



Appendix A: Executive Summary of the Evangelism Strategy

Prayer

The practice of prayer and teaching about prayer is becoming foundational to the ministries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). The ELCA prayer Web site receives 800–900 requests per day for prayer and that number is steadily increasing. The magnitude of these requests indicates the depth of the need for prayer ministries. Not only are this church's prayer resources being translated for ethnic-specific communities, but international trips also are being taken to explore the diversity of prayer practices in other ethnic communities. The Prayer Leaders Network of the ELCA's Evangelizing Network offered 97 prayer-related activities in 2008, including workshops and prayer breakfasts, and requests for their expertise continues. The Revivalist Network organized 44 revival events in 2008, and at each of these events two to three revivals were offered. The youth and young adults of this church are learning about prayer not only through the "Christian Education Planning Guide," but also through outdoor ministry events as seen in the 2005 theme for the outdoor ministry curriculum: "Pray."

Leaders

Financial resources are being used to support leadership development. In addition, individuals are offering their support and guidance to leaders by assuming the role of "coach" for those in a leadership role. The importance of the coaching process is evidenced by the goal of the Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission (EOCM) unit to assign a coach to every mission developer, every congregation using Natural Church Development (NCD), and every congregational leadership team involved in a transformative process. Grants have been awarded to enhance church leaders' evangelism skills and also have been provided to assist in the overall development of new church leaders. For example, a three-year proposal on leadership development, "Congregational Latino/Hispanic Lay Leadership Formation," has produced 70 Latino leaders, lay and clergy, who will evaluate the characteristics of Latino and Latina leaders in the ELCA, explore vocational development of Latino bilingual leaders who want to serve this church, and review both existing and exciting new Latino lay schools of theology in the ELCA. The importance of evangelism is being stressed in seminary internship experiences and is often found in the curriculum for First-Call Theological Education. The increase in lay leadership in this church is evident within the African National ministries, where 70 percent of the new and existing ministries are being led by lay leaders. The Leadership Office continues to recruit, evaluate the readiness, and assist in the assignment of lay and rostered leaders as mission developers.

Discipleship

In September 2008, a new Director for Discipleship, the Rev. Brenda K. Smith, was called to the churchwide organization to serve in EOCM. Part of her vision is to support current efforts in the area of discipleship but also to assess what other resources and networks can be fostered to promote optimal discipleship teaching in the ELCA. A Discipleship team and a Faith Practices team will be convened in the churchwide organization in early 2009. The "Call to Discipleship" directive from 2000 consistently has been promoted through ELCA Christian Education efforts that concentrate on growing discipleship. These resources have been made available on the ELCA Web site. One of the seven faith practices of the ELCA is "study." The ELCA has embarked on the Book of Faith initiative whose goal is to "increase biblical literacy and fluency for the sake of the world." As people participate in this initiative, their discipleship will grow as well. As this church strives to reflect its discipleship by the inclusion of all persons regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or physical challenge, the ELCA offers suggestions on ministry with those with special needs, such as strategies on how to plan an accessible meeting. Part of discipleship as individuals and as the Church is to demonstrate love for the neighbor through words and deeds. To aid in understanding how racism negatively impacts individuals' character and the healthy functioning of communities, the ELCA continues to lift up anti-racism training as a valuable and necessary teaching in this church.

Congregations

Even though the number of newly started congregations has not met the Evangelism Strategy's goal of 100 new congregations annually by 2010, with 20 percent of these congregations being among people living in poverty, there has been a consistent rise in the number of new starts, ranging from 12 new starts in the year 2003 to 16 synodically authorized worshiping communities and 33 congregations under development in 2008. There are now five ethnic planting teams that assist EOCM in new mission starts for each of the ethnic communities. The redevelopment goal for the Evangelism Strategy was 200 existing congregations redeveloped annually. Again, this goal has not been met, but there has been an increase in redevelopments from 78 in the year 2004 to 85 in 2008. A newly organized Renewal team has assessed past efforts and has made recommendations to the new director for Renewed Evangelizing Congregations, the Rev. Neil P. Harrison. EOCM has begun implementing a renewed structure for field staff in which each synod will have a Director for Evangelical Mission. These directors will be pivotal in the coordination of new start

ministries, stewardship ministry, renewing of congregations, and synodical mission strategies that include conferences, clusters of congregations, and ethnic strategies. A significant increase in new ministries has occurred in the African National community, with ministries growing from 86 to 102. Ethnic-specific resources are being translated, but consistent and intentional efforts need to continue in this area. The ability to learn from other communities is fostered by the companion synod relationships in which lay evangelists and pastors from international settings exchange visits, resources, and support with ELCA laypersons and pastors. The ELCA Worship and Liturgical Resources (WR) section and EOCM are intentional about exploring how the partnership among worship, evangelism, and discipleship can be strengthened. The Mission Partners and Mission Founders programs will certainly be strengthened by a renewed focus through the director for Support Networks. The vision of EOCM (borrowed from the Indiana-Kentucky Synod), “Every pastor a mission director, every congregation a mission center, every baptized member a missionary in the world,” is a strongly motivational framework for striving to implement the specifics of the ELCA Evangelism Strategy.

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