



Evangelism Strategy: Sharing Faith in a New Century: A Vision for Evangelism in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

An overview of the decade (1991-2001) in the evangelism efforts of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America was presented to the 2001 Churchwide Assembly. The report, “A Telling Witness of God’s Good News,” was received by the assembly. At the same time, the presiding bishop, in consultation with the Division for Congregational Ministries and other units, was authorized to establish a task force on evangelism.

The 33-member task force, with Bishop Gary M. Wollersheim of the Northern Illinois Synod serving as chair, met to shape a proposal for “a comprehensive evangelism strategy” for consideration and possible adoption by the 2003 Churchwide Assembly.

The proposed text of an Evangelism Strategy, “Sharing Faith in a New Century: A Vision for Evangelism in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,” was recommended by the Church Council on April 6, 2003, for adoption by the 2003 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Recommendation for Assembly Action

1. *To receive with gratitude the proposal, “Sharing Faith in a New Century: A Vision for Evangelism in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,” which was prepared in response to the request of the 2001 Churchwide Assembly for a statement of strategy for evangelism;*
2. *To commend the report for study and implementation by congregations, congregational leaders, synods, synodical leaders, churchwide units, and institutions and agencies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in the call for fervent prayer, crucial renewal, and expanded evangelism and outreach in the years to come;*
3. *To affirm the call for all members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:*
 - a. *To pray for the renewal of this church so that every member, congregation, and institution might bear witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ;*
 - b. *To nurture evangelical leaders so that this church will be faithful in its response to God’s call to mission and evangelism;*
 - c. *To train disciples by equipping people of all ages to be faith-filled witnesses to God as revealed in Jesus Christ and committed disciples in service to others, working for justice and peace in all the earth; and*
 - d. *To support the development of new ELCA congregations and ministry sites in communities that invite all to faith in Jesus Christ;*
4. *To underscore the importance of strengthening partnerships throughout this church for starting new congregations and renewing existing congregations as centers of evangelical outreach;*
5. *To express gratitude for the possibilities for expanded collaboration in witness and service with ecumenical partners and companion churches around the globe; and*

6. *To commend the proposed actions in the report “Sharing Faith in a New Century: A Vision for Evangelism in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America” to the Office of the Presiding Bishop for inclusion into the overall strategic planning process and to the appropriate churchwide units for implementation.*

Summary of Evangelism Strategy

Called by God in baptism and empowered by the Holy Spirit, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America calls upon its members, congregations, synods, churchwide ministries, and related institutions and agencies to...

Objective I: Call the Church to Prayer

...pray for the renewal of this church so that every member, congregation, synod, churchwide unit, and institution might bear witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Goal

Activate and mobilize this church to pray for renewal that is grounded in the Word.

Actions

- A. Issue a call for prayer from the presiding bishop and synodical bishops to congregational members and congregations
- B. Promote spiritual renewal
- C. Provide resources to teach, model, and mentor prayer
- D. Learn from, and walk with, our global and ecumenical partners in prayer ministry
- E. Develop new prayer leaders through the identification and training of children, youth, and young adults

Objective II: Prepare and Renew Evangelical Leaders

...nurture evangelical leaders under the renewing power of God’s Spirit so that this church can be faithful in its response to God’s call to mission and evangelism.

Goal

Prepare and renew evangelical leaders, lay and clergy, by reaffirming evangelism as a key priority.

Actions

- A. Provide local grants to initiate evangelism and leadership renewal, with an emphasis on youth, family, and lay development
- B. Implement a comprehensive churchwide mentor training program
- C. Train ethnic-specific leaders
- D. Strengthen internships to sharpen evangelical leadership skills

- E. Establish criteria and assessment tools for effective outreach and evangelism with youth, young adults, and parents
- F. Expand training of lay mission developers, redevelopers, and evangelists
- G. Deepen the conversation about our evangelical identity

Objective III: Teach Discipleship

...train disciples by equipping people of all ages to be faith-filled witnesses to God as revealed in Jesus Christ and committed disciples in service to others, working for justice and peace in all the earth.

Goal

Teach people of all ages to live as disciples of Jesus Christ, sent as witnesses to Jesus, in service to others and working for justice and peace in all the earth.

Actions

- A. Teach disciples of Jesus Christ by inviting them to deepen and broaden their faith practices
- B. Develop spiritual mentors
- C. Offer anti-racism training and resources
- D. Offer training and resources for ministry to persons with special needs
- E. Provide discipleship and evangelism resources
- F. Host a variety of inspirational evangelical mass rallies, gatherings, or revivals
- G. Expand the plan to start new Christian schools and early childhood education centers

Objective IV: Start and Renew Congregations

...seek opportunities to strengthen partnerships throughout this church for starting new congregations and renewing existing congregations as centers of service and witness, inviting all to faith in Jesus Christ.

Goal

Increase the number of ELCA congregations and ministry sites, which are growing spiritually and numerically.

Actions

- A. Develop and implement a comprehensive plan for establishing vital new start congregations
- B. Develop and implement a comprehensive plan to revitalize congregations
- C. Research and publicize alternative funding sources for starting and renewing congregations
- D. Increase the purchase of advance church sites
- E. Expand electronic communication for internal and external communication and evangelism
- F. Expand the partnership with the global church and our ecumenical partners
- G. Develop worship resources to renew the church
- H. Strengthen relationships between worship, evangelism, and discipleship ministries