

**Strategy Committee Information  
September 2012**

***For Such A Time As This*  
2013 - 2023 Strategic Plan**

**Metropolitan New York Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

In May of 2012 the Synod Assembly adopted a strategic plan to direct the activities and resources of the Metropolitan New York Synod over the next decade. The significant components of that plan are on page 3 of this document. This includes the:

- Mission
- Vision
- Strategies

The plan is organized around three integrated strategies:

- Claimed
- Gathered
- Sent

Three strategy committees are charged with developing and directing the action and resource plans needed to achieve the objective for that strategy. This document contains information about the three strategy committees in four areas:

- Purpose
- Principles
- Priorities
- Process

This information will be used to form the strategy committees and as an initial chart or work. However, it is expected that this information will be further developed and modified over the first year of work by the strategy committees.

The Synod Council is responsible for appointing the strategy committee chairs and members. The three strategy committees report to the Synod Council Executive Committee. The Synod Council Executive Committee monitors and coordinates the work of the three strategy committees, as well as the Financial Management Committee.

The composition of the strategy committees will be in accordance with the Synod constitutional guidelines. Anyone can apply for membership on a strategy committee via an online application process. The strategy committees will have from six to twelve members with a composition of:

- 60% lay leaders, 40% rostered pastors
- 50% female, 50% male
- 10% people of color or primary language other than English
- 10% youth and young adults

Appointments to the strategy committees are for three years. Strategy committee members will be expected to attend monthly meetings (sometimes via video conference or conference call). It is expected that strategy committee members will complete additional work outside of meetings. Strategy committee members will also be expected to attend an annual working session of the three strategy committees, the Synod Council Executive Committee, and the Financial Management Committee.

Strategy committees may also create work teams for specific areas of focus. These teams are advisory and may include individuals not on the strategy committee.

The scope of work for the strategy committees includes:

- The geographic area and population of the Metropolitan New York Synod, which includes New York City, Long Island, and seven upstate counties.
- The 200 local congregations of the Metropolitan New York Synod
- All Synod committees, task forces, ministries, and programs related to the strategies
- All partnerships with other organizations and ministries related to the strategies
- Church-wide programs, initiatives and grants related to the strategies

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*For Such A Time As This*  
**2013 - 2023 Strategic Plan**

**Metropolitan New York Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

**Mission**

Marked with the cross of Christ forever,  
we are claimed, gathered and sent for the sake of the world.

**Vision**

**Claimed** by God's grace for the sake of the world,  
we are a new creation through God's living Word by the power of the Holy Spirit;

**Gathered** by God's grace for the sake of the world,  
we will live among God's faithful people, hear God's Word and share Christ's supper;

**Sent** by God's grace for the sake of the world,  
we will proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed,  
serve all people following the example of our Lord Jesus  
and strive for justice and peace in the world.

**Strategies**

From the Mission and Vision three strategies will preserve the core of our faith while ensuring  
relevance for the next ten years:

**Claimed:** Will help people grow in faith through engagement with the Lutheran Tradition

**Gathered:** Will ensure Word and Sacrament ministry is provided in the metropolitan New York  
area

**Sent:** Will respond to specific societal needs and issues

## Claimed Strategy Committee

### Purpose

To help people grow in their faith through interaction and engagement with the Lutheran Tradition.

### Principles

The Claimed Strategy Committee will endeavor to keep our eyes trained outward rather than inward. Our conversations will be focused not on those who are already in our pews, but those who are not in our pews. We seek to *communicate* our message to those who have not yet heard it, *connect* with those who we are not yet in relationship with, and build the *commitment* of those who stand on the growing edge, through our congregations, ministries, and affiliated agencies.

The Claimed Strategy Committee will read several texts as a part of our work. “Art of the Start” by Guy Kawasaki will be a central text. We will also work with advisors from within and outside the Lutheran Tradition who will visit our meetings and advise in their areas of expertise. Our commitment to the “growing edge” makes it important that a portion of our advisors be non church-goers, especially for the work of the Communication Team.

### Priorities

To meet this objective the Claimed Strategy Committee will focus on three areas:

- Communication: share a clear, concise, compelling message of the Lutheran identity through a variety of methods and medias.
- Connection: provide a variety of opportunities for individuals and families to participate in the network of Lutheran ministries.
- Commitment: challenge people to grow deeper in their faith through the development of new and renewed initiatives.

## **Process**

### Communication

A Communication Team will be formed and will approach their work by seeking to answer three central questions:

1. *Who are we?* We are a diverse Synod. Each ministry is a local expression of the Gospel, completely unique to its own cultural context. Who are each of these ministries, and what binds us together as Lutherans?
2. *What are people hungry for?* We can have the best marketing campaign in the world, but if what we are marketing doesn't resonate with people, it won't be effective. What does the Metropolitan New York Synod, its ministries and the wider body, have to offer the world that they are hungry for? No, starving for? If we begin to feed the hunger of our communities, our message will become contagious.
3. *How can we most effectively communicate who we are to the Synod area?* We will explore the roads of communication currently in use in our context, and those likely to come into use in the next 20-50 years. Looking at the way information is shared and disseminated in our culture, we will create a strategy to effectively communicate our message to the wider public, including online communication methods, social media and the press.

In all of this work, we will recognize that our communication strategies are the doors to our church. Communication is hospitality and evangelism.

### Connection

A Connection Team will be formed and their primary work will be researching and re-imagining the concept of "membership" in the church from a historical, theological, biblical, legal, and cultural perspective. The team will then explore the current state of membership in our culture on a national and local scale, looking at various models for membership and committed participation that are in use in various secular and religious organizations and faith communities in our own region.

With an understanding of how membership currently functions in our church and in our region, this team will propose a new model for membership in our Synod which seeks to provide permeability and flexibility in participants' engagement in ministries of the Metropolitan New York Synod *while* encouraging a deepening sense of relationship and commitment. The team will be asked to think locally as membership is understood in different ways depending on cultural and ethnic norms.

## Commitment

A Commitment Team will be formed to review the various ways ministries in our Synod invite all people to deepen their faith. What are our current opportunities for formation offered to those in the Synod area, and what hungers for formation are not being met? Through formation, how are we calling those in the Synod to embody and live out the Gospel, living out and articulating the heart of Lutheran theology, each in the context of their own cultural setting? Further, how do we cultivate "outward facing" communities whose eyes are trained toward those who are not yet in our pews and those who have been marginalized, oppressed, or forgotten?

## **Gathered Strategy Committee**

### **Purpose**

To ensure that Word and Sacrament ministry is provided in the metropolitan New York area.

### **Principles**

As the 2012 Synod Assembly approved the Strategic Plan presented and in response to widespread congregational decline, our Synod will:

1. Recognize that the cultural and demographic changes washing over us are beyond our control and filled with the movement of the Holy Spirit
2. Stop devoting resources to resisting the tide
3. Learn to swim with the tide and respond to it in new ways
4. Fund innovative new ministries that emerge from our changing seascape, rather than struggle to maintain unsustainable ministries
5. Detach our understanding of ministry from solely buildings based, developing smaller foot-printed ministries that are sustainable
6. Commit to conserving assets for future generations

### **Priorities**

To meet this objective the Gathered Strategy Committee will focus on three areas:

- Locations: determine congregations and church facilities needed to meet the objectives of this strategy
- Leadership: attract, equip and support pastors and lay leaders to execute this strategy
- Ministries: develop new and renewed ministries to enhance this strategy

## **Process**

### Locations

1. Using the Congregational Viability Norms established by the 2012 Synod Assembly, Gathered Strategy Committee will:
  - a. Review our synod's congregations to discern congregations that have completed their ministry
  - b. Recommend congregations to be brought under Synod Administration (MNYS Constitution, Chapter 13.24)
  - c. Develop an ongoing process of providing an orderly transition with a potentially significant number of congregations. This will include the process of congregational appeals to the Synod Assembly.
2. The Gathered Strategy Committee will form a Research Team to identify cultural and social developments for new ministry exploration. It will gather information on population and demographic trends, grass roots movements and growth areas in the metropolitan region.
3. The Research Team will advise Gathered Strategy Committee in reviewing properties under Synod Administration. The Gathered Strategy Committee will recommend properties for re-purposing and properties to be sold.
4. The Gathered Strategy Committee will undertake a review of our synod's congregations and make recommendations for reconfiguration, including potential congregational mergers and consolidations.
5. The Gathered Strategy Committee will review the future needs of our synod offices and recommend the best location and space to advance the strategic plan.

### Leadership

1. The Gathered Strategy Committee will recommend assistance for pastors that may need to transition to new ministries or conclude their ministry. A Transition Fund may be established to support this work.
2. The Gathered Strategy Committee will set the vision for the Synod's Candidacy Committee. This will include identifying innovative thinkers with the goal of attracting them to our synod as a place where their vision can be supported.

3. The Gathered Strategy Committee will recommend cultivation of relationships with seminaries and leadership development programs to strengthen preparation of candidates for new ministries.
4. The Gathered Strategy Committee will set the vision for the Synod's vacancy and call process.
5. The Gathered Strategy Committee will develop new methods of networking supportive relationships and connections among pastors and lay leaders, so that they might be equipped and renewed for ministry.

### Ministries

1. The Gathered Strategy Committee will form an Innovation Team to create a strategy to plant and nourish bold, visionary ways to provide Word and Sacrament Ministries. This team will:
  - a. Recognize that innovation thrives when given supportive distance from the institution, and create structures that balance freedom and accountability to support new ministries.
  - b. Approach the development of new ministries from the ground up and not from the top down by seeking out visionary leaders, successful grassroots groups and multicultural expressions who are already responding to the hungers they've perceived in their local communities, or by commissioning a capable leader to respond.
  - c. Seek to promote new ministries that are built on visionary and capable leadership, theological depth, connected to the local community, and financially sustainable models.
  - d. Remember that we experience grace in risk and failure, and see both as necessary for learning.
2. The Innovation Team will explore the Innovative Disruption ideas of Clayton Christensen (Harvard University).

We will expect the Innovative Team to develop highly experimental ventures. No failures means we are not thinking big enough. The Gathered Strategy Committee will think through how to put constructive governance and finance controls in place.

Ministries will not necessarily lead to official "congregations." They may develop into Synodically Authorized Worshiping Communities where the goal is not necessarily to transition into a congregation. Or they may even stop short of becoming Synodically Authorized Worshiping Communities.

3. Funding for these experiments will be provided through an income stream generated by building sale proceeds to create an Innovation Fund. We will conserve the asset from building sales to permit future ongoing experimentation. When something shows strong promise of self-sustainability we may invest resources beyond the Innovation Fund to move the ministry to established sustainability.
4. The Gathered Strategy Committee will recommend fulfillment of Synod Assembly action 2012.05.03 A Resolution Regarding the LIFT Project which directs “the synod staff and the Synod Council to create, develop and provide opportunities and resources that congregations may use to develop, review or redefine their mission plans, including provision of individual consultation and assistance to congregations as requested.”
5. The Gathered Strategy Committee will review current and future ministry partnerships and grants to ensure alignment with the strategic plan.
6. The Gathered Strategy Committee will reach out to our ecumenical full-communion partners as we consider new avenues for mission and ministry and will communicate our strategy plan to those partners.

## **Sent Strategy Committee**

### **Purpose**

To network congregations, ministries, and leaders to proclaim the Gospel while responding to specific societal needs and issues.

### **Principles**

An important aspect of the Lutheran tradition is to demonstrate our love for God by serving those in need. The following principles will guide our work in this strategy:

1. There are effective social ministries and programs currently being provided by local congregations and the church-wide movement
2. Our Synod has a unique role in discovering, supporting, and sharing these successful models through networking and inspiring congregations and leaders
3. Select partnerships with organizations and ministries addressing critical societal and community needs
4. There are issues of justice and peace that require a response from our synod
5. All social ministries and advocacy supported by our synod will be clearly linked to our desire to share the Good News of Christ
6. The Sent Strategy will require being bold and courageous while exploring societal issues and needs that may lead us to proclaim the Gospel beyond our comfort zone, and with a focus on multicultural experiences

### **Priorities**

To meet this objective the Sent Strategy Committee will focus on three areas:

- Services: develop and deliver programs in our communities that help people in words and deeds
- Partnerships: determine organizations and ministries to support
- Advocacy: speak on specific justice and peace issues

## **Process**

### Services

A Services Team will be formed to:

1. Explore the most critical unmet or under resourced needs of people and communities served by the Metropolitan New York Synod
2. Compile an inventory of effective social ministries and programs currently being provided by local Lutheran congregations, current synod committees, and the church-wide movement
3. Work with the Partnership Team to determine which needs are best met by other organizations or ministries
4. Determine which programs or services need to be further developed, supported, and shared with congregations and leaders
5. Develop a plan to communicate the work of our synod on social issues as a way to share the Gospel of Christ (working with the Claimed Strategy Communications Team)
6. Ensure social ministries and programs are relevant to multicultural experiences

### Partnerships

A Partnership Team will be formed to:

1. Work with the Services Team to explore the most critical unmet or under resourced needs of people and communities served by the Metropolitan New York Synod
2. Compile an inventory of current synod partnerships and existing synod committees related to social ministry
3. Work with the Services Team to determine which needs are best met by other organizations or ministries
4. Determine which partnerships programs or services need to be further developed, supported, and shared with congregations and leaders – and which need to be reduced or ended

5. Develop a plan to communicate the partnerships of our synod as a way to share the Gospel of Christ (working with the Claimed Strategy Communications Team)
6. Ensure partnerships are relevant to multicultural experiences

### Advocacy

An Advocacy Team will be formed to:

1. Research specific justice and peace issues most relevant to the people and communities served by the Metropolitan New York Synod, especially those relating to multicultural experiences
2. Compile an inventory of current synod and church-wide advocacy issues and existing synod committees related to advocacy
3. Engage a broad cross section of Lutherans in discussions on justice and peace issues using social media and “town hall” gatherings
4. Determine a short list of justice and peace issues to address and develop a synod position on each
5. Develop resources for issues in #4 above for local congregations to use in discussions and advocacy
6. Develop a media response strategy to share Lutheran positions and reactions to critical contemporary issues