

Mission Support Strategy of the Northeastern Iowa Synod - ELCA

Our mission is to:

- Support the mission of the ELCA in making Christ known through stewardship education.
- Stir up a passion in the pastors and members of congregations for the mission of Jesus Christ.
- Make congregations and their members more aware of stewardship as an expression of faithful discipleship.
- Foster increased cooperation and partnership among congregations.

Goals:

- ✓ To encourage a passion for the larger ministry of the church.
- ✓ To encourage an attitude of thanksgiving expressed in generosity.
- ✓ To provide resources to congregations in support of the mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Premise:

This strategy is based on the following:

- All we are and have come from God's gracious hand. God calls us to be faithful stewards.
- Stewardship is everything we do after we say "I believe."
- We must be intentional about addressing the issues surrounding the "stewardship of money."

Context

In 1993 the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Stewardship Strategy Development Committee Report focused on the following underlying principle:

"The financial stewardship efforts of this church -- in all of its manifestations -- should foster and exemplify the unity in its mission. The value of each of the elements of a financial stewardship strategy can be measured by their capability to:

- Bring people together.
- Build bridges between parts of the church.
- Form mutual support for cooperative efforts.
- Re-integrate what have been disparate endeavors."

This principle has guided our stewardship efforts since 1988 and is the basis for the following strategy.

Strategy

This strategy is both comprehensive and multifaceted. It challenges the stewardship ministry of the 155 congregations of this synod. It underscores stewardship opportunities in the Conferences for Cooperative Ministry. It recognizes the synod wide component of stewardship education and support. This strategy models the ELCA consultation process. The rotation of consultations includes:

- Visits to congregation councils by staff or trained leaders of the synod.
- Conference gatherings with pastors, rostered leaders, and congregational leaders.
- Personal communications from the bishop or bishop's designee to pastor and congregational president.
- Synod Assembly with structured conversations with congregational leaders and pastors.

CONGREGATION

The Northeastern Iowa Synod constitution states in S14.02.c.4:

“Every pastor shall:

endeavor to increase the support given by the congregation to the work of the ELCA churchwide organization and of this ELCA synod.”

SYNOD ASSISTED WORKSHOPS AND TRAINING EVENTS:

Opportunities for growth in understanding Biblical stewardship and exposure to a wide range of programs and methodologies are important for lively stewardship practices in the life of the church. It is important for congregations to participate in stewardship workshops or learning programs on an annual basis. The synod can be helpful in resourcing events such as:

- Ventures Workshops with a three-way financial partnership between the ELCA, the Northeastern Iowa Synod, and congregations.
- Stewardship training days, i.e., “Stewardship” workshops.
- Direct consultation for program development.

SYNOD COMMUNICATIONS:

There are numerous communication pieces that provide information and resources to individuals and congregations. They include:

- ❖ “Northeastern Iowa Star”

This is a monthly publication of the Northeastern Iowa Synod sent to all rostered leaders and synodical lay leaders.

- ❖ “Making a Difference”
This is a biannual publication highlighting a particular arena of ministry with an invitation to individuals to share financial gifts in support of that ministry.

- ❖ Quarterly Thank You
This is a quarterly communication sent to the 155 congregations updating them on the status of their annual mission support. It is accompanied by a letter of thanks from the bishop.

- ❖ Fall Mission Support Information
A variety of materials are sent to each congregation for distribution to its members as support for their stewardship growth and as encouragement apprising them of the broader ministry of the church. Items can include:
 - Making Christ Known – an annual publication of the ELCA with stories about real people impacted by the various ministries of the ELCA.
 - Offerings to the Penny – an information sheet customized for each congregation for use by its congregation council.
 - Bulletin inserts – items developed for duplication by congregations.
 - Annual Statement of Intent for use by the congregation council.

Outcomes:

- Increase the number of congregations committed to a minimum goal of 25% of annual income budgeted for mission beyond themselves with a growth of 1% annually for those already at or exceeding 25%. This commitment means a minimum of 15% budgeted for Northeastern Iowa Synod and ELCA Mission Support and 10% designated to support local benevolence.
- Increase the number of congregations that remit their mission support on a monthly basis.
- Increase the number of congregations participating in stewardship growth opportunities.

CONFERENCE

The Northeastern Iowa Synod constitution states in S12.01.01:

“The primary purpose of the Conferences for Cooperative Ministry is to resource congregations in the standard congregational ministry areas of worship, education, evangelism, social ministry, **stewardship**, youth, etc. By sharing their gifts and talents with one another, and by calling upon available resources such as synod staff, regional staff, and others, congregations within the C o n f e r e n c e s for Cooperative Ministry will be free to seek assistance in whatever areas they feel are necessary and appropriate...”

CONFERENCE CONVERSATIONS:

Monthly gatherings of conference pastors provide opportunities to build and maintain mutual trust and open communication as well as to assist, support, encourage, and teach stewardship and the ministry of money.

On a rotating basis, synod staff will gather with rostered and lay leaders of the 11 conferences. These conversations will include a major component focused on mission interpretation/mission support/stewardship.

Outcomes:

- Increase the number of rostered leaders and laity participating in stewardship workshops and continuing education events, i.e., “Ministry of Money.”
- Increase the number of pastors identified and serving as stewardship mentors.

SYNOD

SYNOD SPONSORED/COORDINATED WORKSHOPS AND TRAINING EVENTS:

Opportunities for growth in the understanding of Biblical stewardship and exposure to a wide range of stewardship programs and methodologies are important. We invite congregations to participate in workshops or learning programs of various kinds on an annual basis.

SYNOD ASSEMBLY

This is our annual family reunion where the Northeastern Iowa Synod of the ELCA comes together in worship, learning, decision making, and fellowship. This is a significant opportunity to reach rostered leaders and laity with stewardship education, encouragement, and resources. Involvement in the assembly could include a variety of the following:

- Present resolutions pertaining to stewardship education, mission support growth, and mission interpretation.
- Begin plenary sessions with a mission moment or some brief component of mission interpretation.
- Provide a variety of workshops on stewardship and mission support.
- Provide a display with a wide variety of stewardship resources as well as a person for conversation and/or questions.
- Include Making Christ Known in all voting member packets.

Outcomes:

- Grow our synodical mission support to the ELCA to 55% of all mission support income to the synod.
- Maintain synodical staffing to carry out the mission of the synod.