices page here: <http://www.elca.org/Resources/Faith-Practices#>.



God, who is rich in mercy and love, gives us a new birth into a living hope through the sacrament of baptism. By water and the Word, God delivers us from sin and death and raises us to new life in Jesus Christ. We are united with all the baptized in the one body of Christ, anointed with the gift of the Holy Spirit, and joined in God's mission for the life of the world.

ELW page 227



Gifts

The bishop's vision for the synod

GOD'S MISSION IN THIS TIME AND PLACE

- + That we, as members of the Body of Christ, gathered in congregations, would bear witness to Jesus Christ by growing in discipleship and service to the world.
- + That we will be willing to take risks and adapt our evangelism and service to our changing world.
- + That we will radically welcome the stranger.
- + That we do long-term missional visioning, embracing risks and changes that may come, and reviewing annually.
- + That we will come to love the question, "What needs to change in this congregation in order to live into God's mission?"
- + That we engage in God's mission, both near and far.
- + That we would combine Matthew 28:18-20 with Matthew 22:36-40 as we live into God's Mission: "Go make disciples with Love God and love your neighbor."

ANCIENT MARKS OF DISCIPLESHIP

- + That the marks of discipleship would be taken seriously and joyfully by all.
- + That all members would dig deeply into daily Scripture reading, and regular Scripture study led by trained leaders into a Lutheran way of understanding Scripture.
- + Each person practices daily prayer, including prayer for each other, our communities and the world.
- + Each person makes time for weekly worship with the community.
- + Each person nurtures a relationship with at least one other Christian person for mutual growth into the gift of faith.
- + That each person is encouraged and equipped to serve in at least one ministry through the congregation and one in the community.
- + That every congregation engages in year-long stewardship education which includes stewardship of our families, our communities, the earth, and God's mission (not just budget-passing).
- + That each person grows into the joy of tithing (10% of income, however you figure it).
- + That each person grows in their confidence and practice of inviting others into the faith.

ACCOMPANYING YOUTH

That we would continue our intentional focus on young people through:

- + Genuine relationships
- + Leadership development
- + Discipleship practices
- + Full integration into the body of Christ

CONGREGATIONAL LEADERS WILL FOCUS ON:

- + Preaching, teaching, faith formation, sacramental and pastoral care.
- + Equipping us to seek out and do God's mission.
- + Encouraging us into ever-widening circles of ministries.
- + Engaging regularly in missional, biblical, and theological education.

SO THAT:

- + We will be a community that grows leaders – of all kinds!
- + People will hear the gospel in a way that makes sense in their context.
- + Bullies and busybodies would be re-directed into life-giving ministry.
- + Our church buildings serve as a tool for God's mission.
- + We grow in understanding other religions while maintaining our own faithful witness.
- + Together we are a community of faith where every member understands God's mission as the very reason for the church!



Bishop Thomas Aitken's Vision for the Northeastern Minnesota Synod

As God's people, we understand that "God's church does not have a mission; God's mission has a church" and that church is us.

Bishop Thomas Aitken



Gifts

Listening to the community

Our congregations are set in the context of communities, whether they are urban, small town, or rural. Part of the mission planning process is listening to, engaging, and recommitting ourselves to those communities and the people who live in them, work in them, go to school and recreate in them. To gain a better understanding of the community's needs and opportunities, and to gain a better perspective of how the church is viewed within the community, we need to be listening to members of these communities.

Individual members of the congregation (and not just the pastor or paid "staff") will want to make one-to-one contacts within the community. Meet with community members where they work, in their homes, or public places like coffee shops, bars, the library or community center. Most important in these contacts is that we, as members of the church, listen. Give others the chance to talk to us about their hopes and dreams, their fears and frustrations for their community, their friends and family, themselves.

The congregation can also host group conversations. Consider inviting community members and leaders together for a forum or a group discussion about the community. Ask "nones" and "dones" to be part of the conversation. Involve members of other congregations and faith communities.

Do not make excuses to avoid community outreach. As members of the church, we are already part of the community. We live, work, shop, dine, and go to school in these communities. The people in the community are our neighbors. When we approach community outreach from a position of respect and genuine care, our honest questions will be well-received. People who start from a defensive position, or whose intentions are to recruit members or demand immediate answers to awkward questions will be frustrated in their outreach. Beware of your motivation for connecting with your neighbors in the community. Our primary motivation is love, deeply grounded in the gospel of Jesus.

Talk with people who are already involved in the community, and have demonstrated that they, too, have the best interests of their neighbors in mind. Who are your community members and leaders? People with valuable insights into your community are not always in high profile jobs, but are active in rarely recognized positions or volunteer behind-the-scenes. Many of them are members of your church or another church already.



All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

Matthew 28:18-20

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Acts 1:8



Gifts Community outreach

Our congregations are set in the context of communities, whether they are urban, small town, or rural. Part of the mission planning process is listening to, engaging, and recommitting ourselves to those communities and the people who live in them, work in them, go to school and recreate in them. To gain a better understanding of the community's needs and opportunities, and to gain a better perspective of how the church is viewed within the community

Individual members of the congregation (and not just the pastor or paid "staff") will want to make one-to-one contacts within the community. Meet with community members where they work, in their homes, or public places like coffee shops, bars, the library or community center. Most important in these contacts is that we, as members of the church, listen. Give others the chance to talk to us about their hopes and dreams, their fears and frustrations for their community, their friends and family, themselves.

The congregation can also host group conversations. Consider inviting community members and leaders together for a forum or a group discussion about the community. Ask "nones" and "dones" to be part of the conversation. Involve members of other congregations and faith communities to join you.

Do not make excuses to avoid community outreach. As members of the church, we are already part of the community. We live, work, shop, dine, and go to school in these communities. The people in the community are our neighbors. When we approach community outreach from a position of respect and genuine care, our honest questions will be well-received. People who start from a defensive position, or whose intentions are to recruit members or demand immediate answers to awkward questions will be frustrated in their outreach. Beware of your motivation for connecting with your neighbors in the community. Our primary motivation is love, deeply grounded in the gospel of Jesus.

Talk with people who are already involved in the community, and have demonstrated that they, too, have the best interests of their neighbors in mind. Who are your community members and leaders? People with valuable insights into your community are not always in high profile jobs, but are active in rarely recognized positions or volunteer behind-the-scenes. Many of them are members of your church or another church already.



Stir up in your people the gift of your Holy Spirit: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, the spirit of joy in your presence, both now and forever. Amen.



Gifts

Conversations with our neighbors

Addiction Prevention and Recovery Groups

DARE
AA, Alanon, Gamanon

Community Support Groups

Friends of the Library
Park Advisory Council

Animal Care Groups

Humane Society

Anti-crime Groups

Neighborhood Watch
Police Department

Business Organizations

Rotary
Chamber of Commerce

Charitable Groups

Hospital Auxiliary
United Way

Cultural Groups

Community Choir
Drama/ Theater Groups

Disability/ Special Needs Groups

Local Mental Health Association

Education Groups

Parent-Teacher Associations
School Board

Elderly Groups

Seniors Clubs
Nursing Homes

Environmental Groups

Recycling
Parks and Recreation

Family Support Groups

Early Childhood Family Education
LaLeche League

Health and Fitness Groups

Fitness Clubs
Portico

Heritage Groups

Historical Society
Sons of Norway

Hobby Groups

Arts and Crafts Center
Garden Club

Men's Groups

Boy Scouts
Shriner's

Mentoring Groups

After School Programs

Mutual Support Groups

Grief Support Groups
Cancer Survivors

Political Organizations

Democratic & Republican Offices
City Council Members
Office of the Mayor

Recreation Groups

Bowling Leagues
Softball/ Baseball Leagues
Hunting & Rifle Associations

Religious Groups

Other churches
Other religious groups

Service Clubs

Lions Club
Kiwanis

Social Cause/ Advocacy Groups

Soup Kitchen
Safe House

Union Groups

North East Area Labor Council
United Steel Workers

Veterans' Groups

American Legion
VFW

Women's Groups

American Association of University Women
Girl Scouts

Youth Groups

Little Leagues
4 H
Key Club



Gifts

Connecting to listen, listening to connect

Mission planning requires us to listen to God, to the church, and especially to our neighbor. The church exists to bear witness to the good news of Christ in the world. In our changing context, we must always strive to connect with the people in our communities and carefully listen to the needs and concerns of our neighbors in order to effectively proclaim the gospel in both word and deed.

Reaching out into the community, we listen with deep compassion and interest to our neighbors' responses to the following (or similarly inquisitive) questions:

"When you hear the words "Fill-in-the-blank" Lutheran Church, what comes to mind? What do you know about this congregation?"

Does your neighbor know about your church? If so, what do they know? Does your congregation have a reputation for being a center for mission and a community of good works?

"What are the most pressing needs of this community? What needs to happen here?"

What do people in the neighborhood or area surrounding your church see happening in the community? What needs to change? What needs attention?

"How do you think the church (or *Fill-in-the-blank Lutheran Church*) might help meet those needs? How can we be better partners in the community?"

You may receive significant help in defining your church's mission by listening to the community members. Is there some need that might be met by using or re-purposing one of your church's assets?

By listening, perhaps you simply learn from these community members what it is they believe the church should be doing, however realistic or unrealistic that might be. You are collecting information and laying the foundation for relationships beyond the four walls of the building. You are connecting to listen, and listening to connect.

"We are a church first. And at the heart of what we do is worship, and the heart of that is Jesus Christ. We are church for the sake of the world. We weren't redeemed to just think good thoughts of Jesus Christ. We're supposed to be out there, helping to bring about the abundant life."

*Presiding Bishop
Elizabeth Eaton*

"This is Christ's church. There is a place for you here. We are the church that shares a living, daring confidence in God's grace. Liberated by our faith, we embrace you as a whole person— questions, complexities and all. Join us as we do God's work in Christ's name for the life of the world."

*Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America*



Goals

Asset mapping

What is God's will for this community? How will God use us and our gifts in mission?
What are our goals as a congregation?

Asset mapping is an important piece when a congregation begins to establish missional goals. When we begin with assets, and not deficits, we have a more positive outlook on our situation and we are able to focus on working with what God has given us, the gifts we already have - rather than what we can't do because of the things (people, resources, etc) that we don't seem to have.

Invite members to form small groups to focus on the congregation's assets. Make an inventory of the assets under every category of the congregation's work (use the faith practices or existing committee categories as a guide). Ask the participants to list as many of the congregation's assets under each category: these might be people, events, ministries, funds, locations, etc.. Talk about which of these assets is especially helpful in advancing the gospel. Who is it intended to reach? How effective is it? Can it become a better tool for our witness to the community?

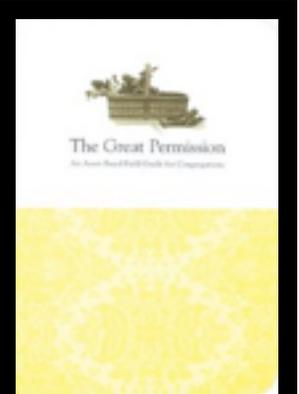
There is no one way a congregation must go about asset mapping. You may want to consider using one of these excellent resources for asset mapping:

The Great Permission: An Asset-Based Field Guide for Congregations from the ELCA:
http://resources.elca.org/Stewardship-Great_Permission_Asset-based_Field_Guide.html

From *The Power of Asset Mapping: How Your Congregation Can Act on Its Gifts* by Luther K. Snow (the Alban Institute):
https://alban.org/uploadedFiles/Alban/Bookstore/pdf/resources/Asset_Mapping/resource2.pdf

From *Some Basic Asset mapping Instructions* by Dave Daubert on the South Dakota Synod's website: <https://www.google.com/>

Through using this asset mapping process, and with significant input from as many members of the church as possible, clear themes will begin to develop: certain gifts or ministries will consistently be raised up as important to the mission of the congregation; new ideas or topics for ministry will emerge. These are the points to reconsider as the congregation listens to the community around the church and begins to form goals for the congregations future.



What is an asset-based approach?

An asset way of thinking and behaving helps God's people move past problems and toward opportunities.

Needs don't disappear in asset-based planning. They're just not the place to start, nor the place to get stuck.

This approach helps people name their assets. Then they can begin to know and value themselves better.

The Great Permission



Goals

Faith practice conversations

Worship

How do we worship God? How do we extend our worship beyond the gathered assembly? How might we renew the Word and Sacrament ministry of this congregation? What would liturgical renewal look like here?

Study

How do we promote and offer life-long learning to the members of this congregation? How do we teach the faith in this time of constant change? Who is involved in studying?

Pray

How do we pray for our members, the community, and the world? How do we promote individual and communal spiritual practices? Is our congregation in need of a spiritual renewal?

Give

How do we ask for gifts in this congregation? How and where do we spend money? How are we making faithful decisions about our financial planning? Is stewardship a year-round ministry here?

Serve

How do members serve within this congregation? How do members serve beyond the congregation in the immediate and wider community? How do we live out Jesus' command to love one another? Are we promoting servant leadership or asking for volunteers?

Encourage

How do we experience and extend fellowship to others? How do we reach out to members and others in difficult times? Are we hospitable, inclusive and caring here?

Invite

How do we invite people to join our church? How do we assimilate people into the ministries of this congregation? What is our evangelism strategy here? Do we understand the difference between inviting and welcoming?

Lead

How do we organize and equip our leadership? How can we connect all of our committees and organizations to the mission of the church? What do we do to encourage our pastor/ rostered leader? Do we understand administration as a ministry here?



These faith practices provide a guide for congregations, planning teams, and individuals as they consider the core activities or characteristics of a life of Christian discipleship. Consider using the questions under each of these marks of discipleship as the main categories to talk about your congregation's current assets and their goals for the future. Perhaps there are other faith practices you organize around in your context. Feel free to add, blend, or remove categories as it makes sense for your planning process. These conversations are an important part of forming realistic goals.



Guide

Writing and submitting a mission plan

When a planning team has led a congregation through the process of listening to God, the church, and the world, and has spent time discerning what God is calling them to focus on, invest in, learn about, and act on, they are ready to create a mission plan. The plan itself is a document that they will use to give focus and guidance to the pastor and council as they continue to lead the congregation in its missional activity.

Once written, the team should present their mission plan to the council for approval. The council may want to present the plan to the congregation for approval, as well. This is not necessarily required, unless the plans include major changes to the congregation's mission, practices, property or staffing, or if pursuing the plan requires a financial commitment beyond the council's ability to approve.

The mission plan would become a central document at staff meetings, council, and committee meetings, and at other times when priorities are made, ministries are evaluated, events are planned, or decisions about the assets of the congregation are made, etc.. The written plan helps keep the work of the church intentionally focused on the work of God that has been discerned through this process.

The pastor of the congregation should forward a copy of the written mission plan onto the bishop of the synod. The bishop plans to use these plans, not only as evidence of the congregation's commitment to vital, gospel-focused work in their context, but as a tool to encourage other congregations who are involved in this planning process. Plans might be shared (anonymously if so desired by the pastor) to demonstrate the variety of innovative ministries happening around our synod, and how teams of committed leaders can instill a spirit of interest and excitement in a congregation's life through mission planning.

A congregation's mission plan may be short-term (one to three years) or may be focused on a longer span of time (five- or ten-year goals). Plans may be formally adopted as a continuing resolution in the congregation's governing documents, or they may be used by the leaders of the church as an informal, yet important, tool to focus their everyday work. There is no requirement as to how these plans will be used. The most important aspect of the plan is not that it is completed and filed away at the synod office, but that it is developed and used in the congregation, bringing new energy and hope in the life of the baptized.

What are your hopes for the future of this church?

What drew you to this congregation and what helps you feel connected?

What important things should this church do in the future – in your community and in the world?

Who would you like to see joining your congregation, and how might this happen?

What are the two biggest challenges facing your church right now? Do you have any ideas to address these issues and move us forward?

*Called Forward
Together in Christ*



Guide

A written mission plan's content

A mission plan should address these main points:

What is it the congregation is going to focus on? What is the mission emphasis they will focus on, and specifically, what will they do?

The plan should explain **why** they have chosen this specific focus. What are the reasons for developing or learning more about this ministry or event?

The plan should detail **how** the congregation might go about accomplishing their missional goals.

Who is going to be involved? Who is responsible for carrying it out? Who is the intended audience of this ministry?

When will the congregation begin to address the missional goals set forth by the team? Is there a timeline you will follow in pursuing your goals?

How much will this cost? Is there money budgeted to handle any financial commitments incurred by this mission focus?

How will the congregation **measure** success? Are there clear signs that this mission work is being carried out? Are there signs that it is not happening or creating the intended outcome?

Who will **review** this mission work? Is the planning team responsible for keeping the congregation focused? Is the council or the pastor accountable for the missional leadership in the congregation?

Consider creating your own document, or using the example format on the next page as a guide.

Claimed by God's grace for the sake of the world, we are a new creation through God's living word by the power of the Holy Spirit;

Gathered by God's grace for the sake of the world, we will live among God's faithful people, hear God's word and share Christ's supper;

Sent by God's grace for the sake of the world, we will proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, serve all people following the example of our Lord Jesus, and strive for justice and peace in all the world.

Vision of the ELCA



Guide

An example of a written mission plan

The *mission planning team/ congregation council* of *Name of Congregation - City/ Location* has intentionally worked on, created, and written this mission plan and we submit it to the congregation and to the bishop of the Northeastern Minnesota Synod on *Date*.

WHAT

Our primary mission emphasis for the next *number of years*, is _____.
Specifically, we plan to: *describe what the congregation will undertake in this specific area*.

WHY

The *mission planning team/ congregation council* has chosen to focus on _____
because: *describe reasons for this primary mission emphasis*.

In order to accomplish *this/ these* goals:

WHO

We direct our congregation council with: *specific things the congregation council will do to accomplish this work*.

We direct our *Name of committee/ board* with: *specific things the Name of committee/ board will do to accomplish this work*.

We direct our *pastor/ staff member* with: *specific things the pastor/ staff member will do to accomplish this work*.

We direct *Name of individuals, groups, etc* with: *specific things the Name of individuals, groups, etc will do to accomplish this work*.

WHEN

We will begin this process by *Date*. We will receive regular updates on this work every *number of months at meeting/ event*. We hope to have met our goal by *Date*.

COST

We will budget \$ *Amount* over the next *number of months/ years* to *fund/ pay for/ invest* in this mission emphasis, specifically in order to cover *education, staffing, advertising, product, etc* costs.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

We will have met our goal when: *describe some outcomes you would like to see in order to call this mission emphasis a success or a successful attempt/ beginning ...*

ACCOUNTABILITY AND REVIEW

Our congregation council is responsible for pursuing these goals and will review these goals every *number of months at our regularly scheduled council meetings*. We will make a full review of this mission emphasis on *Date*.



Go

Plans in action: God's work. Our hands.

Marked with the cross of Christ forever, we are claimed, gathered and sent for the sake of the world. This is the mission statement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. As members of the ELCA, we believe that we are freed in Christ to serve and love our neighbor. With our hands, we do God's work of restoring and reconciling communities in Jesus' name throughout the world.

Using your mission plan as a guide, your congregation will go into the world with renewed passion for the mission we share: proclaim the good news of Christ in word and deed to the glory of God, for the good of the church, and for the love of our neighbors.

God's work.
Our hands.



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