



Report of Research and Evaluation

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New.

25 YEARS TOGETHER IN CHRIST

The primary responsibility of the staff of Research and Evaluation is to provide decision-makers in this church with relevant and useful information through high quality empirical research.

The unit does its work with three main emphases.

General Research in Support of Churchwide and Synodical Initiatives

Over the past two years this work has concentrated on supporting the Living into the Future Together: Renewing the Ecology of the ELCA (LIFT) task force and the Lilly Foundation Stewards of Abundance project. This latter effort is designed to address the educational debt of seminary graduates who intend to serve congregations in the ELCA.

A series of significant projects were completed related to the LIFT task force, including several studies of synods which focused on the role of synods in assisting congregations in being more missional, a study on the impact on synods of potential changes in the Mission Support system of this church, and several studies of the staffing of synods and how staff engage congregations. In addition to these synod-related studies, there was a large multi-group survey of the members of this church which focused on the challenges congregations face and the roles of synods and the churchwide organization in assisting congregations to address those challenges.

Research and Evaluation has also developed a congregational vitality tool in support of the recommendation of the LIFT task force that each congregation develop a mission plan. The goal is to create an online system which would be available to congregations and include online access to the survey and a custom online report.

The Lilly Foundation Stewards of Abundance project involved five different studies: a study of leadership recruitment and the role of compensation, a study of seminarian debt and the implications of debt on ministry, an ongoing debt audit in conjunction with the eight ELCA seminaries, a study of the financial wellness of seminary students and first call pastors, and a study of issues related to the funding of theological education in the wider ecology of the ELCA.

Research and Evaluation has also conducted a series of synod reviews involving the Sierra Pacifica Synod, the Southwestern Washington Synod, the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod, the Rocky Mountain Synod, the South Dakota Synod, and the Lower Susquehanna Synod.

Research and Evaluation responds to requests for information from synods, congregations, and the staff of the churchwide organization which involve the analysis of existing datasets including the annual reports of congregations and the leadership roster. For example, congregational and synodical trend reports are available to all congregations and synods on the Office of Presiding Bishop website. Research and Evaluation also worked with the Office of the Secretary to provide custom reports for each synod with a focus on those synods electing a new bishop in the summer of 2013. The "toolkits" are available for all synods on the Office of Presiding Bishop website.

Evaluation Research in Support of Churchwide Ministries

Over the past two years this research has focused on the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit. Evaluation projects are conducted on most programmatic initiatives including the directors for evangelical mission and the stewardship Macedonia Project with synods. This work is ongoing. A second area of ongoing evaluation work addresses starting new ministries in the ELCA. Research and Evaluation also conducts many event-related evaluations for churchwide staff.

Demographic Research in Support of Congregational, Synodical, and Churchwide Ministries

Custom demographic reports are available at the request of directors for evangelical mission which provide maps of ministry areas. These custom maps highlight population growth, racial/ethnic diversity, household type, income, and a host of other variables that are useful in assisting congregations as they plan for mission.

Mr. Kenneth W. Inskip, *executive*