

UPPER SUSQUEHANNA SYNOD MISSION:

United as Christ's Disciples, we

Support one another; and

Serve God in the World

a strategy of Mission for the Upper Susquehanna Synod

- I. **Mission Statement of the Upper Susquehanna Synod** – Rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit, the Upper Susquehanna Synod supports and assists in the mission and ministry of the congregations of the Upper Susquehanna Synod and our wider ministry together through the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- II. **Introduction** – While discussing mission and ministry in the Upper Susquehanna Synod, the Mission Strategy Table, made up of members of the Mission Support Table and the Mission Table of the synod, concluded that they needed a strategic approach to mission in our synod. A Mission Strategy, we believe, will help us to focus our energy and resources where they can be most effective.

The conversation meandered for a time until the group decided they needed to hear from our constituents, the members of our congregations. From this came a process in which we asked members to respond to two questions: When you hear the words “Upper Susquehanna Synod”, what word or phrase comes to mind? and When you hear the words “Upper Susquehanna Synod;”, what word or phrase would you like to have come to mind?

The responses to the questions were aggregated into a word cloud from which the Mission Strategy Table developed a sense of how our synod is currently perceived, as well as what our constituents feel they need from a synod. It became clear to the group that current perceptions are of a hierarchical, dominating structure that does not provide much to support and assist in ministry and mission of our congregations, whereas the clear desire is for a supportive and enabling organization. With this in mind the Mission Strategy Table worked with Bishop Collins to develop a process for our synod assembly by which we could delve deeper into what support and assistance might look like.

Following the synod assembly, facilitators gathered to reflect on the conversations and discern strategic directions for our synod. From this gathering areas of focus and objectives began to take shape. Once these foci and objectives became clear the Mission Strategy Table developed goals that would lead our synod into the next several years.

The Upper Susquehanna Synod recognizes that a vital church needs participation from all generations. We therefore want to include all ages in our strategy, especially youth and young adults. Running through the strategy is our intention to have diverse representation of ages in all we do.

Our synod transition team in 2016 determined that we want to deepen our relationships with God, one another, our church partners, and the world. We do this especially through

our service to our neighbor in communities and in the world. This strategy seeks to aid our congregations as they develop these relationships among their members.

III. **Areas of Focus** - major theme areas in which we define our strategy

- a. **Church/Unity** We are Church; We are Church Together; We are Lutheran; We are Church for the sake of the world. We are *one, holy, catholic and apostolic* Church. How will we be church and enhance our unity?

- i. *Objective* – to encourage our congregations to strengthen worship and outreach practices so that the Profound Grace of God is proclaimed with clarity and strength within and beyond our congregations, focusing on the words that conclude our liturgies: “Go in peace; **serve** the Lord.”. Goals include:

1. Provide an annual workshop that helps congregation leaders to improve their worship practices;
2. Train laity – especially youth and young adults – in skills for worship leadership using the LMI
3. Assist congregations to train laity about the mission of the church, through faith formation and catechesis.

- ii. *Objective* – to grow a stronger sense of our unity and awareness of our common calling to love of neighbor as Lutherans in the Upper Susquehanna Synod. Goals include:

1. Use time at Assembly to recognize our common heritage as Lutherans in mission, and lift up the connection to the churchwide expression;
2. Organize at least two synodical gatherings per year other than Assembly in which we celebrate our Lutheran unity and receive the diversity of worship and proclamation in our church;
3. Establish multiple Sundays a year in which we recognize and celebrate our companion (ELCA) synod – the Northwest Lower Michigan Synod;
4. Develop resources for deepening our companion global relationships;

- iii. *Objective* – to engage actively with our ecumenical partners, especially those with whom we have full-communion agreements. Goals include:

1. Encourage congregations to gather in local assemblies and include ecumenical partners;
2. Include greetings from ecumenical partners in synod assemblies;
3. Share greetings with gatherings of ecumenical partners;
4. Recognize and celebrate partnerships that exist in our synod now, such as union churches, full-communion ministers serving by

extended service and other arrangements, LARC, disaster response network, local ministeriums.

- b. **Support/Presence** We are a church in relationship with God, each other, our church partners and the world. How can we deepen these relationships?
- i. *Objective* – to strengthen ministry relationships with God, each other and the larger church. Goals include:
 1. Offer opportunities in three conferences each year for members to gather with the bishop, staff and other synod leaders, for worship, prayer and conversation;
 2. Have conferences meet in assembly twice in the year – once for pre-synod assembly purposes and the second for sharing and building relationships with God and each other.
 - ii. *Objective* – Create opportunities for members to listen and build relationships. Goals include:
 1. Bishop and staff seek invitation and use time with congregations to intentionally listen to faith stories of members;
 2. Use synod teams – such as Mission Interpreters, Healthy Congregations facilitators, Deacons – as relationship enablers;
 3. Equip synod council members as Mission Interpreters in order that they can share the stories of our church in mission with congregations.
 - iii. *Objective* – to strengthen congregation and synod relationships with partner organizations. Goals include:
 1. Invite churchwide ministries to present at synod assembly (at least one ministry each year; e.g., advocacy, world hunger, global mission, etc.);
 2. Church partners (Diakon, Campus Ministries, Camp Mt Luther, Susquehanna University, etc.) included regularly in synod communications and in gatherings of congregations and conferences;
 3. Bishop and staff seek invitation with constituents of partner ministries with the intention of listening for faith stories.
- c. **Discipleship/Leadership** We are a church called to lead others to the profound grace of Jesus. How do we recognize leaders in our congregations and beyond?
- i. *Objective* – to recognize leaders among our congregation. Goals include:
 1. In gatherings, listen and identify leadership strengths and name them;
 2. Welcome first-time voting members at synod assembly.

- ii. *Objective* – develop leaders for ministry in the church. Goals include:
 - 1. Provide orientation prior to opening of the assembly;
 - 2. Establish a formula for conferences to nominate youth and young adults to the synod council as regular members;
 - 3. Increase the number of youth and young adults appointed/elected as voting members to the synod assembly by their congregations.
- iii. *Objective* - Improve practices in congregations in the areas of administration, stewardship and discipleship. Goals include:
 - 1. Provide at least two workshops in the year for stewardship/discipleship practices;
 - 2. Provide at least two opportunities in the year for congregation leaders to share best practices and learn about resources available for administration.

IMPLEMENTING RESOLUTIONS

Resolved,

- I. The Upper Susquehanna Synod Council gratefully recognizes the work of those who participated in developing this strategy for Mission, including deans, conversation facilitators, congregations, synod assembly members and visitors, Mission Strategy Table members, synod council members, our Bishop, and the Director for Evangelical Mission; and
- II. The Synod Council thanks the members of the Mission Table and Mission Strategy Table for their work on behalf of our synod; and
- III. The Synod Council adopts this document as the strategy that will guide our synod for the next three years; and
- IV. The Synod Council hereby establishes an Implementation Team (to replace the Mission Strategy Table and Mission Table) that will propose annual goals, processes and procedures to put this strategy into effect; and
- V. The Synod Council charges the Implementation Team to propose revisions to the current synod committee, task force, team structure in order to better align with the strategy; and
- VI. The Synod Council directs Bishop Collins and the Director for Evangelical Mission to review the membership of the Mission Support Table in order to recommend new members for this critical team; and
- VII. The Synod Council charges the Mission Support Table to develop a strategy that identifies sources of funding for synod mission and ways to increase Mission Support; and
- VIII. The Synod Council authorizes expenditure of up to \$2,500 in 2019 from synod Mission Funds for the purpose of training members of the Implementation Team through ELCA Congregational Vitality training.