

## Special Report :

### ***Mission Values and Priorities Guide Planning and Budgeting***

Witness, Mercy and Life Together complement one another and enhance the Synod's stakeholders' ability to achieve common goals established in the Synod's mission statement, which says, "In grateful response to God's grace and empowered by the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacraments, the mission of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is vigorously to make known the love of Christ by word and deed within our churches, communities and the world."

Combining the interests of all mission stakeholders requires clarity and priority. Values clarify Synod's identity as a confessional body while budget priorities link gifts, tithes and offerings to the Synod's objectives. Together, values and priorities inform and shape budget preparation.

Synod's mission planners applied the following values and priorities as they developed the comprehensive program budget. While values undergirded the preparation, priorities guided planners through funding allocations. Sharing these values and priorities with Synod's members intends to enhance strategic awareness, foster cooperation, and encourage synchronization throughout the "LCMS enterprise," namely all the work we do together to bring the Gospel to people.

#### Values

**1. Values articulate core cultural identity, and first among them is fidelity.** Be faithful to the symbols of the Church. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod remains Lutheran in teaching and practice. The same principles that brought new freedom to the Church of the Reformation continue to bring spiritual liberty and freedom today.

The confessions have served the Church well over hundreds of years. They encourage unity among the faithful, identify ecumenical foci, norm catechetical instruction and shape practice.

Faithfulness to the Holy Scriptures and to the Confessions continues to mark the Synod as a corporate confessor of the one true faith and clearly identify the Synod as a witness to the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**2. Quality accompanies faithfulness.** As St. Paul says, “Let us do all things as unto the Lord.” Excellence is a response to the Lord’s call. It is integral to the Synod’s witness.

Parishioners deserve the best pastors, teachers, deaconesses—every rostered worker—they depend upon them to provide for their spiritual wellbeing. These called servants daily nurture men and women in the midst of spiritual battle. Nothing short of excellence will do.

Synod, in turn, must strive for excellence in serving rostered workers and congregations. They, too, deserve nothing but the best. Synod will advance excellence via routine self-assessment, accountability to stakeholders and through intentional planning and resource management.

**3. Credibility is defined as “the ability to inspire belief or trust.”** Mission, vision, planning and resource management create credibility. Applying objectives and goals to a multi-year plan provide a clearer way to accomplish mission goals for rostered workers, congregations and everything the members of Synod seek to do together to bring the Gospel into the lives of more people.

Many projects and programs are worthy causes, and they often fulfill creative desires to share the Gospel or witness to the redeeming work of Jesus Christ. Yet, if not part of a greater whole, they may not be as effective as other equally worthy endeavors in the work of the kingdom of God.

Credibility fosters confidence among Synod’s members, which, in turn, fosters assurance among the laity. Credibility ultimately creates an environment of mission boldness.

**4. Given fiscal realities, every program must stand the test of sustainability.** Mission planners incorporate multiple objectives to assist them in determining the viability of legacy, emerging, and generational projects and programs.

The Synod has the privilege of reaching the lost for Christ. Legacy partners have stood the test of time, but they require ongoing synodical engagement. Partner churches, some the direct result of LCMS mission efforts, now reach many for the Kingdom throughout the world. Sustaining these partnerships is vital to global engagement.

Emerging associations exist in several global regions. Every opportunity is unique and requires careful, deliberate assessment; therefore, as opportunities present themselves, Synod considers how to engage in order to achieve greater mission outreach.

Long-term “generating” missions seek to provide a cultural platform whereby the Synod will reach the nations for Christ over the current and next generations. Sustainable mission paradigms will employ synodical resources most efficiently and effectively. Sustainability provides a mission target, not only for this generation, but for the next.

**5. Synod’s congregations endure a variety of tests, internal and external.** This is no surprise since the adversary never rests. In the midst of these trials, congregations must be the epitome of stability. Congregations manifest stability in the midst of an ever-changing cultural environment. Families, communities, and nations morph over time. In the midst of familial, community and national transformation, God provides stability by means of the Church.

Cultural change, at times a positive phenomenon, distresses the fiber of society and our congregational fellowship. Churches must be the bastions where men and women of faith may find theological respite, consistency and an enduring *koinonia*. This *koinonia* is God’s work by means of His Word, through our study of

Scripture, the resulting agreement in our Confessions, through corporate worship, and sacramental practice and ministry.

*Fidelity, quality, credibility, sustainability* and *stability* work together to enhance discipleship, and discipleship is an “enterprise” responsibility. These values are not new; they only restate the wisdom of tradition, instruction, confession, and Holy Scripture.

### **Mission Priorities**

As values provide the cultural environment for planning, so priorities provide a way to evaluate those activities that engage the Church in the world via mission, mercy and life together.

**1. Foremost among mission priorities is planting, sustaining, and revitalizing a global network of spiritually healthy, vibrant and orthodox Lutheran congregations and international partners** wholeheartedly committed to reaching the lost, nurturing disciples and bearing witness through Word and Sacrament to the Lord and Savior of the Church, Jesus Christ.

**2. Foreign and domestic pastoral education is central to the ministry of congregations, church partners, and the Synod.** Synod intends to enhance institutional instruction, pastoral mentoring, and ongoing vocational training as she seek to shape the next generation of church leaders.

Institutional support and expanded theological education via domestic and foreign seminaries is the focal point for accomplishing pastoral formation. Sustaining these domestic and foreign seminaries provides the primary means whereby clergy are trained and educated to lead congregations as they reach out in numerous domestic and foreign mission fields.

**3. The LCMS mission statement includes reaching people with the Gospel, baptizing and catechizing them into the faith.** It also provides for the Church’s response to a world that often suffers starvation, sickness, homelessness and a variety of natural and manmade disasters.

Response to such suffering is part and parcel of the Christian life; therefore, it must find root in Word and Sacrament that it may alleviate, not only human suffering, but also that it may address the very real spiritual suffering that leaves the world in sin, death and darkness. Acts of mercy without accompanying Word and Sacrament are almost akin to celebrating the Holy Eucharist without the words of consecration.

The acts of mercy must be in proximity to Word and Sacrament so that they may always have reference in the Church and her presence in the world.

**4. The Synod will collaborate with members and partners to enhance mission effectiveness.** Strategic partners in ministry are essential to reaching all people, all nations, and all cultures for Christ; therefore, the LCMS engages her international Church partners to formulate a coordinated strategic plan to fulfill the Great Commission.

Coordinating with these partners provides for more effective employment of full-time and part-time missionaries. By formulating a synchronized global strategy, regional partners are able to better predict LCMS involvement and support, and they are also able to identify targeted needs for local and regional engagement.

**5. Nurturing pastors, missionaries and professional church workers to promote spiritual, emotional and physical well-being is essential to the health of the Church.** Resilient pastoral leaders are more likely to produce healthy, resilient congregations. This cadre of called servants requires nurture and commitment, a commitment to enhance their spiritual lives as they shepherd those in their care.

Synod will continue to make intentional efforts to sustain and enhance the welfare of their frontline rostered workers, who daily engage laity and local communities in the cause of Christ. Their leadership, instruction and pastoral care impact directly the overall health of the Synod. Their influence cannot be overstated.

**6. Children and young people baptized into Christ are the Church *today*, not only the Church of tomorrow.** They deserve the Church's fullest attention and care; therefore, the final priority is to enhance early childhood, elementary and secondary education, as well as youth ministry. Our children live in a world opposed to Christianity and are regularly exposed to philosophical and religious disinformation.

The Church cannot leave her children to the adversary's instruction while at the same time expect them to bear fruit for the Gospel. Together, the Synod will be able to address the needs of her young people by intentionally caring for them throughout their formative years.

Mission planners employed these six priorities to link available resources with activities deemed most relevant to achieving the mandates provided in the Synod's mission statement. They provided a systematic means to assess legacy, emerging and generational programs, and they will continue to provide the ways whereby the Synod will reach the nations for Christ.

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