

**Lower Susquehanna Synod – ELCA  
900 S. Arlington Avenue – Suite 208  
Harrisburg, PA 17109**

**Committee for Evangelism and Outreach  
Mission Plan for the New Decade**

*Approved by Synod Council on  
February 5, 2000*

## **Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Lower Susquehanna Synod: S11.01.07**

*The Committee for Evangelism and Outreach shall provide leadership and support for this synod as it reaches out in witness to the Gospel in areas served by this synod by developing new ministries and congregations; working toward the goal of full partnership and participation of people of all races, nationalities, and languages in the life of this synod; supporting existing ministries, and congregations in transition or with special needs; and developing area strategies for outreach taking into account the multicultural needs of the area. To fulfill these responsibilities, this committee shall develop and recommend policy related to the development of new ministries and congregations; assist this synod and its congregations to minister in a multicultural context; support and assist those in transition and with special needs; coordinate Mission Partners and Mission Builders programs in this synod; emphasize programs of evangelism, and relate to outreach ministries supported by the Division for Outreach.*

***Bishop Carol Hendrix, 10/22/01***

*Together, we the baptized people of God known as the Lower Susquehanna Synod, are nourished and strengthened by our Lord in Word and sacraments and called to make Christ known in this new century. In responding to this call and in the power of God's Holy Spirit, we seek to proclaim the good news of Jesus near and far; to reach out in love and compassion to all in need; to teach the faith handed on to us from the apostles; to work for peace and justice; and to be faithful stewards of all God has given us, that all will know Christ's love and so become his disciples.*

## **Committee for Evangelism and Outreach Draft A Plan for Mission in the Lower Susquehanna Synod - ELCA**

*"And Jesus came to them and said, '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, NRSV).*

It is our understanding that this statement is the mandate to the church for mission.

This understanding is further defined by eight Foundational Statements. These statements help the church to focus on its mandate to mission. In order to keep in sight the mission with which our Lord has entrusted us, the church in the Lower Susquehanna Synod must turn to these Foundational Statements to set the tenor and direction of its ministries.

**Foundational Statement #1:** Witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ, through words, in all their forms, and through acts of service meeting concrete needs of persons and communities, shall be the first priority of this synod. All decisions about program and budget shall be oriented to this priority.

**Foundational Statement #2:** "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God - what is good and acceptable and perfect"(Romans 12:2).

The will of God is revealed to his people as they enter into conversation with God through the study of God's Word, and through prayer. Gatherings within this synod (groups within congregations, conferences, Synod Council, annual assembly) shall make it a priority to be engaged in regular Bible study. That study shall include focusing questions such as: What is the Word of God in this text? What would God have us to be? What would God have us to do? The disciples listened to Jesus and heard "the great commission." So the people of this synod, also disciples of Jesus, must be engaged in serious and ongoing corporate and individual prayer as they seek to hear Christ's call to mission.

**Foundational Statement #3:** The necessity for the spiritual formation of pastors and lay persons shall be emphasized as a matter central to the integrity of mission. Pastors and lay people shall be informed, and encouraged to avail themselves, of opportunities for spiritual formation. Such opportunities include but are not limited to: the ministry of Wittel Farm House of Prayer, the Society of the Holy Trinity, seminary course offerings, and continuing education events.

**Foundational Statement #4:** Healthy interpersonal and congregational process shall be fostered (see the work of *Friedman and Steinke*, for example) with the understanding that mission goals and priorities will not be postponed or thwarted by unhealthy process.

**Foundational Statement #5:** In order to respond positively to God's call, congregations are encouraged to employ processes of discernment. While parliamentary procedure can be helpful in the discernment process, it is to be understood that the parliamentary process is not synonymous with discernment.

**Foundational Statement #6:** Congregations in pastoral transition will receive names of candidates when they have (a) a plan for mission in place, or (b) a plan for mission under development.

**Foundational Statement #7:** A Mission Endowment Fund shall be established for the purpose of new ministry starts and redevelopment of existing congregations. Closing congregations shall be encouraged to place assets in the Mission Endowment Fund. Undesignated assets of closing congregations shall go to the Mission Endowment Fund. Additional resources for the Mission Endowment Fund shall come from gifts from merging and consolidating congregations, from other congregations, and from individuals.

**Foundational Statement #8:** Planning for mission, in all its particulars, shall include consideration of the implications for ecumenical relationships. It is important to strengthen and to expand existing partnerships, such as the St. Barnabas Center for Ministry in Harrisburg. In the case of the Latino ministry in Lancaster, consultation with ecumenical partners is necessary and basic.

Based on the Mandate to Mission and the eight Foundational Statements, the Committee for Evangelism and Outreach will be engaged in the following Proposals for Action. These proposals are geared to the context in which we find ourselves at this time, and are to be understood as flexible, given the inevitability of change in the context in which we live and are engaged in ministry.

### **Proposal: Assessing the Will for Mission**

Assessment of mission needs and opportunities must be done at every level: Congregation, conference, and synod. Each congregation, each conference, and this synod itself shall be involved in annual assessment of mission needs and opportunities. Area strategies shall be developed and coordinated. Pastors and lay persons need to be trained for mission.

The will of congregations for mission will be assessed in a process that provides for the participation of the bishop and his/her staff, the Synod Council, conference deans, and congregational leaders. The results of the assessment will be communicated honestly to each congregation.

Congregations desiring "maintenance ministry" will be assisted in such ministry (within the realities of budget and availability of pastoral candidates).

Congregations having adequate leadership and resources will be encouraged and supported as they move forward in witness and service.

Congregations with potential for renewal will be encouraged to enter into opportunities for redevelopment training, possibly with funding provided by the Division for Outreach of the ELCA.

### **Proposal: Interim Pastors**

A group of at least six persons shall be trained to serve as interim pastors. One function of the trained interim pastors would be to assist congregations in transition to develop viable plans for mission.

When notice of a pastoral resignation or retirement is made, congregations entering a call process should be encouraged to participate in the Beginning Ministry Together process.

### **Proposal: Mission and Location**

Urban congregations and immediately adjacent suburban congregations will need to work together to meet the challenges of mission in the urban setting. For example in Harrisburg, a new urban cluster might be formed; in York, the present strength of urban congregations may allow them to become a model for urban clustering; and in Lancaster, outreach to the Latino population should be pursued to implementation, while the existing urban cluster should be encouraged to look beyond Latino ministry to other areas of mission and mutual support, including a shared mission plan.

Suburban congregations will need to plan for mission in the midst of their changing circumstances.

Town and rural congregations will need to think of mission on a cluster basis as they discern their futures and develop plans for mission.

Congregations are always discerning their missions in an ecumenical context.

### **Proposal: Mission and Shared Ministries - Co-operatives, Clusters, and Yokings**

Opportunities for shared ministries will be identified and encouraged. Examples of shared ministries include the following:

- **Support Ministries:** One or more congregations support another congregation in a specific effort;
- **Adoptive Ministries:** A congregation with greater resources might temporarily "adopt" a congregation with lesser resources to assist that congregation in a particular area of its mission;
- **Yoked Ministries:** Two or more congregations come together to share ministry;
- **Task Ministries:** Congregations work together around a specific purpose, such as a confirmation camp;
- **Cluster Ministries:** Congregations cluster for mission and provision of resources;
- **Co-operative Ministries:** Congregations come together in a "formal" agreement for more effective mission and for sharing of resources.
- **Merger or consolidation:** Two or more congregations come together in a unified ministry;
- **SMO Ministry:** One or more congregations work with a social ministry organization to accomplish a specific mission;
- **Multiple-Point Ministries:** Two or more congregations work together collaboratively for effective mission and ministry. They are frequently staffed by one or more rostered and volunteer leaders who serve the whole parish;
- **Mission Partners:** Congregations and members of congregations may support new and/or renewing congregations out of their own resources.

## **Proposal: Mission - Special Opportunities and Challenges (Geographic)**

Areas will be identified where new mission starts or relocations are needed. Available information, including demographic studies, will be used to pinpoint such areas. Current examples of areas of significant growth include:

- The I-83 corridor in York County;
- The I-81 corridor in Franklin County;
- The area of Lancaster County, north of the city of Lancaster;
- The area of Lancaster County near the Reading Interchange of I-76, adjacent to Routes 272 and 222 (here, some planning in concert with the Northeast Penn Synod may be in order);
- The area south of Fairfield and Route 116, between Gettysburg and Waynesboro;
- The area north of Harrisburg along Routes 22/322 (in the vicinity of Dauphin);
- The area of southern Perry County where growth is expected following the completion of Routes 22/322 construction and resolution of sewage treatment issues.
- The area of south of the City of Lebanon.

Areas of slow, steady growth will be identified, with congregations in those areas being encouraged to respond positively to the growth (for example, see the area around Roxbury/Newburg in northern Franklin and southwestern Cumberland counties).

Specific population segments will be identified for mission opportunities. Taken into consideration will be the mission opportunities in areas where agriculture and employment possibilities are in decline, where populations are aging, where mission among migrant workers is needed, and where communities are experiencing cultural change.

Mission opportunities can be explored in areas of population decline.

## **Proposal: Mission - Special Opportunities and Challenges (Social)**

Word of Life Deaf Lutheran Church in Lancaster is becoming a base for Deaf Ministry in the synod. The synod will utilize the gifts of a Deaf Ministry missionary to provide ministry for Word of Life Deaf, to assist in Deaf Ministry at Zion (Penbrook) in Harrisburg, and to seek opportunities to develop Deaf Ministry in other areas of this synod. The Deaf Ministry missionary also will serve as a resource person to the congregations of our synod.

Additionally, lay leaders for Deaf ministries should be trained, and Deaf persons should be recruited for alternate routes to ordination.

Multicultural and ethnic specific ministries are important in the ongoing mission of this synod. Opportunities for such ministries include, but are not limited to:

- Developing refugee ministries;
- encouraging continued sponsorship of refugees;
- seeking ways to do mission among refugee communities;
- partnering of congregations with one another to develop ministries among the Hispanic and Latino population;
- calling by Synod Council of an urban missionary to develop a new multicultural congregation;
- sharing resources with other congregations and agencies within and beyond this synod;
- training of lay persons for multicultural ministries; and
- identifying and encouraging persons from various races, cultures, and ethnic groups to consider God's call to ordained or other rostered ministries. Alternate routes to ordination for such persons may be considered.

Every congregation will be encouraged to walk with the poor, rather than doing ministry to the poor.

Congregations will be encouraged to develop ministries of hospitality among persons who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, and or dealing with other sexual identity issues.

Congregations are encouraged to develop specific ministries for young people.

Congregations will be encouraged to develop ministries among groups with special needs including, but not limited to, the mentally ill, the emotionally ill, and prisoners and persons newly released from prison and their families.

Congregations will be encouraged to move toward full accessibility for persons with disabilities, including the mentally challenged.

## **Proposal: Support for Congregational Leadership - Consultative Support**

Elements of consultative support might include the following:

- The recruitment of pastors, other rostered persons, and lay persons who could be trained as mission planning consultants (training to be provided by the Division for Outreach of the ELCA);
- The provision of consultative teams for congregations developing mission plans;
- The provision of self-guided mission planning processes for congregations;
- The provision of resources and support for congregations in the mission planning process:
  - ◆ Discernment, which is the process of seeking guidance from the Holy Spirit through prayer and reflective Bible study around questions like, what is the Word of God in this text? What would God have us be? And, what would God have us do?;
  - ◆ Mission planning, which, following discernment, is a process of seeking concrete and specific ways in which a congregation will be in mission in the name of Christ;
- The encouragement of congregations to pay for one another in the mission planning process.

## **Proposal: Support for Congregational Leadership - Transformational Leadership Development Training**

With the help of the Division for Outreach of the ELCA, mission development training should be provided for all newly ordained pastors, and redevelopment training should be provided for all synod pastors and congregational leaders over a period of years. This process of redevelopment training could begin with selected pastors and lay leaders from congregations that have demonstrated readiness for redevelopment. It could be done in several ways including a single event in this synod, a series of events over a period of several years, a series of events in different locations.

## **Proposal: Support for Congregational Leadership - Resource Centers**

Congregations shall be encouraged to use the mission-related materials available at the Resource Centers. Additionally, the Resource Centers shall be encouraged to increase the size and scope of mission-related materials for loan to congregations.

## **Proposal: Committee for Evangelism and Outreach Participation**

The Committee for Evangelism and Outreach shall continue, expand, or initiate the following as appropriate:

- Fostering and modeling a positive climate for mission in this synod;
- The involvement of Mission Consultants in the work of the Committee for Evangelism and Outreach;
- The offering of mission events on a synod-wide or conference-wide basis (and exploration for funding of the same);
- The provision of training for congregational lay leaders in the discipling and retention of members;
- The advisement of Synod Council in all aspects of planning and doing mission in the Lower Susquehanna Synod;
- The expansion of the Committee for Evangelism and Outreach to include persons with gifts for evangelism and outreach.
- Task groups may be established to oversee the details of special orders that come before the committee
- The expansion of communication about mission in this synod;
  - ◆ Publicizing models of mission in this synod;
  - ◆ Making known what congregations are doing in mission;
  - ◆ Assisting congregations, in cooperation with the Synodical Office for Communication, in the use of media for evangelism and outreach;
  - ◆ Utilizing the opportunities and talents of persons in teaching congregations.
- Encouraging congregations in the use of electronic communications;
- Exploring the possibilities of evangelism on the Internet.

## **Proposal: Division for Outreach (ELCA) Participation**

The Division for Outreach shall assist this synod in the following ways:

- Recommending and/or devising instruments for assessing the vitality and mission orientation of congregations;
- Identifying existing congregations and new ministries that would qualify for partnership support.
- Providing consultation in the initiation and development of new starts including traditional new starts, consolidations, relocations, and multicultural and ethnic specific ministries.
- Assisting in the development of training events for pastors and lay leaders in the areas of redevelopment and building readiness for change.
- Assisting this synod in identifying, selecting, training, and mentoring leadership for new starts and mission initiatives in existing congregations.
- Assisting this synod in working with existing congregations that are dealing with significant change issues.
- Assisting the Committee for Evangelism and Outreach in training mission planning consultants.

There is a need to bring resolution to the recent conversations between the Committee for Evangelism and Outreach (LSS) and the Division for Outreach (ELCA) about the nature and details of the partnership between the two.

## **Proposal: Synod Council Participation**

The Synod Council shall provide assistance in the following ways:

- Developing, in concert with the Committee for Evangelism and Outreach, a consultative mission assessment process for congregations to be used either annually or biennially;
- Providing adequate resources of budget and personnel to initiate mission planning processes involving congregations, conferences, and this synod.

**ENDNOTE:** *Upon adoption of a mission plan by the Synod Council, the Committee for Evangelism and Outreach will assist the Synod Council in preparing a plan for implementation of the same that may include recommendations for priorities, staffing, and funding.*