



**Supporting Information**

**for**

**Synod Profile**

**January 2008**

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(available at <http://www.spselca.org/Profile/profile.html> and on the CD mailed to each congregation)

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Additional items on the Resource CD and online at <a href="http://www.spselca.org/Profile/profile.html">http://www.spselca.org/Profile/profile.html</a> :	
• Discussion Questions in PowerPoint presentation	
• Flipchart photos from Gatherings	

## Congregational Discussion Questions

The Sierra Pacific Synod will be electing a new bishop in the spring of 2008. As we enter into this important time, our Synod has undertaken a new venture. A Synod Profile Team has been created and has gathered extensive input from around the Synod. We are the first Synod in the ELCA to undertake such a process. The team has listened to many voices and this input, together with existing Synod information, has been used to create a Synod Profile. The Synod Profile is, in some ways, similar to a congregational profile created when a congregation is seeking a new pastor.

The 13 themes below represent the synthesis of much conversation around our Synod about the current and future direction of our Synod and about the leader we seek in our next bishop. The Synod Profile Team heard 13 major themes and we present them to you for your consideration.

The questions below are intended to allow you to join in this groundbreaking conversation. These questions are similar to questions asked of candidates for bishop. These questions may be used by your congregation in a number of ways:

- 1) To begin a conversation in an adult forum or other setting about the ministry of our Synod and each congregation's role in that ministry.
- 2) To inform people about the ministry of the Synod, both its challenges and its strengths.
- 3) As conversation and preparation with voting members to the Sierra Pacific Synod Assembly.

A hard copy of the Synod Profile has been sent to your congregation as well as a PowerPoint presentation and an accompanying CD containing many of the supporting documents used in this process. The same information is available online at <http://spsprofile.wordpress.com/> where you can download the files and extend this pioneering conversation across the Synod.

Please use these questions and the accompanying materials in any way that would assist your congregation and its ministry. Thank you for adding your voice to the conversation.

In Christ's service,  
The Members of the Synod Profile Team

## ***Bishop's Ecclesiastical Duties***

It was no surprise to the Profile Team that the Bishop's personal schedule is filled beyond capacity. But what did come as a surprise was the significant quantity of ecclesiastical duties and activities that are assigned to the Bishop specifically, not to his or her office. These duties are either mandated by the Synod Constitution or directed by the ELCA.

The list includes:

- Three National Bishop's Meetings per year
- Synod Council work and meetings
- The Professional Leaders' Conference
- Conference Deans' Meetings
- Crisis and Conflict Response
- Ordinations
- Synod Assembly preparation and participation
- Requests to serve the larger Church
- Region 2 consultations
- Region 2 mobility Conferences
- Chief Ecumenical Officer of the Synod

You will note, as the Team did, that this list does not include additional travel time, personal study, prayer and sermon preparation time, continuing education, visits to congregations, serving as a pastor to the pastors, church anniversary visits, working with various Synod groups, working with the call process, routine administrative tasks, and time spent with the staff. If the Bishop were to visit each congregation on a Sunday it would take at least four years, not counting any conflicting Sunday activities.

There are many other functions and activities assigned to the office of the Bishop and not to the Bishop personally.

Fulfilling just the mandated duties and activities, including travel time, can absorb approximately 50 to 70 percent of the Bishop's time. This may vary somewhat from Bishop to Bishop, depending on how much time is devoted to church crises and conflicts. And this does not take into consideration normal administrative tasks and other travel.

- What do you think should be the priorities of the Bishop's time, especially in light of the ecclesiastical duties and activities specific to the Bishop?
- As you think about the work of the Synod, what functions and activities do you think should be handled by the Bishop personally?

## ***Call Process***

The procedure of preparing for and calling a new pastor or other rostered individual is a time congregations are assured of connection with the Bishop and the Synod staff. At the gatherings in Fresno, San Mateo, and Lodi, and in the ELCA audit program report and in the online survey, strong feelings were expressed about this connection. The verbal comments were mixed, mostly positive, but with a still significant number of negative responses.

Whether positive or negative, the comments included such statements as, "This was the only time we ever had communications with the bishop's office and staff." Complaints about the length of time involved in the process were often heard, but many participants were complimentary about the assistance received from the bishop's office. The issue was at the top of the priority list at the San Mateo gathering. "Improve call process (more options on choices or information on having more choices)." Currently there are 30 congregations participating in the call process, 21 seeking a solo pastor, 4 an associate pastor, and 5 a lead pastor or co-pastor.

- If your congregation were entering into a call process, what would you need and expect from Synod staff?
- What steps do you think could be taken to make the call process more efficient?
- What creative solutions can you envision for small, rural congregations who find it difficult to fill the pulpit?
- What do you think might be done to increase the pool of prospective candidates for openings in the Sierra Pacific Synod?

## ***Care for the Pastors***

Comments throughout the process expressed a need for care for pastors, but not necessarily by the Bishop. One suggestion included the design of a specific peer support program with input from those served. There is often a sense of detachment from the Synod staff and this is exacerbated by the inability of the bishop and the small staff to be present in person other than during times of crisis. The report from the Leadership Discipling Team's Listening Posts expands on some of these issues.

There is a sense of ambivalence about the role of the bishop in dealing with pastors and their families. Should the bishop be strong in administration or should the bishop be strong in pastoral care?

- How might the Synod staff, as well as congregations, support your pastor and your pastor's family?
- What programs or ideas might create a stronger pastoral relationship between the bishop's office and pastors?
- Being bishop calls for a great deal of interaction and team building. What skills and experience do you think are most essential for this task?

## ***Communication***

Communication is the broadest and most pervasive theme to surface in this process. It was identified as a crucial issue in and of itself, and emerges as a key factor in discussions of the strengths and weaknesses in other areas. Members appreciate the establishment of communications channels, such as the website and Byte of Synod, along with any information disseminated from the Synod Office, and especially visits from the Bishop or staff. At the same time, most communications efforts were frequently identified as inadequate or irregular. Participants often said that the gatherings, in and of themselves, were “positive” and made them feel they were “heard.”

Four essential areas of communication have been identified:

- face-to-face communication with the Bishop and staff
- digital/electronic communication
- information dissemination
- conceptual/contextual communication addressing mission and purpose.

In particular, congregations in our geographically dispersed Synod would like direct contact with the Bishop at times other than crises situations; an updated, easy to navigate, more complete website; a more effective way to let congregations and members know about the programs and resources developed by the ELCA or Synod; and communications from the bishop that clearly delineates purpose and direction.

- What communication from the Synod might be helpful to you as a congregation and as individual members of the Synod?
- What would inspire you to engage in the mission and purpose of the Synod?
- What kind of personal connection would you like to have with the Bishop and Synod staff?
- How do you think that connection might be best accomplished in our geographically dispersed Synod?
- What kind of digital technology might best assist in communication between your congregation and the Synod office?
- How might the Synod office best make synodical and national resources available to your congregation?

## ***Diversity***

The diversity of the Sierra Pacific Synod is well known. It is one of our greatest strengths, as well as one of our major challenges. The Synod is diverse geographically, politically, theologically, culturally, and in matters dealing with sexuality and sexual orientation. The majority of congregations are less diverse ethnically and socio-economically. One of the Synod's strengths is that it welcomes and encourages diversity, particularly at a synodical level. One of our great challenges is how to work with and speak for such diversity. It can create an "us" versus "them" mentality. It can also create a fragmentation that makes forward movement slow and, at times, difficult. And it should be mentioned that our self-understanding that we are diverse sometimes blinds us from seeing the ways in which we are not.

- How would you define "diversity" both in our congregations and in our mission field?
- What do you consider to be the greatest blessings and greatest challenges of our diverse Synod?
- How shall we, as a Synod, remain focused on our mission?

## ***Finances***

The Synod has a finite amount of financial resources and they are allocated to programs, events, staffing, overhead, and mission. Different groups sometimes see themselves as being in competition for funding. Some churches choose to withhold financial giving for various reasons, some have no idea how their giving is used, and some feel they are not getting an adequate return on their giving.

Since a budget is a planning document for the future, it and financial resources, have a major impact on all the other themes highlighted in this profile.

- What do you think should be the priorities for the allocation of the financial resources of the Synod?
- What major or minor changes do you think need to be made to the Synod's budget and budgeting process?
- How do you think the Synod staff ought to respond to congregations who choose to withhold financial giving from the Synod?
- How would you like to be informed by the Synod office about the use of your financial giving?

## ***Geography***

The Sierra Pacific Synod is one of the geographically largest in the ELCA, and includes the Silicon Valley, extensive agriculture lands, Pacific Rim opportunities, and the capital of our country's most populated state. This provides a large mission field whose energy can be captured for the sake of ministry. The Synod has rich educational resources, including Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary and the Graduate Theological Union. But the geography poses several challenges as well. The Bishop and Synod staff have to serve a vast area and many congregations feel disconnected from the Synod for this reason. The sheer size of the Synod, as well as its geographic diversity, can cause us to feel fragmented from one another and can make it much more difficult for ministry partners to work together. There is a perceived need for nurturing of congregation-to-congregation connections within the conferences. The size also affects several other key issues: communications, the call process, diversity, Synod structure and financial resources.

- What are the key issues facing the Synod as a result of its large geographical size?
- How would you like to see the next bishop address these issues?
- From the perspective of your geography, what specific changes might be made to the Synod structure to address the challenges of our large geographic size?

## ***Healthy, Multiplying Congregations***

Building healthy, multiplying congregations has been a major focus of the Synod for the past few years. The document of that same name provides a detailed overview of the Synod's efforts in this regard, organized under the following categories:

- Pray First
- Lead by Example
- Plan for Mission
- Build up the Body
- See and Speak the Truth in Love

The Synod has had more new mission starts (nine in the past two years) than any other ELCA Synod in the country. At the same time, the Synod has a large number of shrinking and aging congregations, some which may not be viable, especially using "Criteria for Viable Congregations."

- Are you, as a congregation, familiar with a Synod document called, "Building Healthy, Multiplying Congregations"?
- Describe a "healthy" congregation.
- How might the bishop and Synod staff best be involved with a congregation on the edge of viability?
- How could the bishop and Synod staff best help you to engage in meaningful evangelism and outreach?

## ***Identity***

As a Synod, we are not always clear about our unique identity as Lutheran Christians. Those outside our fellowship seem even less clear about our identity. In Northern California and Nevada, we live in a multi-cultural, diverse, and secular region of the country. Outreach and Evangelism, especially in the development of Mission Churches, is a challenge since many in our area are unchurched, while the lines differentiating Christian denominations are often perceived as soft. Nationally and regionally, we are recognized by our work with Lutheran World Relief, by our seminaries, Hunger Appeals, and participation in Ecumenical or Interfaith organizations. As individuals, many members see themselves as part of a long tradition as the church of the Reformation, with a strong sense of identity and spirit of pioneering. However, there is a perception that those “outside” are not clear about who Lutherans are, the good work we do, or what we believe.

- How would you articulate our distinct identity as Lutherans in a contemporary, secular and diverse society?
- What do our Lutheran theology and a Reformation mentality mean in 2008?
- How does our Lutheran faith speak to young families? To singles? To an aging population?
- How do we keep “passion for the faith” alive?
- How do we address societal and ethical issues from a faith perspective?

## ***Leadership Development***

Capable leaders, both lay and clergy, are needed for the congregations of the Synod to be effective in deepening and sharing faith. Building “healthy, multiplying congregations” will be more likely to happen if there is good leadership in this direction. There is a desire to attract and equip more young leaders who will lead in new ways with new gifts, and thus help the congregations of the Synod to reach a younger population.

- As you consider the office of bishop, what, in your mind, is effective leadership?
- What kind of leadership do you need and expect from the bishop of the Synod?
- How, as a Synod, might we attract and equip a greater number of younger leaders?

## ***Sexuality***

The discussions and actions surrounding the ordination of gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender (GLBT) clergy have been contentious and divisive for the Synod. There is substantial confusion about what the Bishop is and is not empowered to do. Faithful members have very different opinions on how we should proceed. While those differences of opinion are strongly held and strongly stated, the Synod looks to the Bishop for leadership traversing these uncharted territories, both in the present situation and dealing with the consequences of any policy decisions made at the churchwide level. One dominant message that emerged is that we must “get on with it” and not be defined by this issue.

- What do you understand to be the key issues in the area of sexuality and how do you feel the bishop needs to address them?
- What policies, in this area, would you like to see implemented for the Synod and for the ELCA?
- What do you think should be done, by congregations and by the Synod, to address the divisiveness within the Synod over this issue?

- How might our Synod get beyond this issue rather than being defined by this issue?

### ***Staffing of the Bishop's Office***

The current staffing of the Bishop's Office includes the Bishop and three full-time assistants, plus three part-time support staff and one half-time ELCA deployed staff. There are diverse opinions (and lack of knowledge) about the Synod staff. Congregational members expressed a clear desire that the Bishop and staff be more present in their congregations, not just in times of crisis, transition, or when asking for money.

It is also recognized that the current staff possesses a vast amount of knowledge about the past 20 years of mission and ministry in the Synod; that, of course, can be both an asset and a liability. There is strong support for a younger, more diverse staff, one perceived to be less bound to "the way we've always done it before."

- How do you understand the purpose of the Bishop's staff?
- How might the new bishop take advantage of the institutional knowledge of the current staff and, at the same time, create a "new" staff that is effective?
- In what ways do you want to see the Synod staff present in congregations? To do what?

### ***Synod Structure***

What does "Synod" mean? The term is used in different ways: One, the expression of the body of Christ through the ELCA presence in northern California and Nevada; another, the office of the Bishop. The role and the structure of the Synod as an institution are not clearly understood. The perception is that the focus of the Synod office is on addressing problems and that relatively little emphasis is placed on creating a vision for the future and leading the Synod towards that future. The Synod Assembly is viewed as an untapped opportunity to bring disparate groups together and lead them towards a shared mission and common goals. The conference structure works well in some areas and not so well in others. There is a sense that this Synod is unique within the ELCA, yet the potential to leverage that uniqueness has not been addressed.

- What does "Synod" mean?
- What vision do you have for the Sierra Pacific Synod? How might the Synod office lead toward that vision?
- What do you think should be the priorities of the bishop's time? How might the bishop and Synod staff align those priorities with the structure and activities of the Synod?

## Methodology and composition of groups

### *About the Regional Gatherings*

All members of the Synod were invited to apply to attend one of four regional gatherings. Applications were solicited so that the Profile Team could compose gatherings that most accurately represented the make-up of the Synod. In reality, almost all who applied were then invited, with the only exception being congregations with too high a number of applicants for their church size. One gathering, in Ukiah for far northern California, was cancelled because of insufficient applications (3).

<b>Location</b>	<b>Number Attending</b>	<b>Congregations Represented</b>
Fresno	18	10
San Mateo	55	30
Lodi	48	17
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>57</b>

Approximately 30% of Synod Congregations were represented.

### **The Gathering Day Process**

Participants were seated at deliberately diverse tables of 6-8 for the day.

The entire group was invited to fill in a wall-length timeline of the Synod divided by Bishops' tenures.

In light of this timeline, small groups were asked to discuss, list and report out to the larger group their answers to these questions:

- “What is this Synod especially good at? What are its strengths?”
- “What is this Synod not so good at? What are its weaknesses?”

The entire group was then invited to fill in the timeline for the next 12 years (the length of two Bishop's terms) with their conjectures and desires for the future.

- The small groups were then asked to list the most important issues the Synod must and will face in the future. These lists were explained and posted.

Finally, individuals were asked to place dots on the six most critical issues to be faced in the future of the Synod.

## ***About the Surveys***

A simple 5-Question survey was made available for any Synod members to complete. This was available on-line and in print, in both English and Spanish. The survey was available for completion for five weeks.

The survey was completed by 118 individuals, representing 59 congregations or ministries.

## ***Surveys and Gatherings Combined Participation***

90 congregations or ministries were represented at the gatherings and/or with completed surveys. Approximately 44% of the congregations and 100% of the Conferences in the Synod were represented.

## ***Participating Congregations and Organizations***

Members participating in the gatherings or completing the on-line 5 question survey identified themselves as being part of the following congregations.

<b>Location</b>	<b>Congregation</b>
Alameda	Trinity
Antioch	St. John's
Berkeley	Shepherd of the Hills
Berkeley	University Chapel
Burlingame	Good Shepherd
Chico	Faith
Citrus Heights	Advent
Citrus Heights	Ascension
Clovis	Lord of Life
Coalinga	Our Savior
Corte Madera	Marin
Easton	Immanuel
El Dorado Hills	Church of the Resurrection
El Dorado Hills	St. Stephen's
Elk Grove	Lord of Life
Eureka	Calvary
Fairfax	Christ
Fairfield	St. Mark's
Fernley	Gift of Grace
Fremont	Christ the King
Fresno	Good Shepherd
Fresno	Hope
Fresno	Trinity
Galt	Shepherd of the Valley
Granite Bay	Resurrection
Groveland	Mountain Lutheran Mission
Half Moon Bay	Coastside

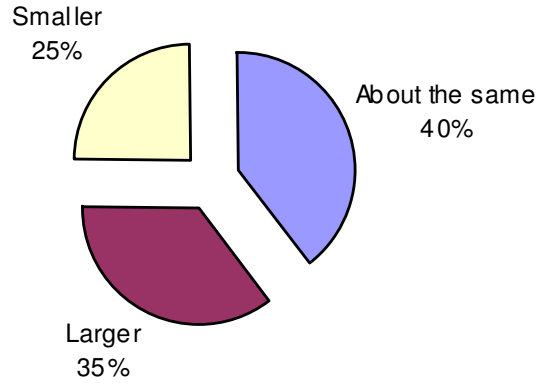
Kingsburg	Concordia
Lafayette	Our Savior's
Lodi	St. Paul
Los Banos	St. John's
Merced	Shepherd of the Valley
Monterey	St. Timothy
Morgan Hill	Advent
Napa	Napa Valley
Novato	All Saints
Oakland	Bethlehem
Oakland	Trinity
Palo Alto	First
Palo Alto	Grace
Palo Alto	University
Pleasant Hill	St. Mark's
Pleasanton	Trinity
Porterville	Trinity
Quincy	Our Savior
Redwood City	Messiah
Reedley	Christ
Reno	Faith
Reno	Good Shepherd
Rio Linda	Calvary
Rohnert Park	Cross & Crown
Sacramento	Atonement
Sacramento	Church of the Master
Sacramento	First English
Sacramento	Good Shepherd
Sacramento	Our Redeemer
Sacramento	St. John's
Salinas	Church of the Good Shepherd
Salinas	Good Shepherd
San Carlos	Holy Trinity
San Francisco	St. Mark's
San Francisco	St. Paulus
San Francisco	St. Francis
San Jose	Christ the Good Shepherd
San Jose	Coro
San Jose	Gloria Dei
San Jose	Immanuel
San Jose	New Creation
San Jose	New Generation
San Jose	St. Timothy
San Leandro	Epiphany
San Mateo	St. Andrew
Santa Rosa	Bethlehem
Santa Clara	Hope
Santa Clara	Our Savior

Santa Cruz	St. Stephens
Santa Rosa	Bethlehem
Saratoga	Immanuel
Truckee	Truckee Lutheran Presbyterian Mission
Tulare	First
Vallejo	St. Paul
Walnut Creek	Saint Matthew
Woodland	American

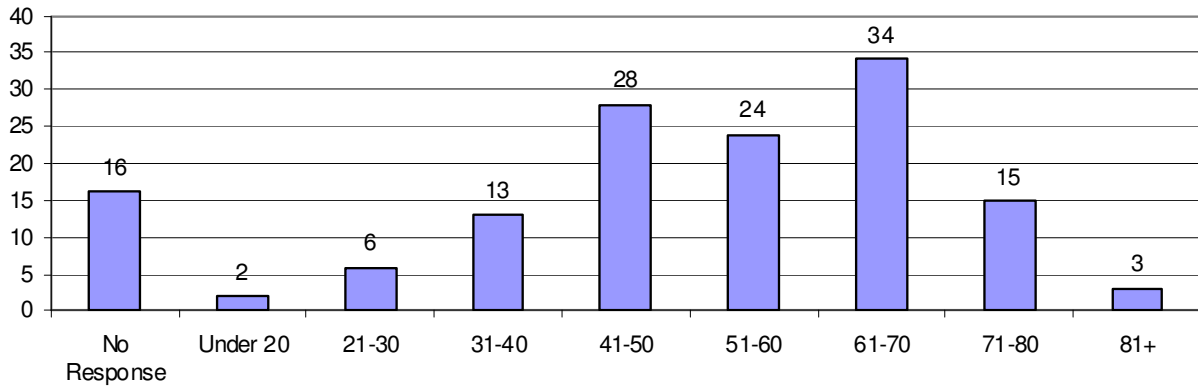
A number of people identified themselves as being part of these groups.

- East Bay Youth Program
- Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County
- John Muir Medical Center
- Lutheran World Relief
- Retired
- Synod Hunger Network

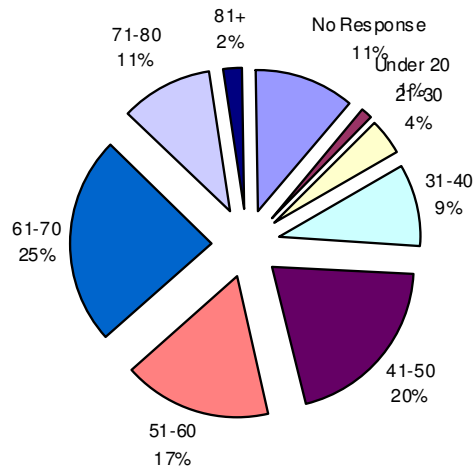
### Church Size Now versus Past



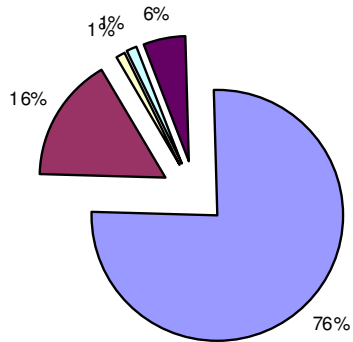
### Age of Participants



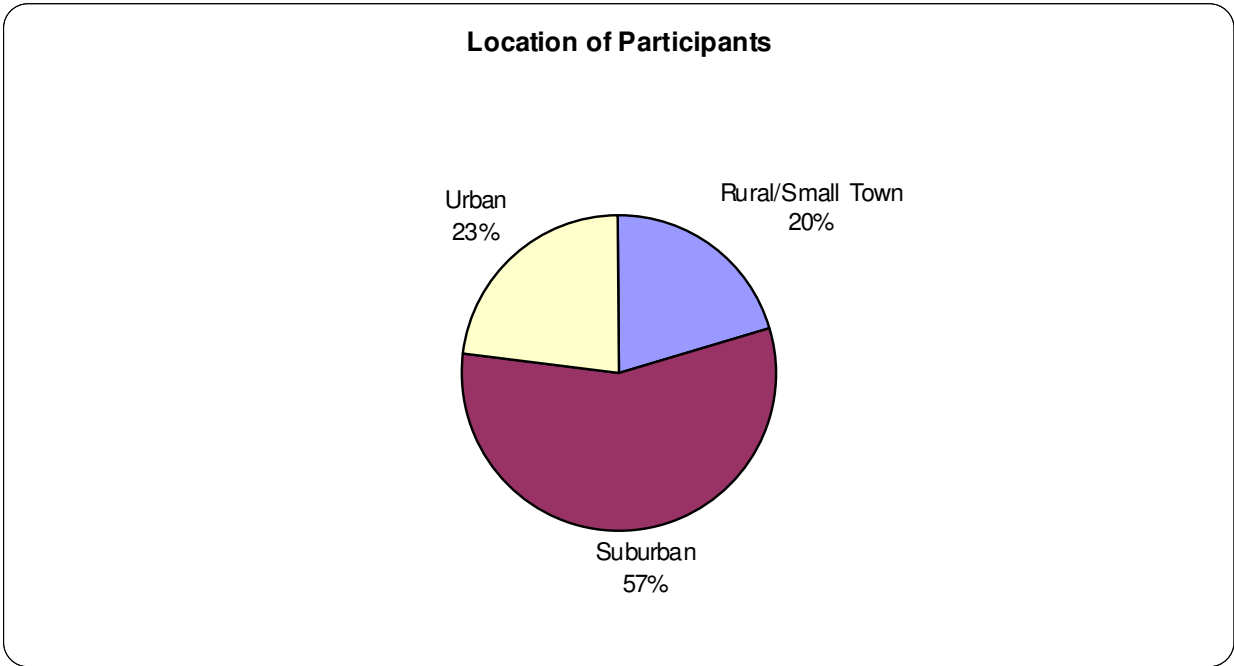
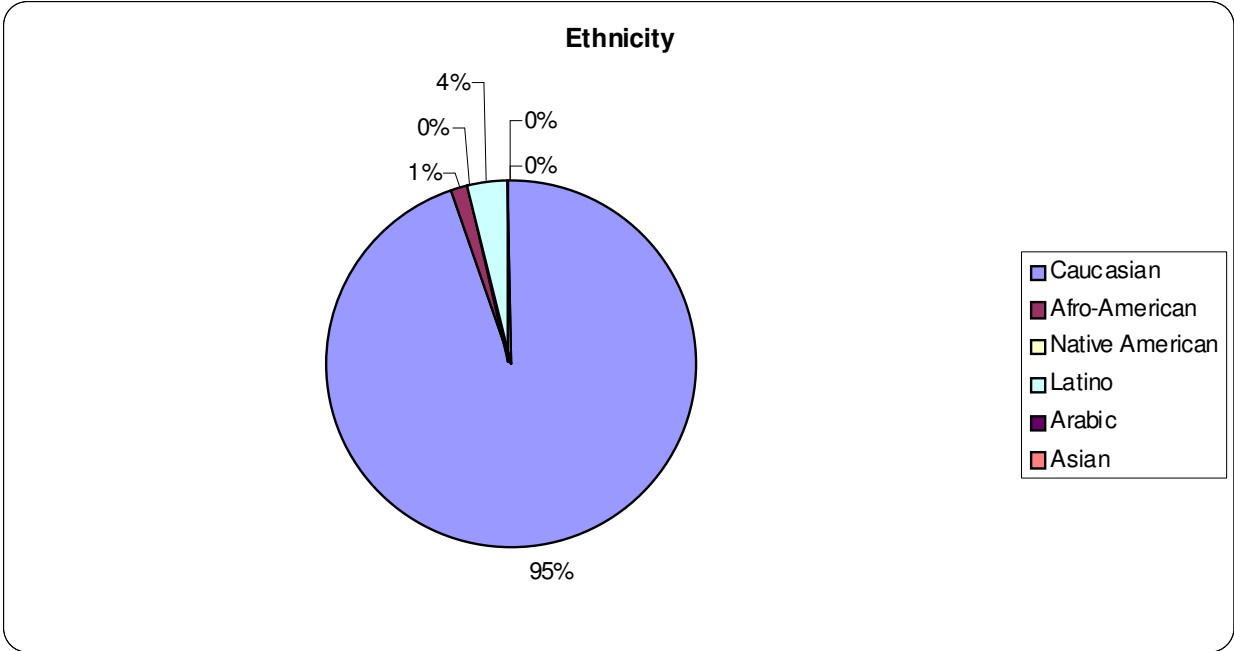
### Age of Participants



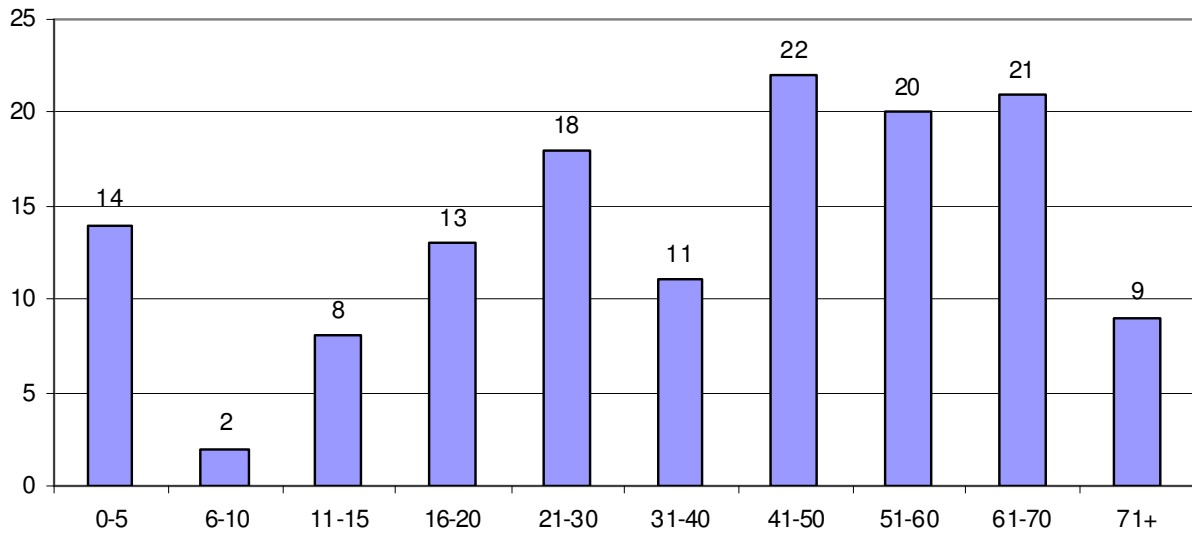
### Clergy/Staff/Lay



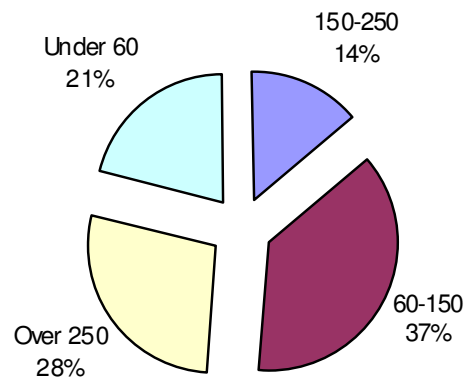
■ Lay 
 ■ Clergy with call 
 ■ Clergy without call 
 ■ Retired clergy 
 ■ Church staff



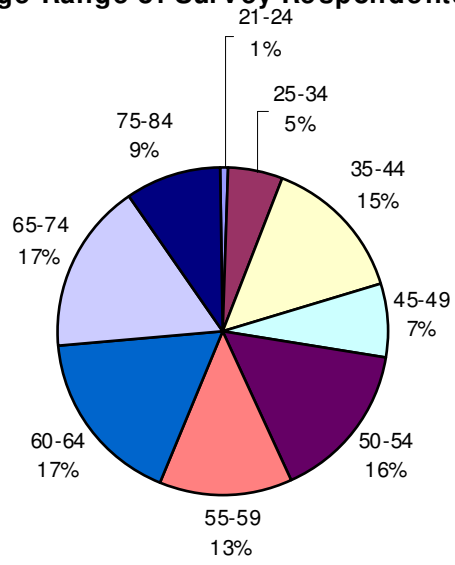
### Years as a Lutheran



### Worship Attendance



### Age Range of Survey Respondents



## Overall Summary of Gatherings

These tables summarize the sticky dot prioritization exercise mentioned in “Methodology.”

<p><b>Healthy Multiplying Congregations</b></p> <p>Development of alternative models for church (deal with increasing closings, parish model, consolidation, targeted ethnic missions). Becoming mission outposts (develop missionaries, telling our faith stories, speaking language of locals, using music in culture). Youth ministry – digital generation. Making the ELCA relevant to young people. Represent/grow to reflect today’s society (more diverse congregations, keeping youth involved after confirming to starting their own families, evangelism to neighbors around the church). Decline in memberships / attendance – closure / transformation of congregations. Education &amp; nurturing of children and youth. Evangelism, Evangelism, evangelism. Families with young children ministries that accommodate modern families. Dealing with population of unmarried couples &amp; single young adults. Look at diversity and age in congregations. How to reach out to those we are missing? Find fresh, lively ways to articulate the faith so that “Sunday morning” connects to the rest of the week. How to bring in youth / young adults. Pastors lacking passionate spirituality. Reaching out to 20’s, 30’s, 40’s. Dynamics of starting new ministries vs. ongoing support needs. Faith formation / confirmation. Integration of parental involvement w/ congregations. Biblical illiteracy in culture and congregations. Engage church and people in healing. Ethnic and gender diversity and age inclusion. Evangelism &amp; outreach. Increase appeal / recruitment of minorities &amp; youth. Loss of membership &amp; aging of members (broadly defined). Nurturing our aging population. Address the churches that don’t care enough about non-Christians to do something. Declining congregational membership. Demographic expansion or implosion w/ retirement and eventual death of baby boomers. Growing the church through better/improved evangelism. Keeping our youth in the church. Reach out to all members and not just the same few / more evangelism. Being relevant. Creating active disciples in the world. Defining a healthy community (deal with people who undermine health). One size doesn’t fit all.</p>	151
<p><b>Synod Structure</b></p> <p>Establish vision/goals with metrics and timetable with input from lay and clergy. Look at restructuring Synod into smaller divisions &amp; deploy staff to be in those divisions. Greater understanding that we congregations are the synod. Take a critical look at Assembly agenda. Consider doing budget/business one year and spiritual growth the alternate year. Make Synod mission statement more visible/accessible to congregations. We need to be mission/vision driven, instead of budget &amp; crisis driven. Education / communication on synod roles/responsibilities and what they are doing. Synod develops organizational expertise (Shares missions among congregations, shares ministries/programs, Identify and utilize congregation talent). Rethink how we as a synod vote for a bishop, make policy decisions and communicate at synod assemblies. Clarity of mission/vision/goals that guide/inform/allow accountability of budget &amp; decision making. Synod Structure. Re-evaluate our synod structure (clean the slate and start over). Re-evaluate the size and geographics of the synod. Synods focus on the views and needs of congregations. Improves local congregation synergy – perhaps conference structure could be enhanced to serve this (example lay leadership training). Re-evaluate synod process and procedure for gatherings ALC or LCA polity? Continued dialog toward resolution of issues that divide us.</p>	88

<p><b>Identity</b>  Focus on churches as community centers. Promote programs that support all families in our local communities (mixed families, poor parent/teen communications, single parent families). Maintaining our “Lutheraness” in a diverse congregation. Clear statement of faith. Fellowship together. Honest financial/service commitment. Ethical issues re technology (biotech, info tech). Recommitment to LSS. Tapping into society spiritual reserve, engage the spiritual but not religious. Social secularization. Keep the first (2). 1. God first. 2. Love your neighbor. Support of social ministry education ministry partners, etc. Now that the historic episcopate decision has been made nationally, how can SPS embrace it?  Change in ethics/values (e.g. technology, family planning, cost of living). God’s inclusive love. Positioning church to impact secular society. Retaining Lutheran identity in face of megachurches (nondenominational). WWJD.</p>	74
<p><b>Sexuality</b>  Sexuality. Deal with the results (“fall out”) of sexuality study (ELCA 2009). Closure on sexuality issue in church and address possible fallout. Decide clergy sexuality issue first, then drop it. Move on! Make the decision and we’ll live with it. Resolve the GLBT issue. Confront sexuality issue – GLBT (Pastors, same sex marriage, welcoming congregations). Decisions about homosexual clergy. Human sexuality leadership.</p>	55
<p><b>Call process</b>  Improve call process (more options on choices or information on having more choices).Will face shortage of well qualified pastors. Revamping the call process. Revamp/improve call process to be quicker, more responsive, better supported. Fix the dysfunctional call process. Clergy shortage/inability of congregations to financially support calling a pastor. Revamp &amp; shorten the call process – more face to face meetings with synod staff – not just phone calls. Clergy candidate pool viability.</p>	49
<p><b>Care for Pastors</b>  Pastoral care of the pastors from the bishop’s office (more of it) – recognizing problems &amp; dealing with them. Pastor the pastors’ families. Clergy care and their families. Pastoral support/care. Established improved pastoral relationships. Clergy caring for each other in healthier collegial relationships. Provide pastoral care for all pastors (mentorships) – geographically isolated churches.</p>	44
<p><b>Communication</b>  Embracing and empowering technology. Effective communication/communication gap. Policy/process to share info/accountability. Integrating personal, electronic, written forms. Learning to market the ELCA. Shine light on what we do well (ie social ministries and disaster relief) – can be an evangelism / outreach tool. Making congregations aware of church structure and role in church-wide beyond flyers and literature to reach people. Continue tech expansion but embrace one-to-one contact. Have more face to face communications with pastors &amp; church leaders, congregations. Marketing what we have to offer.</p>	42
<p><b>Finances</b>  Shrinkage (\$, people, congregations). Understanding our stewardship of all that God has made (earth, environment, etc.). Dwindling monetary resources. Congregations that withhold funds. Focus on servicing and being good stewards towards those in need. Financial issues (synodical staff &amp; programs pastoral housing &amp; benefits). Other ways of combining resources (youth, elderly, etc.). Recruit and support (monetary &amp; spiritually) for seminarian.</p>	28

<p><b>Bishop's Ecclesiastical Duties</b>  Identity of bishop (administrator, leader, pastor).  Working relationship between Christians/Muslims/Jewish (depolarizing the issues) – new bishops role. Peace building.</p>	23
<p><b>Diversity</b>  How to become a community of moral deliberation without alienation. Diversity (broadly defined) of congregations and pastors/staff. Cultural diversity (language)</p>	21
<p><b>Leadership Development</b>  Identifying, equipping, training lay leaderships. Leadership Development. Effective Training, training, training of pastors, staff, lay leaders, synod staff. Continue lay leadership development. Raising up leaders at every level in the church. Proactive leadership involvement &amp; training of congregational leadership before conflict cripples/paralyzes. Shortage of pastors (increase lay ministry?)</p>	16
<p><b>Staffing of the Bishop's Office</b>  Synod staff (responsibilities/roles, structure of staff). Synod as administrative resource center. Create a “crisis prevention/intervention” team to help congregations. Follow through on the implementation of new things. Staffing needs balanced with resource limitations.</p>	7
<p><b>Geography</b>  Connection – geography challenges. Geographic size &amp; diversity of Synod, specifically visibility/involvement of bishops &amp; staff in wider area &amp; individual congregations.</p>	4

Photos of the flipcharts at the gatherings are available at  
<http://www.spselca.org/Profile/Flipcharts.pdf>.

## **Fresno Summary**

<p><b>Synod Structure</b>            Look at restructuring Synod into smaller divisions &amp; deploy staff to be in those divisions. Take a critical look at Assembly agenda. Consider doing budget/business one year and spiritual growth the alternate year. Make Synod mission statement more visible/accessible to congregations. We need to be mission/vision driven, instead of budget &amp; crisis driven. Clarity of mission/vision/goals that guide/inform/allow accountability of budget &amp; decision making.</p>	36
<p><b>Sexuality</b>            Decide clergy sexuality issue first, then drop it. Move on! Make the decision and we'll live with it. Decisions about homosexual clergy</p>	13
<p><b>Communication</b>            Effective communication/communication gap. Policy/process to share info/accountability. Integrating personal, electronic, written forms. Have more face to face communications with pastors &amp; church leaders, congregations.</p>	11
<p><b>Healthy Multiplying Congregations</b>            Look at diversity and age in congregations. How to reach out to those we are missing? Reaching out to 20's, 30's, 40's. Biblical illiteracy in culture <u>and</u> congregations.</p>	11
<p><b>Identity</b>            Clear statement of faith. Fellowship together. Honest financial/service commitment. Clarity of mission/vision/goals that guide/inform/allow accountability of budget &amp; decision making. Keep the first (2). 1. God first. 2. Love your neighbor. God's inclusive love.</p>	9
<p><b>Call Process</b>            Revamp/improve call process to be quicker, more responsive, better supported. Clergy shortage/inability of congregations to financially support calling a pastor. Revamp &amp; shorten the call process – more face to face meetings with synod staff – not just phone calls.</p>	8
<p><b>Finances</b>            Congregations that withhold funds</p>	4
<p><b>Staffing of the Bishop's Office</b>            Create a “crisis prevention/intervention” team to help congregations. Follow through on the implementation of new things. Staffing needs balanced with resource limitations.</p>	3
<p><b>Care for the Pastors</b>            Provide pastoral care for all pastors (mentorships) – geographically isolated churches</p>	2
<p><b>Geography</b>            Geographic size &amp; diversity of Synod, specifically visibility/involvement of bishops &amp; staff in wider area &amp; individual congregations.</p>	2
<p><b>Leadership Development</b>            Proactive leadership involvement &amp; training of congregational leadership <u>before</u> conflict cripples/paralyzes.</p>	2
<p><b>Diversity</b>            Cultural diversity (language).</p>	1

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## San Mateo Summary

<p><b>Healthy Multiplying Congregations</b>  Development of alternative models for church (deal with increasing closings, parish model, consolidation, targeted ethnic missions). Becoming mission outposts (develop missionaries, telling our faith stories, speaking language of locals, using music in culture). Making the ELCA relevant to young people. Represent/grow to reflect today's society (more diverse congregations, keeping youth involved after confirming to starting their own families, evangelism to neighbors around the church). Decline in memberships / attendance – closure / transformation of congregations. Education &amp; nurturing of children and youth. Dealing with population of unmarried couples &amp; single young adults. Engage church and people in healing. Ethnic and gender diversity and age inclusion. Increase appeal / recruitment of minorities &amp; youth. Loss of membership &amp; aging of members (broadly defined). Nurturing our aging population. Creating active disciples in the world. Defining a healthy community (deal with people who undermine health). One size doesn't fit all.</p>	90
<p><b>Identity</b>  Maintaining our "Lutheraness" in a diverse congregation. Ethical issues re technology (biotech, info tech). Learning to market the ELCA. Recommitment to LSS. Tapping into society spiritual reserve, engage the spiritual but not religious. Evangelism &amp; outreach. Support of social ministry education ministry partners, etc. Being relevant. Change in ethics/values (e.g. technology, family planning, cost of living). Positioning church to impact secular society. Retaining Lutheran identity in face of megachurches (nondenominational). WWJD.</p>	37
<p><b>Call process</b>  Improve call process (more options on choices or information on having more choices). Will face shortage of well qualified pastors.</p>	32
<p><b>Synod Structure</b>  Establish vision/goals with metrics and timetable with input from lay and clergy. ALC or LCA polity? Continued dialog toward resolution of issues that divide us.</p>	27
<p><b>Sexuality</b>  Closure on sexuality issue in church and address possible fallout. Resolve the GLBT issue. Human sexuality leadership.</p>	24
<p><b>Bishop's Ecclesiastical Duties</b>  Identity of bishop (administrator, leader, pastor). Working relationship between Christians/Muslims/Jewish (depolarizing the issues) – new bishops role. Peace building.</p>	23
<p><b>Care for Pastors</b>  Pastoral care of the pastors from the bishop's office (more of it) – recognizing problems &amp; dealing with them. Pastor the pastors' families. Established improved pastoral relationships.</p>	22
<p><b>Finances</b>  Dwindling monetary resources. Financial issues (synodical staff &amp; programs pastoral housing &amp; benefits). Other ways of combining resources (youth, elderly, etc.). Recruit and support (monetary &amp; spiritually) for seminarian.</p>	9
<p><b>Communication</b>  Making congregations aware of church structure and role in church-wide beyond flyers and literature to reach people</p>	4
<p><b>Diversity</b>  Diversity (broadly defined) of congregations and pastors/staff. Continued dialog toward resolution of issues that divide us.</p>	2

<b>Leadership Development</b> Shortage of pastors (increase lay ministry?)	1
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## **Lodi Summary**

<p><b>Identity</b> Focus on churches as community centers. Promote programs that support all families in our local communities (mixed families, poor parent/teen communications, single parent families). Evangelism, Evangelism, evangelism. Focus on servicing and being good stewards towards those in need. Social secularization. Now that the historic episcopate decision has been made nationally, how can SPS embrace it? Reach out to all members and not just the same few / more evangelism.</p>	46
<p><b>Healthy Multiplying Congregations</b> Youth ministry – digital generation. Families with young children ministries that accommodate modern families. Find fresh, lively ways to articulate the faith so that “Sunday morning” connects to the rest of the week.” How to bring in youth / young adults. Dynamics of starting new ministries vs. ongoing support needs. Faith formation / confirmation. Integration of parental involvement w/ congregations. Address the churches that don’t care enough about non-Christians to do something. Declining congregational membership. Demographic expansion or implosion w/ retirement and eventual death of baby boomers. Growing the church through better/improved evangelism. Keeping our youth in the church.</p>	36
<p><b>Synod Structure</b> Greater understanding that we congregations are the Synod. Education / communication on synod roles/responsibilities and what they are doing. Synod develops organizational expertise (Shares missions among congregations, shares ministries/programs, Identify and utilize congregation talent). Rethink how we as a synod vote for a bishop, make policy decisions and communicate at synod assemblies. Synod Structure. Re-evaluate our synod structure (clean the slate and start over). Re-evaluate the size and geographics of the Synod. Synods focus on the views and needs of congregations. Improves local congregation synergy – perhaps conference structure could be enhanced to serve this (example: lay leadership training). Re-evaluate synod process and procedure for gatherings</p>	31
<p><b>Communication</b> Embracing and empowering technology. Shine light on what we do well (lie social ministries and disaster relief) – can be an evangelism / outreach tool. Continue tech expansion but embrace one-to-one contact. Marketing what we have to offer</p>	22
<p><b>Care of the Pastors</b> Clergy care and their families. Pastoral support/care. Clergy caring for each other in healthier collegial relationships.</p>	22
<p><b>Diversity</b> How to become a community of moral deliberation without alienation.</p>	18
<p><b>Sexuality</b> Sexuality. Deal with the results (“fall out”) of sexuality study (ELCA 2009). Confront sexuality issue – GLBT (Pastors, same sex marriage, welcoming congregations).</p>	18
<p><b>Leadership Development</b> Identifying, equipping, training lay leadership. Pastors lacking passionate spirituality. Effective Training. Training of pastors, staff, lay leaders, and Synod staff. Continue lay leadership development. Raising up leaders at every level in the church.</p>	13
<p><b>Finances</b> Shrinkage (\$, people, congregations). Understanding our stewardship of all that God has made (earth, environment, etc.).</p>	12

<b>Call Process</b> Revamping the call process. Call Process. Fix the dysfunctional call process. Clergy candidate pool viability	9
<b>Staffing of the Bishop's Office</b> Synod staff (responsibilities/roles, structure of staff). Synod as administrative resource center	4
<b>Geography</b> Connection – geography challenges	2

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## 5 Questions Online Survey Details

### What are the strengths of the Sierra Pacific Synod? (Bullet point style - please be specific)

- Administration in crisis situations and handling the institutional administrative tasks
- Allowing each church to grow \* stepping in with care when there are synod-level concerns. \* Intervention during Pastor's process of coming out
- Allows churches to call Pastors from within or outside the Synod \* Doesn't interfere
- Am not sure of any of this. It's kind of over my head.
- Autonomy amongst churches \* Some strong clergy \* A Lutheran seminary
- Availability \* being proactive w/small staff availability \* encouraging
- Belief in Jesus Christ \* SPS Assemblies \* Addresses Social Issues \* It's all about God \* Supportive of new churches \* Transforms into healthy congregations
- Both urban and rural \* excitement of growing, creative congregations in urban ferment \* challenge of needs of small, faithful congregations in the more rural areas \* our Full Communion Partners
- Call process [revision] is a worth task to solve. Other focuses should take priority over the Call process, which is even now much better than those of other mainline denomination
- Close Knit Group
- Competence of the Pastors
- Coordination between congregations
- Cultural Diversity \* Concern for the marginalized \* Strong sense of social responsibility
- Dedicated, professional staff in the Bishop's Office, especially Church and Noreen. • Building Healthy Multiplying Congregations is excellent blueprint • Second-mile giving
- desire to unify
- Diverse
- Diverse geographies, socio/economic groups, theologies and ideologies. \* PLTS and the GTU in our Synod \* talented retired clergy & people in special ministries.
- Diverse geography, ethnic groups, economic groups, cultures and lifestyles \* Immediate availability of information-based technology hub. \* Dedicated Christians.
- Diverse ministries \* accessibility of synod staff: they respond when called upon \* closer connections with companion synods (Rwanda)
- Diversity
- Diversity -- ethnicities, languages, ages strong leadership in most parishes \* proximity to PLTS & GTU -- resources for education for lay & clergy alike
- diversity technical expertise \* synod youth program \* Mt. Cross PLTS Spiritual directors at our disposal
- Diversity \* a bible based synod
- Diversity \* Many gifts for ministry \* Large unchurched population \* financial assets
- diversity \* PLTS and GTU \* resources: pastoral, lay ministers, buildings, other ministries,
- Diversity \* Voices are from various ethnic groups/ regions. \* Strong leaders and gifted staff. \* High level of theological awareness. \* A seminary on our territory
- Diversity in cultures \* Diversity in ministries \* short resolution discussions
- Diversity of congregations \* Full communion fellowship with other denominations.
- Diversity of congregations \* number of workshops \* The vision for mission and new starts \* conference structure \* strong Deans \* congregational cooperation
- Diversity of ethnicity \*. Leadership of Bishop Mullen
- Diversity of people.
- Diversity of race, age, sexual orientation \* Openness to ecumenical dialogue \* Great mission field
- Diversity, Ecumenical \* in process to be more inclusive
- Diversity, Intelligence, Inclusion
- Diversity: different races, language groups, experiences, genders, and sexual identities.\* Wealth . . .allows for unique ministry development and for survival of smaller churches \* Education: seminary and the GTU \* opportunities for learning and growth of our member. \* Natural beauty / quality of life - the Sierra Pacific Synod is a place where pastors and parishioners want to come and want to stay.
- Diversity: Ethnic, ages, political, worship styles \* Bishop Mullen and his staff \* Excellent clergy – mostly \* Friendship / comradeship of members \* Ecumenical thrust
- Don't know - wasn't even aware of the Synod's existence.
- Evangelical, caring \* Pastoral \* Say all the right things, act on a few of them

- Excellent . . . seminary that produces enthusiastic pastors. \* St. Matthew has been provided excellent pastors when we've needed them and the Bishop is involved in that.
- Excitement and privilege to do ministry on the West Coast, among so many unchurched and where mission is so dynamic and engaging and similar to the First Century.
- Expansive cultures in our context. \* sustainable ministries \* Lutheran tradition \* developing the natural gifts in congregations
- Financially efficient.
- Geographic placement \* access to the GTU and top Universities \* proximity to environmentally sensitive areas, socio-economically diverse areas, and political areas . . .
- Gifts and creativity of the leaders of the synod.
- Good bishop \* Listening bishop \* Good resources \* Good resource teams
- Good communication \* Enjoy Summer Youth Activities \* Like openness of communication about varied controversial subjects.
- Good leadership and staff support \* Proper stance on gays in clergy--inclusiveness
- Good Shepherding for the Pastors in our Synod.
- Good works -- Habitat for Humanity, LSS Sincerity -- true believers,
- Great pastors, key lay leaders, some very vital congregations in diverse locations working with diverse populations
- Has served as a focal point for ministries outside SPS, such as Rwanda.
- History \* tradition \* resources \* many locations \* PLTS \* many good Pastors \* volunteers
- I don't have that information.
- I don't know
- I don't know much at all about the Synod other than it's a group our church belongs to.
- I don't know the answer to this question! My involvement is with WELCA and with my church, and I don't think I have a concept of the synod's strengths, or weaknesses.
- Inclusive \* Enthusiastic \* The Seminary
- Inclusive \* Socially progressive \* Liturgically meaningful
- Internal communication (among the churches in the Synod) \* Resources are great \* Church membership seems strong
- longevity \* resources
- Lot of potential.
- Lutheran theology \* Clear mission: building healthy multiplying congregations \* Cultural diversity \* Gifts of members: money, talents, experience \* Gifted, capable Synod staff/ volunteers \* Ancillary organizations: LSS, PLTS, LOPP, LAMN, Mt. Cross, etc.
- Many caring, talented pastors and lay leaders \* over 200 congregations located in places where real people live and have [many] needs that can be served \* PLTS
- Many fine, dedicated clergy \*
- Not sure - as [our church] has not had much involvement with the Synod
- Our Mission Statement "Building . . ." Ethnic, geographic and lifestyle diversity \* Willingness to engage difficult social issues \* Strong social ministry \* 13 mission starts!!! Discipling Teams
- Our Seminary turns out good preachers/pastors for the most part, judging from the interns that we have had.
- Oversight and support of individual congregations \* forum for controversial issues
- Pastoral Call process \* Lay Leader seminars \* Conventions \* Administrative, legal, insurance information and guidance through Chuck Ruthroff
- Relatively compact geographically so one can get anywhere in the synod pretty easily \* last couple of bishops, have led well and pastorally
- Relatively liberal \* Accepting of diversity - racial, gender, etc.
- Seminary on territory \* Crucible for determining possible outcomes of ecclesiastical controversies \* Deals with religion-resistant culture \* deals with cutting-edge issues/ministries
- Several strong congregations with a mission focus \* Many excellent pastors Synodical emphasis on mission \* caring, committed bishop \* experienced synod staff \* good relationships with agencies and institutions \* ecumenical partnerships Geographic and political diversity
- Size Large enough to matter \* Support to churches
- Size: 200+ congregations \* diversity of geography and therefore congregations: large cities, industrial, heavily populated areas to small towns and rural, farming communities \* relative to some other synods: starting new missions \* good support for some ministries.
- Stable staff \* pockets of deeply committed people \* meaningful Synod Assemblies \* Growth in involvement with other country Christians
- Strength in diversity \* Affiliation with strong seminary in PLTS \* Unified in outreach and social justice

- Strong core of dedicated people who have faithfully supported their congregations \* dedicated pastors bring Christ to the communities in which they work.
- Strong history and foundation
- Strong personal contact from existing staff \* diverse population allowing for wide-ranging contributions of talent and opinion
- Strong Synod Leadership, Bishop through local church \* Inclusive: geographic, racial ,economic, sexual ecumenical and interreligious
- Support that is given to the dying churches and to those that are growing up, due to the general contribution of funds. (*El apollo que hay hacia las Iglecias en decadencia y alas que estan en crecimiento, por las aportaciones generales.*)
- Support to congregations in need \* Benevolence \* Views on homosexuality \* Awareness of change
- Synergy! \* broader participation in the global family of God \* Call process, Leadership development \* pastoral support, help with legalities & business of doing ministry, communication.
- Synod is never discuss at [our church; our pastor] doesn't like the Synod.
- Synod Assembly leadership \* Asilomar Prof. Conf. Leadership \* Enabling and empowering leadership teams.
- Synod is all but non-existent at the congregational level.
- Synod Resource Center
- Synod Resource Center \* PLTS.
- Talented rostered leaders \* some good program offerings.
- That they work together
- Tolerance toward race, ethnic origin and gender Diversity Communication
- Use of Natural Church Development/New Church University
- Values \* Beliefs
- Vibrant and caring leader \* lay involve[ment] in synod leadership \* mission congregations
- We all Love the Lord \* We are all passionate about our relationships with the Lord \* We all want to serve God to our best knowledge of Him
- Website \* disaster relief
- Well defined outreach goals
- Willingness of the congregations to work toward inclusiveness \* Becoming a church for all people(s).
- Willingness to listen to all members' needs and viewpoints.
- Women of the ELCA \* Strong Congregational Pastors \* International outreach: Taiwan, El Salvador, Rwanda \* Community outreach -
- Wonderful caring pastors
- Wonderful pastors
- Youth involvement

**What are the weaknesses of the Sierra Pacific Synod? (Bullet point style - please be specific)**

- Aloofness from the pews. \* limited communication \* indecisive
- Apathy \* lack of talent to mobilize resources \* fostering a mentality of individual congregations versus one church
- As a young, yet life-long ELCA Lutheran, I have no idea what the Sierra Pacific Synod does for me.
- Being visible or known to the average (uninvolved) church member.
- Bureaucracy, lack of understanding between the role of the Synod office in the life of the congregations, and congregations without missionary vision and renewal.
- Candidacy process \* lack of adequate synod staff \* lack of common vision / common mission \* culture of "lone ranger" pastors \* culture of suspicion and distrust \* PLTS is under-supported financially, not "owned" enough by the synod
- Communication
- Communication between Synod and individual congregations \* Lack of support/involvement from the clergy \* Weak conference leadership \* Lack of support as shown by financial giving from congregations
- Communications with individual members of congregations \* Lack of clear mission and vision communicated and understood by all \* Greater concern with bureaucracy than with results \* Personal agendas are seen as more important than the mission
- Congregations seldom experience or perceive benefits or personnel from Synod except in the Call Process, or Crisis time or Invited Synod Guests. \* Apparent irreconcilable difference seem to be destroying our sense of unity \* Mission Dollars.

- Difficult to do ministry in such a diverse and pluralistic place \* Underfunded synod ministries \* Pastors do not feel pastorally cared for \* distrust and disconnect felt by pastors in relation to decisions or perceptions of decisions made by synod assemblies
- Disconnection \* Geography, regional identity, parochial identity work against a group who would be a synod \* Money: congregations do not see the value of contributing beyond themselves to meet a mutual goal \* We are a community of acquaintances more than colleagues, church members, or persons identified as God's children in Baptism
- Diverse Opinions as to way to proceed
- Diversity creates much conflict \* Polarized over theology \* Weak financial support to Synod and [ELCA] congregations and pastors lack commitment to conference, Synod and Church wide
- Don't know
- Don't know
- Don't know enough about what you do.
- Dying bureaucracy \* Excessively antonymous congregations Inability to cohesively unite toward common goal(s)
- Entrenched dysfunctional relationships between congregations, and congregations to synod, etc. \* Lack of support for synod ministry reflects culture, not intelligence or God-directed discernment. \* Huge geographic area.
- Entrenched leadership \* Divisiveness: the broad geographical scope of this synod makes for a lack of unity in thought. \* Lack of connection to synod \* contact with synod is seen as a negative thing \* Difficulty in call process, lack of response for mission ideas, just plain lack of presence in worship (one visit in 10 years?) makes synod seem like a faceless bureaucracy \* Wishy-washiness on homosexuality \* Opaqueness: Who knows what discipling teams do? \* Conference meeting nominations become a drafting process of people who won't say no rather than people who feel called to say yes.
- External communication (to the public) \* Lack of coordinated educational and inspirational events \* Lack of inspiration as to why we should stay involved
- Fail[ure] to fully embrace gay marriage, and bless openly gay clergy. We need to be more welcoming without being pushy and judgmental.
- Failure to deal with issues
- Failure to organize for growth or the future \* inability to "move-on" re issues with no solution \* limited funds are not applied to growth \* failure to separate politics from theology \* failure in regional coordination \* failure to help families with daily problems
- Geographic size \* many congregations that are in "survival" mode \* diversity of opinion about many issues related to the life of the church; \* what is the mission of the Synod Office?
- Geography
- Greater synod-level support of youth and young adult ministries. The high school youth at St. Mark's greatly appreciated the SPSYC event, but churches within the synod could do more together. Improve synod youth ministry network??
- Haven't recovered from botched conflict process at Synod's inception regarding homosexuality. \* Red state/blue state cultural wars. \* Poor communication process: gatekeepers and bottlenecks.
- Hiding its light under a bushel
- Highly negative attitude amongst many clergy -- and a feeling of hopelessness Synod office is in San Francisco \* very far from many churches \* Aging leadership
- I don't have that information, but I think the Synod representatives should keep in closer contact and visit our churches.
- I don't know anything about the sierra pacific synod.
- I have no idea what the Synod does to support the individual church \* Neither the Synod, nor the Council did a good job in dealing with Pastor's departure.\* consultant skirted the real issues [and] nothing was addressed \* Small churches cannot be flexible enough to provide enough choices
- I know nothing about the Synod, because it is never discussed at [our church. Pastor] doesn't like the Synod.
- I'm not sure what they do for me personally and for St. Matthew as a congregation, so maybe communication with ordinary Lutherans is a weakness \* Nothing for older single people to find and meet local people in a similar situation.
- Inability to address starting new mission congregations \* Synod level programs/ministries are completely invisible at the congregation level.
- Inability to grow \* Weak on evangelism \* Weak on community outreach--not focused
- Inability to lift up, nurture, encourage, and build upon what is already being done well/creatively. \* Creating 'one size fits all' programs. \* Lack of collegiality.
- Inability to move with the times \* inability to unify \* inability to see trends and move with them

- Inadequate funding for synod-wide projects \* Insufficient staff to meet needs of synod
- Ineffectiveness in dealing with the various diverse groups. "Majority rule" is not best way to deal with diversity. \* Synod does not tap the talents of the retired clergy [or the people in special ministries] as resources for ministry in the Synod.
- Intolerance toward gay clergy I do not see 'future thinking'
- It has not been proactive and forthcoming in stating it's position with regard to homosexuals in the clergy and so called "marriage" between those of the same gender.
- Just from my limited experience, there seems to be a lack of diversity.
- Lack clear direction on major divisive issues \* more interested in platitudes and conflict avoidance than in stimulating honest debate.
- Lack of connectiveness with individual churches and the membership
- Lack of financial support for all missions
- Lack of ministries in the growing churches, and of faith in the leaders. (*La falta de ministerios en las Iglesias en crecimiento, y Fe en Los lideres.*)
- Lack of ten or twenty-year plan with specific objectives and benchmarks to meet targeted goal based on the emerging future. \* Lack of a solid network of congregations working together with dedication toward common goal. \* Lack of energy.
- Lack of written communication \* information about synod events or concerns [should] go directly by e-mail or letter to members. \* [keeping] young people in the church \*Lack of people of color in the pews
- Lay leadership is dwindling - due to aging primarily and perhaps burnout. \* The synod seems not to be as communicative and supportive of local efforts as I recollect in other synods or decades ago here. \* New ideas and creativity seems missing
- Limited communication between itself and smaller churches \* Largely invisible to our congregation. We rarely have had anyone from the synod come to speak or give information or meet us,
- Limited communication on critical issues \* declining membership in many churches \* recruiting pastors to our churches
- Losing members - where are they going? \* Reduced revenue
- Losing traditional Lutheran traditions and values
- Low level of lay and clergy involvement \* Geographic disparity \* A "we" versus "they" mentality \* Low level of understanding of what a Synod is \* Low trust level \* Low level of commitment to the wider church
- Low visibility.
- Lutherans aren't well known in California \* Many of the congregations are running on a shoe string and very small \* Still too tied to our northern European heritage
- Marginally viable congregations \* division on issues of human sexuality is siphoning energy and financial resources away from mission.
- More focused on survival \* Disconnected from one another's ministries \* Lack trust in supporting ministries \* Do not know how to let ministries die well
- Most of our congregation do not understand what the synod does.
- Need MORE dialogue opportunities/channels on commonalities of our faith \* need to strengthen relationships between congregations/parishes\* need synod administration that focuses on the individual congregation's health and growth \* need to foster more communication (means and frequency/types).\* need an action plan to finance Synod Budget [and] BHMC effort to all old growth congregations/parishes
- New mission starts \* We're not keeping up with population growth \* Lack of collegiality amongst clergy \* Lack of vision to reach a highly secular and unchurched society
- No annual feedback required from c.u.'s on performance of pastor(s) currently under call in the individual churches - an annual review would be beneficial for all \* not enough supervision by synodical office of pastors serving in c.u.'s
- No clearly communicated mission/vision.
- No strong, articulated urban ministry theology \* synod has a one size fits all model (i.e, a suburban model) \* Urban ministry happens despite the synod, not in conjunction with it. \* synod does not communicate or lead with sense of theologically-based justice proclamation or advocacy.
- No vision for the future \* Poor follow through to the needs of congregations Allow the needs of a few to detract the mission of the whole church. \* Too focused on the perceived needs of San Francisco at the expense of the remainder of the Synod
- Not all churches support the SPS with 10% \* SPS is viewed as just another organization \* SPS Men's Fellowship has discontinued it's yearly retreat
- Not enough financial resources
- Not having a larger presence within our congregation

- Not much communication between bishop's office and member churches and their people \* No clear sense of vision and direction \* clergy and professional lay leaders [far] above average age of Sierra Pacific congregational members
- Not sure, as a lay person I have infrequent contact \* Shouldn't the Synod website or email address be on the letterhead? Is there a way on the internet to type in Lutheran and get the ELCA? Especially useful to the public who might not find spselca.org.
- Other than being some point in the hierarchy, what purpose do you serve in the ELCA? What purpose do you serve at all?
- Oversight of Inner City small congregations needs
- Perceived disconnect between Synod and Congregation \* Pastors' time needed in Synod business \* Less oversight/support than in LCA
- Political divides that disable our accomplishing the Mission of reaching people for Jesus Christ and making them into faithful followers of the Gospel
- Political, ecclesiastical, ideological, theological and geographical fragmentation that makes any forward movement as a body of Christ painfully slow and difficult
- Presence and representation at local churches \* lack of education for participating churches: what the synod is, how it functions, its purpose is for the greater glory of God.
- Pressure to reduce or cut the staff in the Bishop's office and the staff is spread too thin. • There is a desire to maintain the status quo \* reluctance to move into new programs. • Some ministry partners are threatened by the second-mile giving.
- Publications heavily focused on older member, versus trying to draw younger member. More information out to families.
- Refusal to fully accept the diversity of congregations in the Synod \* Increasing average age of members.
- Sense of disconnectedness between parish and "synod" \* sense of hostility & animosity between "conservatives" and "progressives" \* anxiety about what might happen at the larger church at next churchwide --lack of "common vision" for ministry in & around synod.
- Sense of itself as progressive and open, which at times prevents it from seeing the ways in which it is not these things
- Sierra Pacific Synod's weakness lies in its ability to be effective in evangelism; e.g. "Making disciples of all nations"
- Size: lots of territory to cover \* diversity: clash of values (liberal and conservative camps) \* poor support for pastors in congregations \* very weak leadership
- Small congregations struggling to have a full time ministry. The Synod seems content to let them die, rather than yoking them with stronger congregations or moving to multiple point parishes.
- Sometimes indecisive on issues of importance to those on both sides of the issue, not wanting to offend anyone, but instead pleasing no one and frustrating everyone.
- Somewhat low profile \* Split on many issues
- Split by our political associations \* .we seem to not be able to agree on what Grace is and how rules vs Grace should be handled
- Still not as accepting of women pastors as they should be \* Expecting too much of the Pastors \* LCMS Elders format would be a great help \* Changing/fixing things that [weren't] broken.
- Struggle with the divisions of the congregations between conservative and liberal theological positions \* the sexuality issues have been a continual battle on the floor of the assemblies.
- They had too much to say with our last call committee.
- Too large! \* significant differences in the way people from geographically diverse areas view their faith and the most important challenges to the synod and the larger church.
- Too many of our congregations have been hijacked by one issue interest groups who have little knowledge and no interest in law and gospel, Word of God and Holy Sacraments. They seem to have a 'just us' mentality.
- Too quiet in our communities \* Differentiate us from (fundamental) "Christians".
- Trying to be all things to all people \* We are not relevant to today's members
- Virtually absent in the life of the congregation \* No definition of what Second Mile Giving is anywhere on the website \* Synod-sponsored/related events are not well-publicized. \* e-mails, etc., would be helpful
- Visibility and communication might be a weakness.
- Weak on facing budget needs, & raising the funds needed for program growth.
- Weak pastors who treat the ministry as a job and not a calling \* Ornery, stubborn parishioners with hidden agendas \* Time-wasting meetings
- Wide and diverse geographic and sociological differences \* lack of unity of vision for Synod \* unclear expectations of Synod Staff

- Wide divide on controversial issues, relating to different geographies \* Entrenched synod staff \* Size coupled with diversity
- Youth ministry

**Keeping in mind emerging trends in church, society and world, what significant issues will the Sierra Pacific Synod face in the next 6-12 years? (Bullet point style - please be specific)**

- A consequence is that couples separate due to the lack of good leaders interested more in their ministry in the growing churches than in their salaries. *Consecuencias de Separacion de parejas, por falta de buenos liderse, sin interes del salario mas que del ministerio en las Iglecias en crecimiento.*
- Acceptance of all of God's people into the full life of the church, specifically the full membership of Gays and Lesbians in our churches, and their ordination as pastors. How can we discriminate in the name of Jesus?
- Acceptance of the gifts that gays and lesbians have to offer the church! \* The graying and literal death of current congregants and the need to reach out to younger folk. \* Demonstrating the relevance of liturgical worship to a non-liturgical world.
- Addressing and resolving the sexuality issue \* -person power for ordained clergy
- Aging church leadership will lose touch with younger generations Challenge of ethnic (and traditionally non-Lutheran) ministries Sexuality debate will continue to cause internal conflicts Environmental issues \* Increasing gap between rich and poor
- Aging congregations \* Remaining relevant \* Challenging parishes for new pastors \* Creating new partnerships \* Encouraging all who feel a call - including LGBT pastors. \* Resource Management
- Aging leadership and a lack of technological savvy \* Retiring clergy in small churches \* The homosexuality issue \* Increasing Biblical illiteracy in congregations.
- Aging Lutheran population, survival will be significant. Lutheran-Christians will have to move in a more apostolic direction.
- Aging of the members of our congregations \* Attracting and retaining younger individuals and families \* Preference for local control of how mission monies are spent \* Reducing centralized bureaucracy while maintaining relationships \* Focusing on Christ rather than ourselves \* Redefining what it means to be Lutheran in the next 100 years.
- Aging population \* cultural relativism \* The Gen Y new parents: a generation born without religion rather than growing up in a religion \* Surplus property \* Rise of Eastern Religions in US \* Busy, over scheduled lifestyles \* Size and shape of towns no longer have the traditional needs for the community church
- Anti-Christian voices \* Diminishing church goers \* Lack of morality \* promoted by the media and the lack of family values \* Terrorist operating worldwide \* Increasing crime rate
- Avoiding splintering of local congregations/ELCA \* Increasing loyalty at all levels of church \* Insuring Christ-like ministry to all \* Rejecting a Pharisee-like, law-based ministry
- Baby boomers and older will need to recognize that for the church to grow, changes will be necessary. Our younger folks already see that. Please don't have growth/change equate with driving away the older members.
- Baby boomers will pass through - and the Synod will have done nothing to take advantage of what they have to offer; their time, talent, and tremendous wealth.\* reaching out to other ethnic groups \* assist congregation to define mission in the community \* Where will our next pastor come from in 12 yrs?
- Biggest issue is how to develop a core of Christian believers who know and love Lutheran theology well enough that they will not be swept away, but will shine the light of the gospel in this part of the world.
- Changing communities (age and ethnicity) \* post-Christian culture, \* post-denominational realities \* congregations needing real support and strategic help \* ever increasing individualism, isolation a consumer-driven culture
- Changing demographics of region: not friendly to Lutheran growth.\* aging members \* ethnicity of newcomers \* How will synod deal with more buildings and pastors than viable congregations? \* Increasing cost to live in the area (attracting new staff). \* Lay leadership is getting old and tired. \*
- Church decline \* population ages \* Average age increases \* Evangelism a must \* Good teaching by educated, biblical clergy and lay
- Clear and inclusive policy on gay clergy \* Mired in slow or no growth syndrome \*Keeping youth involved in congregations
- Competing with the large non traditional churches \*World Vision meeting the needs
- Congregations dying out as their members die and the children either drop out of church or join large non-denominational churches. \* Dealing with the radical right "gospel" of "Rewards and Rapture" vs. Grace and Gratitude. \* The basic call process for new and replacement pastors is out of date and does not fit today's graduates from our seminaries. As the older, mostly male, pastors retire, more imaginative processes will be required to fill these vacancies.

- Continued dissolve of Christendom. \* The continued rise of fundamentalism. \* The continued competition for people's time/energy.
- Continued infighting over human sexuality \* Continued downward trend in worship attendance and financial giving. \* Post modern societal trends towards self-gratification and self-fulfillment. \* Increased loss/fragmentation of community
- Continued reluctance of the population in Northern California to join organized churches especially those of specific denominations \* Less interest from younger families to provide Christian education to their children.
- Continuing Decline in numbers & support of members. \* Inspiring a sense of unity with antagonistic diversity, especially regarding ordination of gay & lesbian people & blessings of their "marriages". \* Feeling connected to the synod & one another as churches \* experiencing a positive presence of the synod at congregational levels.
- Continuing growing irrelevance of Lutheran heritage and tradition (not theology) among the West Coast unchurched
- Decline in public morality as fostered by the entertainment media; and the attack on religion by the liberal media and our elected politicians and school officials.
- Decline of young members
- Declining membership
- Declining membership \* a waning sense of what is special about being Lutheran: need to redefine the approach to religion and worship
- Declining membership \* Public perception that church is "irrelevant"
- Declining pool of candidates for ordained ministry \* relevance (more and more people are finding alternate spiritual practices which speak to them more deeply than the traditional church)
- Decreasing membership \* make drastic changes in the liturgy to meet the needs of the unchurched: meet them where they are, rather than where we are; cut some of the formality during worship services
- Diminished congregations \* Keeping financial support with unhappiness of disaffected congregations/pastors \* Partnering with non-Christian religions \* Dealing with erosion of concept of membership in a congregation
- Diverse Sexuality \* World Government \* Open Borders \*War Time Position
- Diversity and the lack of it in our Lutheran churches \* Cross faith communication \* Social Action
- Don't know
- Dwindling interest in organized religion \* Being open to doing things differently \* Being pulled into political issues that can divide the membership \* Striking a balance between being tolerant and compassionate, and exposing children and families to lifestyles that they may not accept
- Education of adults
- Equipping churches to minister to/with the baby boomers who are retiring. \* Making the ELCA a reconciled in Christ church. \* Ministering within the changing demographics of the Synod with regards to ethnicity, race, sexual orientation and socio/economic factors.
- Evangelism - real \* Membership levels
- Evangelism: participation with congregations in reaching the unchurched \* Expanding ministries with fewer dollars. \* Reaching youth and young families whose lifestyles leave little time, after commuting and working, for anything else.
- Families and family issues needing support \* Addiction support. \* World peace.
- Funding \* How to raise leaders from a variety of ethnic backgrounds \* Determination of which ministries to close and which to begin \* providing specialized leadership for congregations \* Let's be honest: the sexuality issue will still be with us in 6-12 years.
- Gay and lesbian issues \* Ministering to Latinos and other minorities
- Gay Marriage \* Global Warming \* Increasing women and minority leadership
- Gay ministry involvement \* gays in the pews \* declining numbers of church people in the populace
- Gay/lesbian ordinations. marriage \* Environment \* Growth of congregations \* outreach
- Grace vs law: sexuality \* death penalty \* abortion \* any and all areas where we can argue over what the law is as opposed to how Jesus might have treated people.
- Growth \* Aging Baby Boomers \* Health Promotion
- Hands on work in assisting those in the world who are suffering \* Ability to network effectively \* Being relevant to today's youth
- Hatch, match and dispatch attitude in lay & clergy \* Homelessness \* Job loss \* Becoming just more entertainment \* Evolving into a significant source of compassion, service & caring to the glory of God
- Homosexuality
- Homosexuality issue continues to plague us. • The new bishop will need to be forceful in setting his/her agenda. Bishop Mullen set forth a plan to increase accountability of the deans, but the plan was not

embraced because there was fear that the bishop's office would have too much power. Progress will always have dissenters.

- Homosexuality. \* declining numbers of people in worship \* budget \* seeking ways to do ministry and proclaim gospel which seem relevant to next generation, while still ministering to the current mothers & fathers of the church.
- Homosexuality; accepting ordination of homosexual pastors in committed relationships. ecumenical relationships
- How to adapt "Lutheranism" to fit current society and people's needs. \* music and worship styles must fit a variety of people and cultural backgrounds.
- How to connect churches in cities/suburbs together. I feel that St. Mark's is very disconnected from other ELCA Lutheran churches in the Bay Area, and would really enjoy getting to know others from other churches!
- How to reach and hold people of all ages.
- Identifying the primary movements in culture and discovering how we might be Christ in those contexts
- Immigration reform \* inclusion of minorities (color people, GLT people) in the decision process. The transformation of our old fashion modern mission style to an Emerging New Missional Style for the post modernity.
- Implement Second Mile giving, new starts and restarts \* Implement processes to work with declining congregations \* Build trust with pastors and congregations. \* Pastoral care for pastors and their families. \* Accepting that conflict is a part of healthy community life, and managing conflict for the spiritual growth of the body.
- Inclusion of all peoples in the synod, including transgender, gay, homosexual, homeless, socially deprived, psychologically challenged, physically challenged, etc. All need to be truly welcomed.
- Increased minority (now majority) demographics \* Continued growth in homosexual orientation \* Outdated congregational models leading to declined participation
- Increasing conflict and anxiety.\* does God exist or not. \* Narrowing focus to "people like me" yet widening gaps in care of the poor and other countries.\* Violence and cheapening of human life. \* Too much interaction with machines and entertainment \* less patience and skill in talking with others, especially about conflict.\*
- Is it willing to recognize the contradictions and errors in the Bible and Lutheran doctrine, or does it just follow mindless dogma that drives thinking people from the church?
- Keeping pace with the reality that women who used to volunteer and carry much of the work of the churches, are working and they don't volunteer much \* ethnically and culturally diverse \* continuing danger that homosexuality issue will tear apart ELCA
- Keeping traditions as opposed to competing with big-box churches Dealing with the real issues of poverty, homelessness, violence, immigration, homosexuality Growth of some churches and shrinkage in others
- Lack of attendance
- Land - building ... meaning "if you build it, they will come" or better yet, reach out, find a place to gather, and build the ministry
- Lutheran tradition is slowly fading into the unknown. The praise music will dominate. Our children will never know "Holy, Holy, Holy" and " A Mighty Fortress is Our God." It's Jezak or pabulum music today.
- Majority of people ignorant of religion and devoid of faith \* Declining commitment within churches \* Declining free-time of people \* Congregational entrenchment in the "culture war." \* Growing financial difficulty. \* Disheartened professional leaders.
- Make a stand a support, recognize, roster and ordain LGBT candidates and clergy. Homophobia hurts straight people, too.
- Making a distinction between "the popular church," as our society sees it, and "the servant church," as Jesus wanted us to be. \* Finding ways to include all people in service and ministry, to refine our understanding of the ways we are all addressed by the gospel and challenged to offer everything we have been given \* The challenge of ecumenism -- connecting with our Full Communion partners to offer to our communities a vision of the cooperative Christian church in the world, with its larger vision and the ability to accomplish much more than one denomination alone.
- Ministering to non-English speakers, who will become the majority of Californians \* strong anti-war feelings in parts of the synod and strong pro-war feelings in other parts. \* ministering to young people not raised in the church.
- More congregations leaving the synod \* Lack of funds due to downturn in economy \* Continual upheaval over the issue of homosexuality \* Decrease in weekly attendance
- Multi-cultural context [will be] a great challenge for us \* being disproportionately older in our membership \* issues of spiritual emptiness, poverty, materialism, peace, justice, hunger, race, etc.
- Multilingual members \* Global communication

- Necessity of wide use of Internet and modern technology for church education, communication, worship, synod support, training, collaborative efforts, networking and interaction in all areas of the church. \* Trend to move away from denomination loyalty.
- Need to attract more families, kids, youth and teens into the church or the church will not survive. The church is currently lots of old people and only a few families who struggle to keep their teens engaged. \* Support and approve of gay/lesbian pastors \* Better support for female pastors \* Better training and support for Sunday School, youth
- Need to loosen up our approach to worship services to be more inclusive and attractive to those not raised in the Lutheran church.
- New membership - specifically appealing to young 20- or 30-something families
- Older generation dying off must be replaced by a younger group \* problems such as isolation, pressures from school, work and family.
- Ordaining gay clergy \* Reaching out to the gay and lesbian community, while not alienating existing members \* focus on people knowing and walking with Jesus \* Expanding ministry in new and innovative ways to reach people
- Over-preoccupation with sexuality. \* Marketplace competition for time. \* Competition from Islam. \*. Re-emergence of pagan indifference.
- Perception of the diminishing relevance of traditional churches \* Inability to adequately compensate pastoral/other staff, especially considering COLA in many parts of the synod \* Ability to adequately fund the synod-level services needed by congregations
- Post-modern culture \* ethics: environmental, medical, sexual, scientific
- Poverty \* Global warming \* intolerance
- Providing support to an increasingly diversified and polarized population.
- Reaching out to a largely unchurched audience; getting over the idea that everyone has a church background and will understand our references to Christian traditions. \* Demonstrating that Lutheran theology has a lot to offer the modern world, if only we avoid becoming mired in legalism and literalism ala the LCMS.
- Reaching out to the youth (future generations) and the unchurched.
- Reaching/ministering to people currently under 40.
- recognizing same sex marriage \* including all minorities \* reenergize current churchgoers \* try to reach out to the non-churched
- Relevance \* To actually help build thriving congregations \* Outreach to minorities.
- Religious Pluralism \* Declining church "membership" \* cost of living issues for clergy and lay leaders \* relevancy \* need for significant connection with the global church
- Remaining Lutheran as in true to the Gospel midst the pressure to be interfaith/ecumenical
- Resolving conflicts over human sexuality issues \* Relevancy to spiritual needs of 21st century \* Building more ecumenical bridges \* Fostering understanding of all religions \* Learning to think outside the box
- Retaining the Lutheran religion traditions \* Over-expanding and spending too much money \* a lack of solemnity and reverence in our worship \* pastors in the Church should be able to have more control in the management of the church - not the lay people. \* serving our own - especially the seniors and the youth
- Role of the church in society \* increasing level of secularism \* increasing ethnically diverse population \* A growing gap between the rich and the poor \* A decreasing sense of altruism among many \* A growing sense of America as empire \* A growing chasm between political positions \* need for full inclusion of GLBT persons
- Secularization in California. \* Lack of children and young families in many congregations \* Prohibitively expensive church building costs \* High cost of Seminary education.
- Sexuality \* Keeping youth active in the church
- Small congregations that continue to decline \* The vision for mission in terms of restarts and new starts and the associated costs of both \* Changing demographics increasing minority populations \* The cost of doing business: clergy salaries, retirements, etc.
- Social justice \* sustainable economics/living \* right-to-work/immigration \* More "networking" via - regions/Synod retreat(s) and socials (interpersonal) \* Synod Online Faith Forums (Internet) \* Regular communications and missions/field trips to sister synods, congregations and ministries.
- Standing for something instead of standing for everything and doing nothing
- Staying current to draw and retain youth and families. \* Separation between the rich and poor - no middle class.
- Staying relevant and non-confrontational in an environment that is becoming increasingly polarized between Christian-themed political activism and aggressively secular advocacy.

- Structure and organize to help people (families in particular) in need of more than food (hungry) or worship (Sunday services). How do you deal with teens?, how do you improve relationships?, how does the Bible help use bring discipline into a life in chaos.
- Survival in a world with congregants growing older \* Education of youth \* Increasing spirituality \* Foster spiritual maturity
- Taking care of the working poor \* how to include the Hispanic community \* environmental issues
- Total squeeze of the middle class \* Health Care \* Gay Marriage \* Abortion Capital Punishment \* Global Warming \* Population Explosion \* food, land use, water use \* information divide \* internationalization \*Personal Security and Privacy tension
- Understanding and incorporating diverse cultures and religions.\* Attracting people of color \* Providing for elderly and retired people \* Providing for older single people
- Willingness to support ministry on a synodical level \* Geographical barriers.\* articulating mission and ministry, evangelism and stewardship in language that is not owned by the business marketplace.
- Withstanding the pressure to become acculturated and compromise scriptural integrity \* Greater need to expand worship styles to reach an increasingly unchurched society

**If you could change one thing in the Sierra Pacific Synod, what would it be? (Please be specific)**

- Accept gay, lesbian, all people and let them participate fully in all the aspects of Ministry. We should accept all people just like Jesus did. We should not judge others - not up to us!
- Add a prophetic voice on social issues as we used to have with the Commission For Church and Society.
- Advocate for LGBT ordination.
- Be more communicative - both listening and motivating
- Be more outspoken and visible in defense of Christianity! We need to have the Bishop get out of the ivory tower and defend the faith and our values, whenever and wherever attacked on TV and in the print media.
- Be willing to learn from the highly successful (non Lutheran) evangelical churches and deploy such strategies
- Begin a three year effort to deliver effective pastoral care to pastors and their families. Ask the pastors and spouses to help design the effort. Offer a variety of proven models, one of which could be peer support groups at the conference level. Provide adequate funding for professional facilitators as needed. Keep track at the Synod level of each pastor's and pastor's spouse's connection to some form of pastoral care.
- Better communication with the parishes about the activities and opportunities provided by the Synod.
- Better relations with the Missouri Synod, to the point of a merger. Makes far better sense than the "merger" with the Episcopalians!
- Broader acceptance and recognition in world dialogue - political and journalistic - and greater acceptance and recognition within our membership about embracing and respecting other faiths without fear of losing our identity as Lutherans.
- Communication and outreach / education which defines the purpose of the Synod - without this people will not understand, use, or appreciate the system.
- Communication from Oakland concerning issues that impact the whole synod
- complete openness to all people regardless of sexual orientation including pastors and bishops
- Create a new synod for the Central Valley churches. . .would allow us to get together more frequently with less time spent traveling, and to benefit from more frequent visits by the Bishop.
- Develop more discipling teams. They work.
- Developing an inclusive commitment by all
- Do not call leaders who are not upright before God, for example: (homosexuals) Be sure that the highest leaders live in holiness and "uprightness", and re tested according to the Scriptures and not according to the law of men, AMEN. *No poner líderes que no estén rectos ante Dios, Ejemplo: (homosexuales) Asegurarse que los altos líderes estén en SANTIDAD y "rectitud", y sean probados conforme las escrituras y no conforme las leyes de hombre, AMEN.*
- draw energy and dedication away from the sexuality debate and move toward a common vision or mission that is affirming and life giving
- Emphasize traditional liturgy and move away from "entertainment" worship
- Encourage the Bishop's office to work harder on relationship building - with individual congregations, pastors, and ministries and through them parishes. I think if every church saw a representative of the Bishop's office once a year it would be an excellent conduit for information for churches, feedback for the bishop's office, and general goodwill and support all around. I think pastors do want support in general, but feel contacting the bishops office is a worst case scenario. Indeed, many congregations will do just about anything rather than talk to synod. That's too bad. If people had less of a negative connotation with synod (if people had a relationship with synod) maybe things would be better.

- Entirely new Synod staff to support the mission and vision of the synod.
- Everyone would be welcome to participate fully in the Synod in whatever way and form their calling/ministry might take.
- Find better ways of communicating what is happening at the Synod level and the importance of the work done on a Synod and Church wide level. The message and buy in is not getting to the individuals in the pews.
- Focus on a set of manageable issues to be tackled at every level of church engagement in this territory. For example, "The Sierra Pacific Synod is committed to relieving poverty on its territory." "The SPS is committed to equality in all areas of civic life." "SPS congregations will lower their collective carbon footprint x% by 2015." Things like that that the whole synod would know and would be able to rally around.
- Fresh (or refreshed) people in the Bishop's office
- Give c.u.'s the opportunity to annually provide feedback to the synodical office on the performance, or lack thereof, of pastors currently under call.
- GLBT people who are qualified for ordained ministry will be ordained without needing to promise celibacy (they will, of course, promise faithfulness in partnered relationships, just like their heterosexual peers)
- Good clear leadership, without infighting, visionary, with a mind set toward unification
- Greater representation of more distant areas of the synod, i.e., Central Valley through teleconferences, other technologies, so we don't feel like this is primarily a bay-area, biased synod
- Have Elders or Lay Ministers to assist the Pastors. Each one would be assigned specific families to shepherd. Pastor would be made aware by the Elders in a timely manner if there were problems. I don't think this is a process that is only for large churches, I think all congregations would benefit. And as and ELCA church we would have women as well as men serve. Each family would know the name of their Elder and be encouraged to contact them first.
- Have more information and support at the Synod level for congregations to establish Health Ministry Programs. Encourage positions for Faith Community Nurses (Parish Nurses). Have a support staff at the Synod level for Faith Community Nurses (FCNs)
- Have those on both sides of the sexuality study recognize the other side as worthwhile with opinions with equal validity as their own opinions.
- Higher visibility on basics: feed poor, care for leadership, Confessional education. public admonition or public celebration of congregations.
- Honest brokering of issues that divide us
- I am glad we cooperate together as a Synod. Continue to seek God's will for each day. and keep our eyes and ears open, and practice listening to others and God.
- I do not feel that the synod gives a hoot about me. How could they let me know?
- I don't know enough to state.
- I would like more knowledge about the workings of the synod, what missions it supports and how it supports my congregation.
- I wouldn't change anything because what needs to be changed are hearts and only God can do that. Perhaps I would change our prayers, and have us pray for Gods will, NOT any agenda. Of course, then we would have to realize that we each do have agendas and that God's will may not favor any side.
- Image of the Lutheran Church as being a church for "whites only".
- Improve paperwork efficiency in Synod office.
- Improve the connection of the Synod Staff with the congregations of the Synod.
- Inclusivity, specially gender identification and sexuality
- Increase the commitment of congregations to our work together \* consider splitting the synod in half. \* emphasize the collaborative efforts and lift up creative and interpersonal approaches to ministry.
- Increase the staff/services to offer greater contact with congregations including a consultants for Sunday School programs, stewardship and evangelism in our "post Christian" era. . .understanding that it would require currently unavailable funding,
- Inform the congregations of what you are doing and why.
- Infuse our congregations with a greater passion for being church in this time and place.
- Its focus. From officiating/administration to empowerment/facilitation.
- Leadership
- Leadership. A leader (and team) is needed that can cope with the diversity and size of our synod. This should not be a "good ole boy", or a "compromise candidate" to keep everyone "happy".
- Level of engagement by both lay and clergy in the life of the Synod
- Link congregations in mentoring ways. We have gifts and need to grow that. It would be similar to companion synods.
- Make it more open to all; regardless of their sexual orientation

- Make it possible for a congregation to call a full-time pastor who has been serving as our interim pastor for the past two years.
- Make sure Synod personnel and the Bishop visit our church often enough they become known as real people.
- Make the Synod more active, more visible, more involved in congregational life.
- Making sure we act like brothers and sisters in Christ when we have different opinions
- Maybe there should be two synods: one for the bay area and the remaining area.
- More consistent approach to congregations and pastors who wish not to live within the covenant of the ELCA as defined by "Visions and Expectations."
- More direct contact with clergy leaders by Bishop and Synod Staff. Clear leadership vision and strategy from Synod Staff and Synod Council
- More emphasis on training & supporting congregations to reach out to their community.
- More information about what the Synod is doing
- More intentional pastoral support of our pastors
- More or better communications to local churches (members) not just the Pastors.
- More outreach to the poor, addicted, gangs, incarcerated, marriage incompatibility, youth and those without hope
- More support for our urban ministries and for the ultra-small churches in many of our cities.
- More visibility of the partnership with the local congregation as the leader of the broader church effort. A single congregation can only accomplish a limited amount. As part of a larger body with the Synod in an active leadership role, we should be able to accomplish more.
- More women in leadership positions
- Move resources to a growth oriented plan and then be accountable \* grow in people, new congregations, ministries, youth efforts, etc. \* get out of the office - do we even need one - and into the field
- Move the premises to a more accessible and ecclesiastic space. I will re-evaluate the staff profile and I will establish a visitation committee to report the real state of the congregations.
- Move the synod office out of Oakland, probably to Sacramento.
- Much better communication with the community on both what you do as a Synod and why people should be involved-- you need to inspire an increasingly un-engaged population
- Negative and defeatist attitude that seems to permeate. God does marvelous things every day, but you would never know if from a synod meeting.
- Not allow pastors who have been removed from the clergy roster of the ELCA to speak at the Synod Assembly. They seem to be centered solely on themselves. They are one-issue people who have a wrong headed view of 'just us.'
- Not sure! But I've always wondered what the synod's role in the life of the church was. Maybe offering "bishop check-ins" every once in awhile might be appropriate?
- Nurturing connections. Congregation to congregation, staff to pastors, pastor to colleagues. Growing trust to the capacity that congregations, pastors, agencies can share their failures in lament as well as their successes in thanksgiving. Reorient our geographical boundaries to suit our mission. With the increasing cost of fuel and the increase of traffic we are burdened by the expense of time and money from making connections. Should there be a Synod of Nevada, with a Synod of the Central Valley, with a Synod of the North Coast, a Synod of the SF bay area, A Sacramento Synod, a Fresno Synod? Lets have more Bishops, not less, and an uberbishop (Cardinal) for the sake of making connections
- Provide more visibility and access to your work
- Put more resources into youth/family programs
- Rather than perpetuating the current declining model, cohesively unite to discover, investigate and install yet unseen and unknown ideas of how our loving God is made known to us.
- Recognize same sex marriage for all, including clergy
- Remove the ban of non-heterosexual people from serving as Pastors.
- Sense of divisiveness about everything from how or whether homosexuals should be included in church life, to what it means to do "ethnic ministry" and our pulpit & altar fellowship with other churches -- especially the Episcopal Church USA
- Shorten the time it takes to call a new pastor
- Should be a smaller area. I realize that there aren't that many congregations in this area,(as compared to Minnesota) but it is huge and impossible for those in leadership to really have much one on one conversation with individual congregations (particularly those in turmoil).
- Since [our pastor] took over [at our church], he nor his staff of three other ministers ever mention the Sierra Pacific Synod. [He] prefers to run his church the way he sees fits. He has take away our traditional service. Anything traditional is trashed.

- Somehow arranging for an official synod representative to visit, preach, explain the role of the synod and spend some time with each congregation every year or two - on a regular schedule!
- SPS leaders would become architects of change with a focus on the future of the church.
- Stop Illegal Backing of Persons in Country Illegally
- Stop scolding and start helping, especially with the struggling congregations. Perhaps this applies to the ELCA and not just the SPS.
- Suggest radically shrinking the synod staff and budget (both national and synodical). Stop synodical funding of agencies, universities and seminaries - sooner or later this is going to happen - show some leadership!
- Synod should stop trying to save itself; we should give ourselves away in service to our communities. Instead of building healthy, multiplying congregations (an example of "saving ourselves"), we should build healthy, multiplying ministries of serving those in need in our communities. Instead of the largely inward-focused discipling teams--again, trying to save ourselves--we should focus outward, on Jesus' agenda for healing the sick, feeding the hungry, freeing the captives, etc.
- Synod staff. We need new leaders who have not been immersed in the office/system for decades and who can have the freedom to think and act creatively without the baggage of their past relationships/systems.
- Take more advantage of the services available at Center for Ministry in Oakland
- Tell new members about it. I've only been a member for a year (grew up Catholic, became Lutheran), and I'm still not sure exactly what it does.
- That it be more present and available to smaller ELCA churches; to understand and provide counsel and assistance in their problem areas. That it be in tune to the changes of culture in California.
- That we get back to the solas of the reformation -- word alone, faith alone, grace alone. That the focus of ministry would be to serve others, in word and deed.
- We need to get over ourselves and focus on Christ instead of the interpretational details.
- We seem to be trying everything and nothing seems to be working. I don't know what to suggest.

### **What else do we need to know?**

- "As the leader of an organization goes, so goes the organization." Bishop Mullen is a very nice, pastoral person. But he has not been visible through out the synod; has not set a vision for the synod, as its mission.
- A Bishop that will visit the congregations and send others to visit. A sermon from time to time would be enlightening. As well as a break for the local Pastor.
- A lot of congregations are dying, so reformation is now!
- Although it is nice to have a Bishop that is pastoral, it is more important that they are a good administrator based in a strong vision who facilitates excellent pastoral care through her/his decisions regarding personnel and direction.
- Appreciative Inquiry.....move away from Problem Solving and move toward positive affirmation churches are tired of brain storming about what is wrong....ready for a vision to lead us toward what is right
- Being more visible to the local churches can help spread a sense of understanding and belonging to the larger family of Christ - rather than cut off from a distant governing body that doesn't really have a connection to anyone.
- Bishop sees work, ideally, dealing with congregational conflict as an opportunity, not something to be gotten through on the way to the "real work" of the bishop's office.
- Bishop should be pastor to pastors, reaching out, primarily to pastors, which his or her staff deal with congregations.
- Consider a bishop who will continue the work started by Bishop Mullen and expand his ideas
- Elect R. Kevin Murphy the next Bishop.
- For many of us, the church that we have known is "unraveling." However, as H. George Anderson has put it, "This is a good time to be the church." Let's go for it!
- From my perspective, many people in our congregation know very little about the Synod and question why [our church] is involved in it and supports it.
- God bless our Bishop and his staff. Thank you for your dedication and love. Happy Thanksgiving. I give thanks to God for you.
- God only knows. Bless your results of this endeavor
- How can the synod move to be more than communities that are addressing pathology. Of course that needs to happen and yet more how we might flag what God is up to that is surprising.
- I also participated in the Ministry Audit. I strongly believe that the Audit should be released separately, not edited and subsumed into the report of the Ministry Profile group. Evaluations of staff can be removed before the Audit is released, of course. The independence and integrity of this tested survey tool should be preserved.
- I am most concerned with the disconnect with the Synod staff. It appears there is an unwillingness to take the time to be on the road and in the diverse congregation of this Synod.

- I am proud to be a member of the ELCA and am willing to do anything I can to assist in new endeavors. I realize it is always difficult to be a Christian, but with the Holy Spirit guiding us, we can only succeed.
- I am very grateful to Bishop Mullen for his help with my "retirement" & other legal (NV wedding) paperwork, to Chuck Ruthroff & Bill Wong for their help with "call" and contract processes, Bud Egdahl for Stewardship preaching and guidance.
- I appreciate all of your work, love of God and prayers. I pray for you and your work
- I appreciate the support the SPS has given our Mission and hope for continued support in the future as we continue to grow.
- I believe it is time to nominate candidates for Bishop who reflect the diversity of this synod -- female, Asian, African-American, etc.
- I believe that the current emphasis on building healthy, multiplying congregations is exactly the right direction for us in these next years. I hope and pray that the next Bishop and Synod staff will continue to work vigorously toward building a consensus throughout the Synod that leads us in that direction.
- I believe to meet the needs of the synod, the job description of the bishop will need to change. It will need to be more relational and at the same time very focused to empower new projects.
- I cannot stress enough that changes that make older members feel disrespected undermine a congregation.
- I have been in contact with the Synod once over the last year. I was assured they would get back to me... but the committee never did.
- I just got home from the session in Lodi. The format, questions, and discussion were great! Hopefully, as I expect it will, the follow through will be as good.
- I know very little about the Synod or the Bishop.
- I learned very little from your website, which is the most common way people will first come in contact with you, these days.
- I love my church.
- I really don't know what the Sierra Pacific Synod does. What are they supposed to do?
- I really wish the whole church was more open to all religions and less dogmatically inclined to preach instead of listen
- I think clergy need to feel more support from synod staff – I don't personally feel unsupported, but "around the water cooler" there are some really hurt feelings, resentment and downright anger at perceived wrongs, slights, indifferences, etc.
- I think that the current Bishop's focus on prayer is too mono-focused. Don't get me wrong, prayer is ESSENTIAL, but then what? what is the response and action that comes out of prayer? I think the bishop has not moved to that essential response.
- I'm glad the online form is here (although I had a hard time finding it). Despite my efforts to interest my congregation members in this exercise, I'm afraid many feel too disenfranchised to participate. All day long meetings a long drive away for a synod they don't really identify with don't appeal much to the younger set - and I fear that voice may be lost in this process.
- In addition to praying first, I would add "listen well."
- Increases in support will come with a positive agenda - forcing people to "accept" this or that as the correct interpretation of x or y is fruitless and it breaks down our effectiveness in other areas. Get out of political agendas and into helping people and families.
- It was positive and affirming to have the present bishop visit our congregation in Kingsburg. These kind of relationships and connections are needed for a stronger, united front as we engage one of the most challenging, yet exciting places to do ministry - California!
- It won't be easy ...!
- It'd be great to have a female bishop, but only if she is the most qualified.
- I've almost given up on my church many times, because I get so frustrated with personality disputes, insincerity, and mean people. But I keep on hanging in there. I don't know what in the world the synod could do about that.
- Keep on truckin'.
- Lodi gathering did not spend much time in prayer. Seeking God's will for our Synod in prayer is just as important as seeking god's will in conversations.
- Lutherans should be the Christians which other Christians are not. I am tired of being told I am not a Christian because I disagree with the "conservative, intolerant, non-diverse, evangelical Christian" movement.
- More people need to fully understand and participate in the governance of the Synod. The structures and rules come from a time when travel and communications were very difficult as well as just plain slow. Perhaps what we did to accommodate that is no longer the right thing.
- Mount Cross is awesome. Continue to support the ministry there.
- My primary recent attitudes were formed from attendance at a Synod Convention.

- Next bishop should early on set clear and ambitious goals – both strategic and tactical – and have a plan to achieve them. Should look for the best person on a national basis, not just within the Synod.
- Open up, stop the constant begging for renovations, chairs, and other selfish (congregation only) serving purposes and people will come and stay and contribute.
- Our church structure is too Bishop orientated.
- Our synod has extensive resources that can be brought to bear on all kinds of issues. I hope we don't continue to have leaders that don't ask for help and feel they need to go off alone in a corner and come back with "the answer". More transparency into the issues and proposed plans of the synod is needed. It would be great if we, the members of the synod, could function as a large team in defining direction and programs in the synod.
- Outreach is important but ministering to those already in the Church is important too.
- Partner closer with the discovery and ingenuity found at PLTS to create future leaders who are prepared to lead us to and through successful change in our long term future.
- Pastor does not like the Synod nor does he like the Lutheran tradition. Neither is discussed at [our] Lutheran Church.
- Pastor Jay Ford is fantastic!
- Please listen to the responses sent to you in this survey.
- Primary Synod office should be more centrally located on I-5 corridor.
- Thanks for asking
- That people in the congregations are doing the best they can, but need the continual gentle prodding to keep giving and going.
- The bishop should have the wisdom of Solomon to gently guide factions with opposite views.
- The issues facing the Lutheran Church in particular and all churches in general get their genesis from the fact that the church still talks the talk but doesn't walk the walk. We focus on buildings instead ministry. We do not behave as if all people are our brothers and sisters. We judge and find wanting.
- The Leadership team has been encouraged to fill out this questionnaire and many of us know very little about the Synod's goings on. We were told it's OK to say that. I have very limited insight as well, although I did attend the synod conference for the first time ever last year and was taken aback at how much time we spend addressing the Gay, Lesbian issues. I find it a complete waste of time and a poor reflection on how we choose to spend our time. How about some programs that will give our church leaders better tools for evangelism instead?
- The only purpose of a national church or synods is their work in support of the local congregation - which is God's plan for where people worship (the "up" dimension of life); building community (the "in" dimension of life), and engaging their community and the world (the "out" dimension of life),
- The Sierra Pacific Synod can be stronger if each congregation has its own specific goals in support of the Synod and is measured on its progress in meeting those goals.
- The Synod is not very visible to the average church member, however, that may be a good thing.
- The synod needs to look at the various changes in culture, values, races and growth taking place in the California population and access the future of the ELCA here.
- The synod should have more strict control over the local church councils so that we have people on that board who are interested in the church and not for their personal egos. Our Church is in serious jeopardy because of poor judgment in our facility growth and deceit on the profiling for a new pastor.
- There has to be some non-church time in my calendar to be available when I hear God's call to go out into the field.
- There is national support for health ministry: [www.hmassoc.org](http://www.hmassoc.org), and for faith community nursing: [www.ipnrc.parishnurses.org](http://www.ipnrc.parishnurses.org).
- This process should have been in place 30 years ago and repeated periodically. Results of this survey, together with all the other data should be published as a reference to the over-all report. My thanks to everyone for seeing us through this process. Let's do it again on a periodic basis. The next Bishop and staff are called to listen. Shall we have deployed staff? It worked for us more than it worked against us in previous years.
- This synod needs to make itself known as a partner in mission with individual congregations.
- Tradition is Important
- Trends in California will eventually affect the rest of US Lutheranism. How we deal with our challenges will be instructive for everybody else.
- Urban Ministry is extremely important. Small urban churches can minister to people who are not normally going to church, and can do so in unique and wonderful ways. We need to develop our listening skills.
- We are too quick to invoke the Seven Last Words of the Church, "We've never done it that way before." I have hope because I know God's spirit is at work in the world and the church. It seems that often we work to inhibit God's spirit rather than to be moved by it.

- We must communicate about the difficult issues in a loving and caring way.
- We MUST raise more funds & increase our budgets/membership to be able to accomplish this mission.
- We need a bishop who is respectful of all people - someone who expresses appreciation for all people. Yet we need someone who will be able to make tough decisions that need to be made. We need some who is able to love, and yet who is able to deal with being hated. They will need to be able to rejoice and be glad (Matthew 5:12).
- We need creative thinking. I personally favor looking at mergers, but all I ever hear is excuses how this has not worked in the past so it can't be examined now. With dwindling membership, then the only alternative is decline and death of congregations.
- We need to know/hear more from Synod - in person
- Would be nice to know that the bishop is involved in developing and leading the life of the church; a monthly newsletter piece for parish use would be a nice way to start.
- You will be in my prayers. Bishop Mullen has it right... pray first.
- Your work and deliberation are appreciated.

# Churchwide Program Audit

**SIERRA PACIFIC SYNOD REVIEW**  
**Report on the Interviews**  
September 4-6, 2007  
*Rebecca Sims*  
*Research and Evaluation*  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

At the request of the Sierra Pacific Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), a review of the synod was conducted Tuesday, September 4 through Thursday, September 6, 2007. The review consisted of interviews with a total of 46 people, including synod council members, discipling team members, conference deans, and other clergy and lay persons from the synod. All the interviews were held at Lutheran Church of the Cross in Berkeley, California.

People were interviewed either individually or in groups of two to four people. Each session lasted approximately one hour. The interviews were conducted by Margy Schmitt Ajer from Region 2 of the ELCA, Craig Settlage from Synodical Relations of the ELCA, and Rebecca Sims from Research and Evaluation of the ELCA.

### **Opportunities and Challenges Due to the Size of the Synod**

The most common opportunity and challenge listed by participants was the diversity in the synod. Not only diversity ethnically, but also politically, with more “liberal” people on the Coast and more “conservative” people in the Central Valley. Many participants also mentioned the geographical challenges, making travel to meetings difficult. For example, several participants in the ministry review traveled 3 hours or more for a one-hour meeting. This physical distance makes it difficult to get representation across the synod. There is also the potential for isolation, especially among the rural congregations. A few participants talked about the lack of connection to the synod and the lack of community among the congregations. Many felt the synod is too big with too many congregations, 220. This is a very large territory for a bishop and three assistants to cover, and many congregations have not had a visit from synod staff in recent years.

As for opportunities, a few participants talked about the potential for evangelism in the synod because there are so many unchurched people and non-Lutherans in the territory. Others mentioned the beautiful natural resources and the technological resources in Silicon Valley as opportunities unique to the synod.

### **Strengths of the Synod**

As mentioned above, many of the participants felt the diversity of the synod was a strength, with many opportunities for mission. The bishop’s five-point plan was mentioned positively, specifically the focus on “building healthy, multiplying congregations.” Some participants felt Bishop Mullen makes genuine efforts to be attentive to the synods’ congregations and rostered leaders, and he demonstrates pastoral care. Others appreciated the bishop’s emphasis on “pray first.” The seminary was listed as a strength, as well as many educational centers and the highly educated people in the synod. A couple participants mentioned the social ministry in the synod, the camp, and the public policy office in Sacramento as strengths. The synod is also rich in resources, such as high caliber leaders, land, buildings and dollars. Some felt the coaching program was good for the relationships it created between congregations. A couple participants felt the synod was adept at discussing difficult issues, such as sexuality. Even though people often do not agree, there has been productive dialog on the issue at synod assemblies. One

participant listed the professional leadership conferences and new start programs as strengths of the synod.

## **Conferences**

The effectiveness of conferences varies widely, with some functioning well, such as the Santa Clara Parish, and others barely functioning, like the San Francisco conference. The conference dean appears to be a key factor in how well the conference functions. The other significant issues seem to be the size and location of the conference. A couple participants suggested a realignment of the conferences. There was also some discussion of what the expectations of a conference and a dean should be. One dean suggested better leadership training for conference deans, more funding for conferences and more accountability. Some of the deans questioned the practice of deans installing new pastors, calling this a “missed opportunity” for the bishop to interact with the pastor and congregation at an important time. One participant mentioned a new practice of bringing lay people into conference meetings, but the effectiveness of this remains to be seen. Overall, the conferences are most effective in providing supportive networks for pastors.

## **Synod Council**

The synod council elicited a range of opinions, with council members generally expressing positive comments and non-council members less positive or critical. Some participants felt the group was too big and could not effectively make decisions, while one participant felt a smaller council would not be representative of the synod. One concern expressed was the absence of members from large-membership congregations, which was seen as a weakness. Another theme was that the council primarily serves an administrative function or “rubber stamp” group as opposed to visioning or long-range planning. Some participants felt the synod council was a “secret society” and did not have much transparency to people in the synod. A couple participants expressed appreciation for the new budgeting system and the document on healthy congregations produced by the synod council.

## **Structure and Discipling Teams**

Three discipling teams (Leadership, Witness and Service, and Word and Sacrament) were established through a restructuring of the synod a few years ago. Most of the participants were aware of them, but many did not know what they were accomplishing. Some felt the new structure was an improvement over the past committees that aligned with the churchwide structure. One concern was that the teams have “dropped” some areas that were formerly addressed, such as social ministry and youth ministry. This was especially true of the Witness and Service team, which covers a wide range of responsibilities. Members of this team were concerned that most of their focus was on witness and new starts, with very little time and energy given to service. It was suggested that these two areas might be split into two separate teams. A couple participants questioned the presence of a synod staff member as part of the team. Although the consistency of leadership is good, there was some concern that this causes the teams to become too staff-directed. Another common theme was that the discipling teams are not funded adequately, do not have accountability, and do not have a clear vision, making them not very effective.

## **Synod Programs and Resources**

A couple participants mentioned the synod resource center as very helpful, and said they were able to request materials easily. A couple pastors felt the professional leaders' conference was generally good, but one participant suggested meeting with other synods, similar to the Tri-Synodical conference in Texas. One participant mentioned "Link to Lead" and the demographic information provided by Percept as a good resource. As for events and workshops, one participant felt they were good, but it was expensive to hold them more than once in different locations. Another participant felt the lay workshops were "one-time shots" with no follow-up afterwards. Many participants commented that they would rather have the synod function in a networking role, rather than as a provider of resources.

A couple participants commented positively on the listening posts for clergy and the council presidents' workshop. Other resources listed as helpful were lay leadership forums, coaching training/NCD, deans' retreats, assembly workshops, and theological convocations. Other participants listed support for ethnic ministries, the call process, support for pastors with substance abuse issues, the women in ministry network and gatherings, and Healthy Start as positive. Epiphany events, anti-racism training, FCTE events and colleague groups, youth ministry, pastors' retreats, and stewardship training and resources were also listed as helpful resources provided by the synod.

## **Communication**

The overall theme was that communication is a huge issue: Communication from the synod to congregations and leaders is seen as not adequate, not timely, and not effective. Some participants felt the synod Web site is outdated and not easy to navigate. One participant said he had seen both better and worse synod websites. The weekly e-mail "Byte" was generally seen as helpful, but most of the participants did not read Praxis, the monthly newsletter available online. There were very mixed comments about the synod vice president's e-mail communication, ranging from concern that it violated "appropriate boundaries" to appreciation for the opportunity to comment on various issues facing the synod. One participant felt that clergy were not good at disseminating information, especially in smaller congregations where the pastor does everything. Another participant commented that the use of e-mail announcements was good to get information out quickly about illnesses, funerals, etc. Several participants commented that the communication framework is there, but there needs to be more of an effort to connect people with it. In addition, several participants felt there was a lack of information passed on about ELCA resources.

## **Synod Staff**

There were complaints about the synod staff not returning phone calls and a fairly widespread perception of a lack of communication from the staff. There is a low level of trust and dissatisfaction to the point of one participant stating that "we're tired of paying for the little we receive" for present staff. At the same time there were participants who affirmed the commitment and dedication of the staff.

There is a fairly widespread belief that the new bishop will need to begin anew in the selection of staff for the next six years with a "new perspective" needed. Two of the bishop's assistants have been there for almost 20 years, and many people feel betrayed because the current and previous bishops both promised to "clean house" and then failed to follow through on that promise. There is concern that the synod staff have far too much control over what happens in

the synod, that they are over-reactive to change and the attempt to do things differently, and it is unhealthy for a system to have so much history residing in one or two people, making them appear indispensable. There was concern about the bishop's lack of presence in the synod office, and many felt it is important for the bishop to live closer to the synod office, so that there is better communication and management of staff.

There was much appreciation expressed for Bishop Mullen as being a pastor's pastor, of setting a vision for the synod, and being genuine and compassionate. However, several participants commented that the bishop lacks some of the administrative skills needed for the position. The new bishop would benefit if the visioning and planning process were consultative rather than being the bishop's personal view only. One participant stated, "What is needed is a bishop who will challenge the synod with a vision that is compelling and that will help the synod find a common ground in its mission."

Overall, the staff got high marks in responding to crisis, supporting the ministry team, the call process and other transition issues. Many participants spoke of the need to have the bishop and bishop's staff in congregations more often, not only at times of conflict or transition. Some participants felt the bishop and his staff spend too much time "putting out fires" and not enough time with healthy congregations. Several participants also questioned the viability of some congregations in the synod and the resources expended to "keep them alive" when it might be better to let them die or redirect their resources to another ministry.

### **Issues Facing Congregations and Lay Leaders**

Several issues facing congregations and lay leaders were mentioned, including stewardship education and funding, a challenge to become more diverse, and holding a stable membership and lack of growth. Other participants listed synod-wide events that will help mold the "identity" of the synod and the ELCA, and staffing for larger congregations, such as youth, music and family ministry. There was also concern about small membership congregations and helping them or assisting them to close when it is appropriate. One participant was concerned about the age of his congregation members and the lack of younger families. Another participant talked about the internalization of congregations and the lack of mission or sense of community with other congregations. One participant listed the fear of change and the dis-ease people feel about the "new way of doing church." Equipping lay people and training them to be missionaries is another issue facing the congregations of the synod.

### **Issues Facing Clergy and Lay Rostered Leaders**

Several pastors commented on the need to bring life into the synod assembly, and felt it was a "poor stewardship" of the synod's resources. A couple pastors felt that clergy and lay rostered leaders were working alone in isolation, and more collaboration and collegiality is needed. There was also concern about clergy and lay rostered leaders' lack of healthy ways of living and lack of pastoral care for self and families. Other concerns were dealing with conflict, fatigue, burn out and lack of joy in ministry. Church political issues are also affecting clergy and lay rostered leaders, such as the split on the homosexuality issue. A couple participants talked about the high housing prices in the synod and how this affects decisions to take calls.

### **Priorities for the Future**

When asked about priorities for the synod over the next five to six years, many suggestions were made. A focus on mission that acknowledges the diversity of the synod was suggested as

a top priority. Some participants felt the focus on new starts is good, but questioned whether it is sustainable. The viability of congregations is also a high priority, and the need for mergers and dissolutions in some cases instead of trying to keep dying congregations alive. Some participants suggested a focus on commonalities and shared identity as Lutheran Christians, and finding a clear, shared vision for the mission and purpose of the synod. A couple participants suggested the Lutheran church needs to be public and visible. There is a need to get beyond the focus on homosexuality and move towards how to address the gay/lesbian reality.

Many participants suggested a restructuring of the synod staff and office, stressing the need for new staff. Transparency, collegiality and team-building were also listed as priorities for the future. A couple participants felt there needs to be more accountability for clergy and congregations in the synod. Other participants felt the call process needs some work, as there has not always been a good match between the candidate and the congregation. Some participants felt the synod council could be used more effectively, not just as a “rubber stamp” group. A couple participants wanted the bishop to be a “pastor of the pastors” and be more visible in congregations, not just during times of conflict or transition. Others talked about the suspicion and general lack of trust in the synod, which will need to be addressed. Other priorities mentioned were stewardship and clear expectations of the synod, staff, teams and leaders. One participant felt the bishop should model healthy work habits for the clergy in the synod.

## **Summary and Conclusions**

As the Sierra Pacific synod enters into a time of transition with the election of a new bishop, there are many opportunities and challenges. The large size and geography of the synod presents a challenge, but there is also great diversity in the synod. The synod has many strengths, including highly educated and talented leaders, the seminary, and the financial as well as beautiful natural resources of the territory. There is also great opportunity for mission in the synod, with a large number of unchurched people and non-Lutherans in the area.

The effectiveness of the conferences varies widely, with the leadership appearing to be a key factor, as well as the size and geographical location. The synod council is not transparent to most of the people in the synod, and is seen largely as a “rubber stamp” group. It was also not clear to most people the functions of the discipling teams and their effectiveness. The synod provides many helpful resources and events, especially professional conferences. Communications could be improved, perhaps by updating the synod Web site and making people more aware of all the communication tools available to them.

Synod staffing was an important issue discussed by the participants. There was a strong feeling that the two assistants who have been there for almost 20 years need to be replaced with new staff. A feeling of betrayal was also associated with this issue, as the two previous bishops promised to “clean house” and then failed to follow through on that promise. The new bishop will need to address the staffing issue, as well as the feelings of distrust. There was also a desire for the bishop and synod staff to be more visible and get out into the congregations more, not only at times of conflict or transition.

One of the main issues facing congregations is the issue of viability. With a large number of small congregations in the synod, the question of whether to keep those congregations going or to let them die gracefully was raised. In some cases, mergers or channeling of those resources into new ministries would be more effective. Issues facing clergy and lay rostered leaders

included healthy living, pastoral care for self and family, and church political issues, such as homosexuality.

Looking to the future, participants had many suggestions for the most important priorities for the synod in the next five to six years. A clear, shared vision for the synod was a top priority for many. This should be a collaborative process, rather than a new bishop coming in and setting the agenda for the next six years without consultation. Another theme was the need for greater transparency and visibility of the synod. Many participants were unclear on what the synod does, what are the expectations of the synod, and what they are getting for their mission support dollars. Improving communication might be one way to address this problem, as well as the new bishop and synod staff being more visible and present in the congregations. This was a criticism voiced by many participants, that they only receive a visit in times of conflict or transition, not when things are going well. This is a challenge with over 200 congregations in the synod and only three assistants, but helping congregations feel more connected to the synod and fostering a sense of community is needed. The new bishop will have many challenges to face, but in such a large and diverse synod, there are also many resources and exciting opportunities.

## Existing Information

### ***Building Healthy Multiplying Congregations (Reference)***

This document is available:

- On the Sierra Pacific Synod website ([www.spselca.org](http://www.spselca.org))
  - <http://www.spselca.org/Resources/resources.html>
- On the Synod Profile CD sent to each congregation

## ***Bishop Mullen's Ecclesiastical Duties in Detail***

<b><i>Bishop's Mandated Ecclesiastical Duties</i></b>	<b>Days per Year</b>
3 Bishops' Meetings in Chicago (Including travel time)	22
Synod Council	4
Professional Leaders Conference	4
Conference of Deans	3
Ordinations	6
Synod Assembly (including preparation)	6
Requests to serve larger Church (ELCA)	4
Region 2 consultations	4
Region 2 mobility conferences	6
Ecumenical officer of Synod	4
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>87</b>

Days in a year	365
Days off @ 1/week (not including vacation)	48
Vacation (4 weeks)	28
<b>Total working days per year</b>	<b>289</b>

Mandated Ecclesiastical Duties from above	87
Crisis and conflict @ 25% of working days per year	72
	<b>159</b>

<b>"Discretionary" working days available per year</b>	<b>130</b>
<b>Percentage of "Discretionary" time per year</b>	<b>45%</b>
<b>Percentage of Mandated Time per year</b>	<b>55%</b>

<b>NOTE: "Discretionary" time does NOT include the following activities, which are often considered "mandatory:"</b>
Call Process
Church Anniversaries
Church Visits
Conference Assemblies
Continuing Education
Correspondence, email, phone, administration
Other Gatherings
Other Meetings
Pastor to Pastors
Prayer and Reflection
Sermon preparation
Staff time
Travel time (not including Bishops' Meetings)

## **LDT LISTENING POSTS, 2005-2006: SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

A Synod consultation among Speed Leas of the Alban Institute, the Leadership Discipling Team and Synod leadership determined that a high priority for the Leadership Discipling Team (LDT) should be the creation of “local communities of nurture and support” for rostered leaders. In 2004, the LDT clergy members--Victor Berg-Haglund, Paul Bodin (chair), Gail Cromack, Mark Holmerud, Nancy Nelson, Arden Strasser and Bill Wong--and the LDT lay members--Margaret McLean and Tom Stoffregen--attempted to define the relevance and meaning of the phrase “local communities of nurture and support.” It was determined that the best way to determine what constituted a “community of nurture and support” was to ask rostered leaders directly.

With assistance for the Peninsula Conflict Resolution Center (PCRC) of San Mateo, the LDT developed and sponsored a day-long event for rostered leaders in all regions of the Synod. The hope was to create an atmosphere of safety and to foster willingness for rostered leaders to communicate at a deeper level. Discussion during the first half of the day centered on the PBS documentary *The Congregation*. The second half of the day focused on two case studies developed by the LDT. This design was intended to facilitate personal reflection on the challenges of ministry that might be addressed through communities of nurture and support. Members of the LDT were trained by the PCRC to facilitate these events. To encourage personal disclosure in a safe setting, a strict code of confidentiality was established. No “sign-in sheet” was provided although demographic data was collected. Participants used only their first names on name tags. Although discussions were recorded on newsprint, no personal attributions were a part of those recordings. In addition, each group of participants agreed to a covenant of confidentiality at the beginning of each event. Synod staff members were requested to refrain from attending any of these events.

A total of five Listening Posts have been completed -- Foster City, Davis, San Rafael, Fresno, and Morgan Hill. A total of 49 rostered leaders participated—48 clergy, 1 Associate in Ministry (18 women, 31 men). The average participant age was 50.5 (range 32 – 76). The average years in ministry was 17.5 (range 3.5 – 50).

Over the course of the day, there were three opportunities for participants to disclose what things mattered to them. These were the most prevalent areas of concern:

Ever-changing world

- o Racial and ethnic diversity
- o Post-modernistic view of the church
- o Competition with secular culture (particularly in CA)
- o Spirituality vs. religion
- o Church is out of touch with contemporary life

Support for both the pastor and the pastor’s family

- o Family needs vs. congregational needs
- o Communication challenges e.g., how does the pastor share congregational concerns with family?
- o Who is the family’s pastor?

- o Who is the pastor's pastor?
- o "Spouses get leftovers."
- o Balancing work, health, family

#### Lack of support

- o From Synod
- o From Congregation
- o From Congregational leaders
- o A feeling of "disconnect" with the Synod

#### Conflict Resolution/Management

#### Pastoral Identity/Health

- o Support systems for pastors
- o Boundaries
- o Having personal needs met solely in the parish
- o Importance of self care
- o Importance of prayer life
- o Spiritual formation
- o Confusion of public/private role
- o Publicly, it is difficult to be honest and to be yourself
- o Is personal/pastoral authenticity desirable? To what degree?
- o Where and how to get support?
- o Isolation
- o Male/female power

Finally, participants were asked what they would like to see happen within the Synod to address the concerns about and the challenges of ministry. There was marked support for the following:

A "pastor for the pastors"

- o "I wish I had a pastor."
- o "I need someone to be my pastor and my family does too."

More clarity/support/ADVOCACY from the Synod on:

- o Salary guidelines
  - o Letter of Call negotiations
  - o Sabbatical leave policies
- Continuance of Listening Posts to provide a safe opportunity to talk with colleagues
- A desire to develop "our own groups" – not ones that come from the Synod
- Intentional, trained interim ministry
- Establishment of and training for congregational Mutual Ministry committees

The themes highlighted above wove their way through every Listening Post and, thus, merit careful attention by the LDT and the Synod. The needs are clear. The challenge remains to develop "communities of nurture and support" to meet these voiced needs of our rostered leaders in the SPS.

Finally, a surprise: we developed this process to uncover and identify the unmet needs of rostered leaders. What we didn't expect was that the event itself would meet the most prevalent need: "Just to be asked. Just to be heard. Just to be listened to."

Summary prepared by:

Mark W. Holmerud, Margaret McLean, Nancy Nelson

On behalf of Leadership Discipling Team, September 21, 2007

## **Synod Structure Overview**

### **1) Describe the synod's present staffing.**

Pr. David Mullen - Bishop

Pr. Noreen Meginness - Assistant to the Bishop, Administration and Communication

Mr. Charles Ruthroff - Assistant to the Bishop, Plan for Mission

Pr. William Wong - Assistant to the Bishop, Lead by Example

Pr. Harvey Blomberg - deployed ELCA staff assigned half-time to Sierra Pacific Synod -  
Mission Director, EOCM program unit

Ms. Mary Woods - Bookkeeper

Ms. Jean Fuller - Administrative Assistant to the Bishop, and receptionist

Ms. Sue Schultz - Administrative Assistant to Wong and Meginness

### **2) List current members of the Synod Council and their duties.**

-- Pr. David Mullen, bishop; CEO of the corporation of the Sierra Pacific Synod; member,  
Executive Committee

-- Mr. Larry Moeller, vice president; chair, Synod Council (the corporation's Board of Directors);  
chair, Executive Committee; liaison to Region 2 council

-- Ms. Kathy Werfelmann, secretary of the corporation; member, Executive Committee

-- Pr. Mark Price, treasurer; member, Executive Committee; chair, Finance Committee

-- Pr. Cora Aguilar, liaison to Tri-Synod Campus Ministry; liaison to So. Alameda conference

-- Mr. David Anderson, liaison to Lutheran Outdoor Ministries (Mt. Cross); liaison to Central  
Valley conference

-- Ms. Karen Anderson, member, Synod Profile task group; liaison to Gateway conference

-- Pr. Tom Beck, liaison to Lutheran Advocacy Ministry of Nevada; liaison to Sierra Nevada  
conference

-- Pr. Diane Bowers, member, Executive Committee; liaison to East Bay conference

-- Ms. Ann Brannen, liaison to Elder Care Alliance board; member, Executive Committee

-- Ms. Pat Cash, liaison to Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary; liaison to Vineyard  
conference

-- Ms. Quinta Ekong, member, Warner Trust Fund committee

-- Mr. Perry Gray-Reneberg, liaison to Lutheran Social Services; liaison to Redwood conference

-- Pr. Sarah Isakson, liaison to Assembly Planning committee;

-- Mr. Steve Krefting, liaison to Lutheran Office of Public Policy; liaison to San Francisco  
conference

-- Mr. John Kuehner, member, Warner Trust Fund committee; liaison to Peninsula conference

-- Ms. Michelle Martin, resigned ... vacancy

-- Pr. Kelly Nesheim, member, Candidacy Committee; liaison to Monterey Bay conference -- Pr.  
Moses Penumaka, liaison to Cultural Competency commission; liaison to Central San Joaquin  
conference

-- Ms. Sharon Seegmiller, liaison to Elder Care Alliance board; liaison to Sierra San Joaquin  
conference

-- Mr. Tom Stoffregen, liaison to Foothill conference

-- Pr. Paul Theiss, member, Executive Committee; liaison to South Valley conference

-- Ms. Mary Tidwell, liaison to Assembly Planning committee; liaison to Sacramento conference

### **3) Describe the synod's support of and involvement with institutions and agencies.**

Individual congregations comprising the Sierra Pacific Synod are engaged with agencies and institutions across the geography of this synod and beyond. As a corporate entity, the synod 'relates' officially via its operating budget with regular financial support to the following agencies and/or institutions --

- Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary
- California Lutheran University
- Lutheran Campus Ministry
- Lutheran Outdoor Ministries (i.e., Mt. Cross)
- Lutheran Social Services
- Lutheran Office of Public Policy
- Lutheran Advocacy Ministry of Nevada
- San Francisco Night Ministry

In addition, the Sierra Pacific Synod is represented by individuals appointed to numerous governing boards of entities which receive no ongoing corporate financial support (e.g., Elder Care Alliance).

### **4) Describe the synod's ecumenical partnerships.**

Sierra Pacific Synod (SPS) is deeply involved in carrying out at the synodical, conference and congregation levels the ecumenical partnerships established by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). ELCA is in full communion partnerships with the Episcopal Church, the Moravian Church, and the Reformed Churches (Presbyterian Church USA, Reformed Church in America, United Church of Christ). ELCA is currently in an interim sharing of Eucharist with the United Methodist Church. In addition, ELCA is in conversation with African Methodist Episcopal, Disciples of Christ, Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, Mennonite, Orthodox, Roman Catholic churches, as well as, Jewish and Islamic faith traditions. These established relationships and conversations provide solid encouragement and excellent opportunity for SPS to live out the healing of the brokenness of the body of Christ. We in the SPS take this exciting journey seriously.

Bishop David Mullen's Commission on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (CEIA) is active with our ecumenical partners and interfaith friends throughout the SPS. CEIA members are active in several local ecumenical and inter-faith organizations throughout the Synod. Bishop Mullen's appointed representative is a member of the Executive Board of ELCA's Lutheran Ecumenical Representative Network (LERN), is LERN Region 2 Leader and liaison between LERN and the Episcopal Diocesan Ecumenical and Interreligious Network (EDEIO).

## **What the Profile Team Learned**

### **About the Synod**

The boundary lines on the map and the demographic profile of those living within those lines tell the story vividly: The Sierra Pacific Synod stretches across a massive and diverse geographic area....diverse in people, in industry and in cultural differences, in ages and lifestyles of members, and in the sizes and financial stability of congregations.

This creates significant obstacles to overcome and in the same moment presents wonderful opportunities to embrace in the future. The Team heard and observed both sides of the discussions.

#### **Among the obstacles:**

A lack of communication and connection and a desire for more unity; a feeling of isolation and a perception that some voices are listened to and others are ignored; a misunderstanding as to what constitutes the Synod, congregations and individuals or the Bishop and the Bishop's staff; issues, such as sexuality, that the majority want to move beyond, yet are struggling to find the way to do so; concerns about our membership rolls not reflecting the rainbow of differences within our communities; a lack of understanding regarding the Synod finances.

#### **Among the opportunities:**

A depth of passion for and commitment to our Lutheran tradition and for the faith; a strong desire for change and many who are willing to invest their time and energy on challenging issues within the Synod and in the church at large; building on the good feelings created by the experiences of the face-to-face conversations at the gatherings, the sharing of hopes and dreams for their congregations and the Synod, and the positive reaction of their voices being heard; the high quality of the programs available from the Synod and the ELCA.

One theme presented itself as an obstacle and an opportunity: The caring for and nurturing of our pastors.

All of the information contained in the profile offers a toolbox filled with excellent ideas and suggestions to use during the process of electing a new Bishop. And, afterwards, for the new Bishop and the Synod staff to conduct a realistic examination of what is working and what isn't, to determine what are the expectations of Lutheran Christians in the Synod, and to decide how to meet those expectations.

Obviously, there were many questions left to be answered: Should the new Bishop take a page from the Rocky Mountain Synod and meet members all over the Synod in the first six months of taking office? How can most members gain a better understanding of the Bishop's responsibilities, as well as those of the staff? Why have two of the three Synod Bishops served less than two full terms, and the third decided not to stand for re-election?

What investments are needed in high tech communications to enhance the Synod web site, and perhaps allow the Bishop to hold regional gatherings in a fireside chat format? How can the Synod office assure that individual congregations are fully informed of available resources? How can the Bishop tap into the enthusiasm we discovered to move forward into the future while

dealing with issues of today? Considering the Synod's geography, would satellite offices be one answer?

And the list of questions can go on and on, and we hope they will.

Each of us answered the call of Bishop Mullen to help build this profile not knowing what we would find or learn, but with the excitement that we would gain new knowledge, new insights and new opportunities to share with others.

We pray that you will experience that same excitement.

## **About the Process**

If there was one overriding lesson learned during this ambitious project, it was this: Never underestimate the value of inviting people to give voice to their opinions, their thoughts, their ideas, and then listening to what they have to say.

Doing it face-to-face is the most effective method, but use on-line surveys, telephone calls and emails, and any form of communication available to reach as many members of the Synod as possible.

Without broad input from members and from a wide variety of data sources, a profile such as this one will not be valid. And this means a lot of work, more than the Profile Team envisioned when Bishop Mullen first asked us to take on this pioneer project.

For those Synods that may want to do this in the future we offer these suggestions:

- It is impossible to over-communicate the purpose and process of the Profile.
- Hear from both leadership and rank and file members.
- Know that many members will be thrilled to be asked to participate; also know that some will not trust the process and refuse to participate.
- It takes a lot of mechanisms to get the word out. And follow-up is necessary, through congregational and conference contacts, via letters, emails, and phone calls.
- Schedule gatherings in geographically distinct areas, especially in a synod as diverse as ours.
- Speak for the Profile Team in one voice.
- Be aware that designing and developing the Profile is more time consuming than expected, especially without a model to follow.
- Decide how you will distribute the information for maximum use by the Synod Council, assembly attendees, voting members, candidates, congregations, etc.
- Determine if on-line surveys should be offered in languages other than English to reach as many members as possible.
- Allow sufficient time to analyze and summarize the vast amount of information and data you will collect.

To our knowledge, this is the first Synod Profile to be prepared in the ELCA. If others follow, we are confident they will be able to add to the list of suggestions.

Bishop Mullen, who is not seeking re-election, joined us for the first meeting of the group and that exchange with him allowed us to move ahead with a deep sense of mutual trust and with the knowledge that what we were doing was vitally important and strongly supported by him.

As a Profile Team, we unanimously recommend this process to other synods.

As for our own experience, we can quote the psalmist: We have been clothed in joy.