

# Lower Susquehanna Synod

## Stewardship Education and Mission Support Strategy

### Definition

Stewardship is *how we* faithfully and responsibly *spend all of life* out of gratitude for the gift of Jesus Christ for the whole world.

### Core Values

1. Thanksgiving - All we have is from God
2. Every gift is for God's mission
3. The need of the giver to give
4. Proportional Giving - Giving first from what we receive
5. Church is interdependent

To implement the Core Values within the synod there are four areas of primary focus:

### Mission Support

**Goal:** Seek to ensure adequate financial support and other resources for all expressions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to assist in carrying out its mission.

**Rationale:** Congregational offerings to the Lower Susquehanna Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are part of the ways in which congregations support and resource one another and the wider church for Christ's mission in the world. These gifts of money are part of our offering to God, entrusted to the church, to help one another carry out God's mission together. As congregations and synods, we are partners for God's mission through the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the whole church.

**Strategy:** Congregations will be asked annually to consider prayerfully and to indicate to the synod the amount of money the congregation intends to give for Mission Support of the Lower Susquehanna Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The basis for Mission Support is to be a percentage of the congregation's regular giving. The Intention of Mission Support can include other committed benevolence offerings of the congregation.

**Strategy:** Consultations will be held with congregational leaders to assist the leaders in planning their Intention of Mission Support.

**Strategy:** Conference deans and secretaries will be included in correspondence from the synod office concerning Mission Support from congregations.

## Education

**Goal:** Encourage conversation about the definition of stewardship and the core values to assist congregations and their members to respond faithfully to God's gifts.

**Rationale:** Developing common understandings and practical resources for congregations to enhance and to grow in faith and understanding of Christian stewardship.

**Strategy:** Educational resources will be provided to congregations, conferences of the synod, and synod-wide. Partnerships between congregations are encouraged to address specific stewardship educational needs (peer to peer assistance).

**Strategy:** Lay and clergy practicums will be provided on a regular basis. Other stewardship educational opportunities will be provided at synod-wide forums, such as Congregations Together In Mission and the annual synod assembly.

**Strategy:** Print and internet resources will be made available, such as the printed stewardship resources from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the resources from the Stewardship of Life Institute, and resources on the synodical website.

## Mission Interpretation and Communication

**Goal:** Using a variety of media, especially the human voice of faith, tell the mission stories of what God is doing through the Church, including a particular focus on ministries of the ELCA in its many and various places.

**Rationale:** Telling mission stories is not the same as sharing information or learning and study. Telling the story of what the living Christ is doing through the Church's ministry typically generates and/or invites a faithful and thankful response from listeners.

**Strategy:** Summarize and describe what the Lower Susquehanna Synod does, using a variety of ways, to connect with members of our congregations so that they can affirm, "Yes, that's a good thing to be doing as the church."

**Strategy:** The Lower Susquehanna Synod Assistant to the Bishop for Evangelical Mission, along with the synod Stewardship Education and Mission Support Table, will communicate quarterly with synod leaders (Synod Council Members, Conference Deans

and Secretaries) about Mission Support challenges and with Mission Interpretation stories. There will also be quarterly communication with congregational treasurers, pastors and Congregation Councils that includes mission interpretation material along with the quarterly giving report.

**Strategy:** The Bishop, Synod Council Members, the Assistant to the Bishop for Evangelical Mission, and conference deans and secretaries will meet annually with Congregation Councils and Assembly voting members for consultation and mission interpretation.

**Strategy:** Conference teams of Mission Interpreters will be created. The Assistant to the Bishop for Evangelical Mission, the Synod Communicator, and/or volunteer Mission Interpretation Coordinator will use primarily electronic technology to provide resources for the Mission Interpreters.

## **Planned Giving**

**Goal:** Create an emphasis on planned giving in congregations, conferences, and this synod.

**Rationale:** Many Christian disciples accumulate assets as they live and grow older. Typically their weekly offering is a portion of their current household income. Gifts and bequests from assets to the mission of the church is another way in which we can exercise Christian stewardship, bear witness to the faith, and support God's mission.

**Strategy:** Provide resources for a wills emphasis in congregations and conferences.

**Strategy:** Encourage the establishment of a Mission Endowment Fund in each congregation that has clear purpose and boundaries.

**Strategy:** Develop a family of synod mission endowment funds to which individual and congregational planned gifts will be invited and encouraged by the regional gift planner of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Foundation and synod leaders. Planned giving opportunities for ELCA-related mission agencies and institutions will also be communicated and encouraged.

Adopted, Synod Council  
20 November, 2010