



Report of the Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission Unit

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Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission (EOCM) unit is to plant and support new and renewed evangelizing congregations and the leadership that makes them thrive. The governing description of this unit appears in continuing resolution 16.12.A05, printed in Section X of this volume.

Report of Work for 2007–2009 Renewed EOCM Mission Plan and Realignment of Field Staff

In December 2007 the unit bid farewell to its executive director, the Rev. Richard A. Magnus, upon his retirement from service to the churchwide organization. In February 2008 EOCM welcomed as its new executive director the Rev. Stephen P. Bouman. The unit had completed a vigorous strategic planning effort in May 2007 and an "Organic Quality Management" assessment process that resulted in improved relationships, communication, and rhythm of engagement.

After a few months, Pr. Bouman shared several "hunches" that have guided the present plan for mission for EOCM. Some of these include:

- The EOCM unit supports mission through the following: new evangelizing congregations, renewed evangelizing congregations, evangelical leaders, and stewarding disciples, with the understanding that every congregation is a "mission station."
- Leadership is pastoral, centered in Word and Sacrament, and shaped by biblical and confessional integrity.
- The Conference of Bishops and the leadership of Synod Councils are critical to the mission of the ELCA.
- Discipleship faith practices are not programs but are public mission witness to the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.
- A fresh, biblical missiology for our time is needed. The discovery and evocation of a missiology for this church will be one of EOCM's primary ministries.
- Today's mission field is global, inter-faith, and often bi-national.
- Immigration is the defining "meta-issue" of what America will become, and will be a continuing missional issue.

Many conversations were initiated within the unit, with the program committee, across this church, and with ecumenical partners regarding these "hunches." This expansive dialogue led to a plan for a renewed structure for mission for EOCM that included the reorganization of existing churchwide staff and ministry into three emphases: New Evangelized Congregations, Renewed Evangelizing Congregations, and Evangelizing Strategies. This plan also called for staffing presence in each synod through a newly designed position of Director for Evangelical Mission (DEM). This missional leader, called by the churchwide organization but serving on the synodical bishop's staff and under the leadership and supervision of that bishop, has responsibility for the core work of planting and supporting new and renewed evangelizing congregations, shepherding a process in the synod for evangelizing mission support, and implementing this foundational ministry through local strategies that bring congregations together and unite them in serving their local communities. The staff will be well trained, cross-trained, adaptive leaders, who will knit together relationships for synodical missional congregational development.

Nine regional consultations were held in Fall 2008 to share the EOCM mission plan with synodical bishops and other synodical leaders. These consultations were held in partnership with the Synodical Relations section and the

Research and Evaluation section, with several consultations that included the Office of the Secretary and the Office of the Treasurer. These consultations provided opportunity to share the EOCM mission plan in depth, answer questions, and meet individually with synodical leadership. The synodical bishop, the synodical DEM, and EOCM will develop missional covenants. These missional covenants will lead to specific missional work in each synod and provide a plan for the DEM that will be used for joint annual performance evaluations. At the beginning of 2009, the majority of synods already had a DEM on staff, and the unit hopes to complete staffing of these positions in all 65 synods by year's end.

New Evangelizing Congregations

The New Starts team continues the work of developing congregations by engaging leaders at the local and synodical levels as well as from ethnic communities to encourage planning and visioning for ministry in a variety of contexts, such as African American, African National, Asian/Pacific Islander, Arab/Middle Eastern, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Latino/Hispanic, as well as urban and emerging new starts. During 2007, there was a total of 56 new starts including 42 congregations under development and 14 synodically authorized worshipping communities (SAWCs). In 2008, there was a total of 49 new starts, including 33 congregations under development and 16 SAWCs. In 2007, 53 percent of new starts were ethnic or multicultural and in 2008 the percentage of ethnic and multicultural new starts grew to 55 percent. Congregations under development follow many different models, including independent congregations, churches starting churches, second-campus or satellite congregations, ethnic-specific new starts, and SAWCs. In 2007, an assistant director for new starts was added to the team to develop a system for tracking and evaluation of new starts, to work with the Mission Investment Fund (MIF) on land purchases, and to increase communication with and supervision of mission developers.

This work continues to be enhanced by the participation and collaboration of nine bishops, representing each of the nine regions of this church, who attend the EOCM New Starts Review Table held each March. This review table examines and approves all new ELCA mission starts. This work also benefits from a New Starts team convened by the Office of the Presiding Bishop. This inter-unit team has initiated the early identification of seminarians who are poised for mission development through the recommendation of four proposals to the Conference of Bishops. The proposals addressed candidacy, mission developer process, and affirmation and training of lay leadership. In partnership with the Office of the Secretary, the New Starts team has also improved the process for the incorporation of the SAWCs.

To meet the needs of a fast-growing coaching ministry, now realigned with the New Starts team, a half-time coaching coordinator will develop and implement a comprehensive plan for coaching in the ELCA. This plan will include a vision for coaching ministry in the ELCA that encompasses coaching training among a variety of ethnic communities as well as a

process for synodical coaching initiatives for renewed evangelizing congregations.

Renewed Evangelizing Congregations

In December 2008 a director for Renewed Evangelizing Congregations was called. The following programs are the concerns of the Renewed Evangelizing Congregations team: Christian education, discipleship/evangelism, and stewardship. This team's work also includes the work of Natural Church Development (NCD) and Transformational Ministry.

A Renewal Review Table is convened annually to review and approve support for congregational renewal. It is composed of churchwide staff along with nine bishops representing each of the regions. The presence of stewardship staff and leaders from ethnic communities has helped the communal leadership to flourish. This expanded process motivated the development of new criteria that must be present in each proposal for funding consideration in the future. Every proposal must include the following, among other criteria: origination from a local missional strategy process that includes other partners; evidence of collective faith practices (e.g., prayer and study); verification of mission-support giving for the wider church; and submission of annual reports. In 2008, 80 congregations were supported with \$1,000,510, and in 2009, 83 congregations are being supported with \$1,101,120.

A new Faith Practices team will be launched in 2009. Its work will include the Discipleship/Evangelism, Christian Education, and Stewardship ministry teams. The vision is for prayer and the other faith practices of a disciple to permeate every meeting, decision, and area of congregational life. The ethos of evangelizing discipleship creates the context for parish life.

Furthermore, the team will help link the faith practice of advocacy with the mission of evangelizing congregations, as a commitment to turn the life of this church's mission toward those living in poverty, the most vulnerable, and the stranger among us—central to a biblical vision of the Church's outreach.

Discipleship/Evangelism

A new director for the Discipleship team began work in September 2008. With the team fully staffed, a review of the Evangelism Strategy activities and efforts to date was initiated. Highlights of this team's work include the expansive Prayer Network and prayer Web sites in both English and Spanish, the leading of revivals in a number of ELCA congregations, and cross-cultural evangelism efforts that have been initiated with the Asian community.

Christian Education

The Christian Education team efforts during this biennium included an African Descent Christian Education Consultation in 2007 and a Latino Christian Education Consultation in 2008. Participants reviewed current Christian education resources and articulated best practices employed in

congregations. The ELCA Christian education advisory team met in 2007 and drafted a “Statement of Common Understanding” with the intent of fostering a more comprehensive, integrated understanding of the importance of Christian education in the mission of the ELCA and to emphasize by its collaborative nature that all Christian education ministries should function as a cohesive missional enterprise. Coordination with the unit’s new structure will seek opportunities to expand “Book of Faith” initiatives with all the mission developers and DEM staff in order to integrate and support faith practices in congregations.

Stewardship

The Stewardship team has been integral to the mission-support efforts of the ELCA. EOCM is central to the work of the Blue Ribbon Committee implementation. “Stories of Faith in Action,” published annually, continues to be the primary mission interpretation communication resource. The staff also responded to all 1400 congregational requests for stewardship consultations as requested on the 2008 Annual Report. This team also has collaborated with the Synodical Relations section and the Vocation and Education unit in the development of seminary stewardship education as well as first-call theological education, and continues to support synodical mission interpreters. The Stewardship Key Leader program continues to grow and expand its ministry by conducting and facilitating congregational appeal programs. In 2009, this program will expand to work on a synodical capital appeal.

Evangelizing Strategies

The primary emphasis of the Evangelizing Strategies work is to align and connect synodical strategic planning efforts with churchwide efforts addressing such things as ethnic strategies, rural ministry, large-member congregations, leadership, and community organizing. In support of this effort, EOCM conducted a Synod Mission Table pilot project in July 2008. Thirteen synodical teams, including the synods’ bishops and EOCM field staff, came together to engage in scriptural and missional planning that would strengthen local relationships and increase capacity for evangelical outreach. EOCM will be inviting the remaining synods to participate in one of three synod mission table projects in 2009. This process will support the synods and their local mission strategies that will lead to renewal and faithful discipleship via mission planning and will be a communal ministry of the local synod, conferences, and allied congregations. This process will be undergirded by congregation-based community organizing. Ethnic-ministry development in EOCM has included the expansion of ministry among the growing African National community with a full-time director position in 2007; the increased strategic development of African Descent ministry plans (e.g., planning for an African Descent Strategy for the Southeast has just been initiated); and continued support to Latino ministry by the EOCM HOPE (Hispanic Outreach Program Executives) Team. Ethnic ministry planting teams have been organized for each of the five ethnic

communities. These planting teams assist the unit in the identification of potential sites for new starts and identification of mission developers and leaders for ministry, and also provide input in the Review Table funding process. The executive director of EOCM is co-convenor of an ELCA Multicultural Table that brings together all the ELCA ethnic strategies and leadership efforts into one inter-unit conversation.

Leadership

EOCM leadership efforts have included alignment with Vocation and Education and Multicultural Ministry units of the mission developer selection and qualification process and the candidacy process. In addition, an improved tracking system for the management of the behavioral interview process for mission developer candidates was developed. During 2007–2008, 135 candidates for mission development were interviewed, with 112 candidates being approved for missional work. The leadership team also strengthened the behavioral interview process through retraining of its lead interviewers. Expanding relationships with several ELCA seminaries have led to the early identification of potential mission developers while students are still in seminary. In addition, in partnership with Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Vocation and Education, and Region 9, a consultation on candidacy and leadership was held to explore growing partnerships through the identification of areas of collaboration. In 2008, a Rural Ministry consultation was held to identify challenges, resources, and opportunities important for rural and small-town ministries. This learning will be incorporated into further review and assessment of this church’s rural ministry program into the next biennium.

The growing network of large-member congregations held its first gathering for pastors and ministry staff of large congregations, “Let the River Flow,” in 2007. This event brought together more than 850 participants to worship, celebrate, learn, and share ministry experiences. A second event, “Let the River Flow II,” will be held in 2009.

Evangelism Strategy

The unit carries responsibility for the oversight of the ELCA Evangelism Strategy, “Sharing Faith in a New Century: A Vision for Evangelism in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.” (*See Appendix A to this report.*)

Lutheran Men in Mission

The Lutheran Men in Mission (LMM) organization continues a close partnership with EOCM. Its offices remain alongside those of EOCM, and the unit assists in LMM’s financial accounting. (*See Appendix B to this report.*)

Resources

Resource development and production is a collaborative process involving program teams, field staff, and Publishing Services staff in the Communication Services unit. The following is a listing of EOCM resources published during this biennium:

- *Stories of Faith and Action*, 2007, 2008, 2009
- Annual Report Cover, 2007, 2008, 2009
- Statement of Intent, 2007, 2008, 2009
- “Thank You” Certificate, 2007, 2008, 2009
- *Money Leadership for Thriving Congregations Series*, 2008
- *Grow to Go: Disciples on the Mission, Christian Education Planner*, 2007
- *Everywhere and Everyway Calling One Another to Prayer, Christian Education Planner*, 2008
- *Discovering Hope: Devotional Guide for Congregational Leaders*, 2007
- *Mission Focus Newsletter*, 2007, 2008, 2009
- *Stories to Tell, Gifts to Share*, 2007
- *Stories to Tell, Gifts to Share*, African Descent version, 2007
- *Evangelizing Church Newsletter*, 2007, 2008
- *The Story of Lutheran Revival (DVD)*, 2008
- *Make it Simple: A Resource for Stewardship Education and Annual Response*, 2009
- *They are Us: Lutherans and Immigration*, 2009

Major Directions for 2009–2010

EOCM will be living into the unit’s renewed structure in close partnership with each synod through the new directors for evangelical mission and through missional covenants that unite the synod, its missionary bishop, and EOCM. The creation of synodical missional tables throughout this church will bring powerful renewal to a growing Lutheran communion that embraces the growing diversity in America. The EOCM Faith Practices team will provide opportunity through missional work in synods for expanded faith practices in congregations. The implementation of a more comprehensive Review Table process for both new and renewed missions in the ELCA, due in part both to the new DEM position and to synodical mission strategic planning, will enhance, impact, and strengthen funding decisions. The unit also looks forward to all the missional opportunities and challenges that will be faced in an ever-growing and changing church. This is the vision: Every person is a missionary, every pastor is a mission director, and every congregation is a mission center for the sake of the world. EOCM’s commitment will continue to be to the raising up of new and renewed congregations in support of the ELCA’s Plan for Mission, strategic directions, commitments for implementation, and churchwide organization priorities.

Stephen P. Bouman, *executive director*