

BEYOND OUR DOORS



Congregational Mission Planning

2011 – 2012



Northwest Synod of Wisconsin
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

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This document is available for download on the synod website: www.nswi.org

AN OPPORTUNITY FOR MISSION PLANNING BEYOND OUR DOORS

Dear Friends in Christ:

All congregations of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are invited to participate in a process that will engage us in conversation with one another, leading us to identify a particular plan for meeting the mission opportunities in each congregation's particular setting. These materials will help you talk about your mission as a congregation. The process consists of three steps.

First, as a member congregation in a Book of Faith synod, you are asked to *turn to prayer and Scripture* as you open yourselves to the Spirit of God moving among the members of your congregation. Identify the people who will participate in this process and urge the entire congregation to share in prayerful support.

Second, you are asked to *have intentional conversations* with several community leaders. The purpose of the conversation is to learn more about your community and to demonstrate to others that the body of Christ is interested in interacting with the community in order to help respond to the needs of the people. If more than one congregation shares the same geographical area, we urge you to work together to converse with community leaders and to talk about how you will respond to needs and mission opportunities. You are also encouraged to include ecumenical partners in this discussion.

Finally, you are asked to *develop a concrete mission plan* that describes how you will serve the needs identified in your community, based upon the call of Christ to be disciples in the world. Included in the plan will also be your commitment to being a generous congregation as you give financial support to the work of mission and ministry that we all do together in the name of Jesus Christ. If your congregation is already engaged in mission planning, this will be a review and recommitment to your mission. If you are new to mission planning, this will be an opportunity to take the first few steps. Once you've completed this three-step process, you may want to go deeper. Resources, including people to assist you, are available to help you take the next steps. Your synod staff partners with you as we *Walk Together + For The Sake of Mission + In God's World*.

A form for reporting the results of your conversations and mission plans is in the back of this booklet. Please return this form to the synod office and keep a copy in your congregation's files. Our 2012 Synod Assembly will include a celebration of your congregation's commitment to mission. Take advantage of this opportunity. Imagine the witness for Christ that will come forth as over 200 congregations intentionally reach out to our communities to meet the needs of God's creation.

If you need help along the way, your synod staff is available to help you. May God bless us as we open ourselves to the powerful work of the Holy Spirit – Beyond Our Doors!

SUGGESTED TIMELINE

JUNE 2011

At synod assembly, congregations receive the challenge to engage in intentional mission planning.

JULY & AUGUST 2011

Mission planning materials are sent out to each congregation with letters of invitation to rostered leaders and council presidents.

Council determines who will be responsible to carry out this process. (Council may appoint a task force or may appoint a group already in existence, such as a visioning team or long range planning committee.)

Congregations located in the same geographical area converse about working together. You are encouraged to engage ecumenical partners in this conversation, too.

Persons responsible for carrying out the process identify the community leaders with whom they will converse and make arrangements for those conversations to take place.

SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER 2011

Engage in the Bible Study provided. This can be done by council members, adult/youth study groups, anyone participating in the planning process, and anyone interested.

Meet with community leaders.

Discuss what has been learned about the community and what impact that might have on the ministry of the congregation – Beyond Our Doors!

Keep the congregation informed and ask for their continued prayerful support.

DECEMBER, 2011 AND JANUARY 2012

Develop a mission plan for your congregation.

Incorporate into the plan the congregation's commitment for financial generosity.

Send a report of your plans to the synod office.

FEBRUARY – JUNE 2012

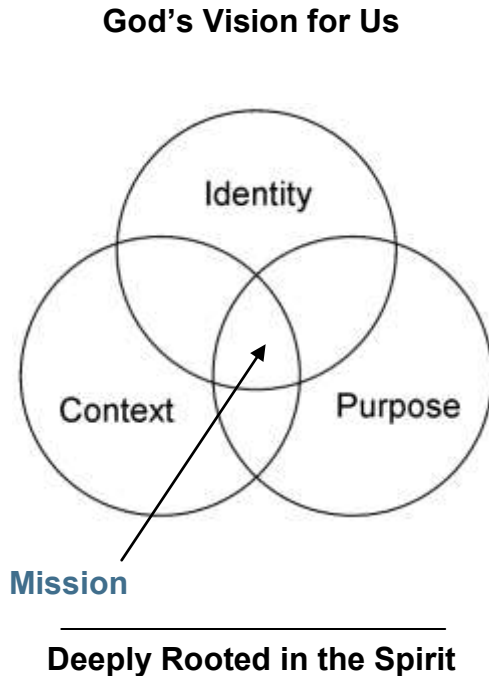
Put your plans into actions.

Celebrate our synod-wide commitment to mission at the synod assembly!

OUR CONGREGATION'S TIMELINE

STEPS	DATE	PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE	COMPLETED
Distribute materials to council			
Meet with Council to determine who will oversee this process			
Conduct planning team meeting			
Make arrangements to work with other local congregations if appropriate			
Determine the community leaders with whom you will converse			
Engage as many people as possible in the Bible study provided in the materials			
Make arrangements to meet with community leaders			
After meeting with community leaders, talk with one another about what you heard (meet with other congregations)			
Ask, –How does the community bless us?” and –How does our presence bless the community?”			
Begin to formulate a list of mission plans based on study of Scripture and what we’ve learned about needs Beyond Our Doors			
If you already have a mission plan, review it in light of what you’ve learned			
Report to council and begin to plan for financial commitment to the mission plan			
Share the mission plan with the congregation			
Once the congregation is comfortable with the plan, submit final report			
Send the mission plan to the synod office			
Get started on carrying out the plan			

A MODEL FOR THINKING ABOUT MISSION



To know your mission is to know your purpose and calling, but how do we discover what our true mission is? How does a congregation identify the *main thing* that God is asking of them? The diagram at left suggests a way to begin to zero in on an answer.

Discovering your mission as a congregation begins with an exploration into what God's vision is for the mission of the whole Church on earth. Scripture and study into the history and tradition of the church can help us see God's vision. Then, grounding ourselves in prayer and reflection both privately and corporately, we can stay fixed on what God is saying to us.

It is in the context of our listening to God's vision for the Church on earth, that we can then ask the specific questions about our congregation's mission. We will ask about our congregation's identity, purpose, and context.

Identity/Who Are We?

- As People of God's creating?
- As Lutheran Christians?
- As generous disciples of Jesus Christ?
- As a congregation set in this community?
- How are we blessed and who do we bless?

CLAIMED

Purpose/Why Are We Here?

- What does Scripture tell us?
- Where does prayer and reflection lead us?
- How are we different from other organizations?

GATHERED

Context/Who Is Our Neighbor?

- Within the congregation?
- Within the community?
- Within the wider church and world?

SENT



*Claimed by Christ in our baptisms,
our identity is given*



*Gathered around Word and
Sacrament, our purpose becomes clear*



*Sent into the world,
we live our faith in a particular context*

**OUT OF BAPTISM, WORSHIP, LEARNING, AND SUPPORT FOR ONE
ANOTHER, OUR PARTICIPATION IN GOD'S MISSION IS BORN!**

Mission is . . .

- what we are called to be as we participate in God's action in the world
- discovered at the intersection of identity, purpose and context

BIBLE STUDY

Session One: Who Are We? Acts 2:1-4, 40-47

We are: A Letter...The Body...The Branches...A Royal Priesthood...Vessels...Children of God...Baptized...Beloved...Forgiven...Gifted...Called...Holy...Gathered...Sustained...Enlightened Witnesses...Ambassadors...Peacemakers...Heralds...Teachers...“Little Christs”

READING SCRIPTURE

When the day of Pentecost arrived, all the believers were gathered together as a strong wind and tongues of fire appeared. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to talk in other languages. Many believed Peter’s message that day and were baptized; about three thousand people. They spent their time learning from the apostles, taking part in the fellowship, and sharing in the fellowship meals and the prayers. Many miracles and wonders were done through the apostles, which caused everyone to be filled with awe. Every day they continued to meet as a group in the temple, and they had their meals together in their homes, eating the food with glad and humble hearts, praising God, and enjoying the good will of all the people. And every day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved. (Acts 2: 1-4, 40-47 paraphrased)



ASKING QUESTIONS

How did the early Christians think of themselves? What made them bold?
How did “who” they are effect what they said and did?
How are “being” and “doing” connected in your experience?
What is the chief part of the identity of this congregation?

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Often being a disciple is thought of as subscribing to a set of beliefs or following a set of behaviors and practices. But being a disciple might more accurately be thought of as having entered into a way of being that then results in a way of doing. Discipleship is becoming a new self or a different self because one’s whole orientation to the world has changed. How one views people, purpose, future, urgency, values, and commitment changes. The disciple is a person with a new vision; he or she is a new creation. The power of the Good News, Holy Spirit, and

community life in the experience of the early Christians made them natural and urgent witnesses to the good things they had discovered.

- Witnessing is highly *relational*; it is one person sharing with another – friend to friend, parent to child, and child to parent, worker to co-worker.
- Witnessing is highly *reflective*; it is conversation about the transformation that occurs in one’s worldview, values, and commitments because of Jesus.
- Witnessing is highly *immediate*; it is dialog about the experience of life and conviction in that moment; it is sharing one’s own spiritual journey.
- Witnessing is highly *incarnational*; it is allowing the encounter with Jesus to happen for another through you. It is being open to Jesus through your encounter with another.
- Witnessing is a mentoring activity in which there is freedom to explore, question, and share. It accepts people where they are, but it also seeks to help people take a next step in their spiritual life.
- Witnessing is a teaching activity which should not be confused with what happens in worship -- worship is about praise and adoration. To limit one’s spiritual feeding to adoration (worship) without coupling it with learning (discipling) is to miss the opportunity to have balance in one’s growth as a disciple and a witness for Christ.

PRAYER

O God, we are children of your presence and your promises. We are shaped by your love and filled with your grace. Make of us what you will, that we may be your people in this world, bearing witness to your goodness and salvation. May those around us be touched by your Holy Spirit because of our words and deeds, and may we be open to your presence with us as we encounter others for your sake. In the name of Christ, our Lord. Amen

IDENTITY: WHO, THEN, ARE WE?

As people of God’s
creating?

As Lutheran Christians?

As generous disciples of
Jesus Christ?

As a congregation set in this
community?

claimed

BIBLE STUDY

Session Two: Why Are We Here? Acts 4:1-22

WE ARE: To Go...Baptize...Teach...Proclaim...Announce...Make Disciples...Stewards
Lights...Mustard Seeds...Salt...Leaven...New Wine...Sent...Given...Blessed...Chosen...Shared

READING SCRIPTURE

*Peter and John were in the temple in Jerusalem speaking to the people. The religious leaders became annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming that in Jesus there is the resurrection of the dead. And so they arrested them. But many who had heard them speak believed, about five thousand. The next day as the elders and scribes examined them, Peter and John—who were common uneducated men—spoke with boldness so that the elders of the temple wanted to prohibit them from speaking further. But Peter and John declared, “**We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.**” And seeing they had no case to press against them, the elders let them go. (Acts 4 paraphrased)*



ASKING QUESTIONS

What purpose filled Peter and John’s life? How did they come to know that purpose?
What is God’s purpose for the whole Church on earth?
What can prevent us from fulfilling our purpose in Christ?
What is the chief purpose that this congregation is living out?

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It’s not hard to hear the central theme here – that the disciples understood themselves as **message-bearers** who had been given the Spirit, power, reassurance, and authority to carry out a mission. It is good to know one’s purpose! It likely helped the disciples cope with Jesus’ departure and all the fear and confusion that swirled around them after the crucifixion. The disciples found a boldness coming from outside of themselves to proclaim Good News, to teach for obedience, and to be a witness. In the disciples’ day, as in ours, the message is intended to address the deep spiritual needs that people experience. And those needs may change over time. In New Testament times the great spiritual question may have been, “Who is this Jesus?” In Reformation times the question may have been, “What must I do to be saved?” Both questions are especially well addressed by considering Jesus’ death. In more recent times the question gets expressed in various ways: “What must I do to be happy?” “Am I loved?” “Am I safe?” “What

is the meaning of this life?” Such questions are especially well addressed by considering *Jesus’ life*. To bear witness is to carry the message of Jesus into the conversations that happen all around us about all these questions.

PRAYER

O Lord, help us find our “voice” within today’s world. As people who have seen and heard great things, help us to speak of what we know. Preserve us from being the kind of religious establishment that gets in the way of its own message. By your Holy Spirit make the message of salvation find freedom of expression and freshness of style so that all people can hear the proclamation of Good News “in their own language.” Amen.

PURPOSE: WHY, THEN, ARE WE HERE?

What does Scripture tell us?

Where does prayer and reflection lead us?

How are we different from other organizations?

gathered

BIBLE STUDY

Session Three: Who is Our Neighbor?

Acts 1:6-14

THEY ARE: Christ's Sheep...The Lost...Sojourners...Samaritans...All People...Son...Friend
Daughter...Spouse...Coworker...Stranger...Those for Whom Christ Aches...Weeps...Reaches
Touches...Dies...Finds

READING SCRIPTURE

The Book of Acts records the earliest steps in the spread of Christianity from the central point of Jerusalem outward like radiated light into the lands beyond. "And you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). How comfortable to think that the proclamation begins at home (we do, after all, refer to our "home church" when we speak.) But how uncomfortable to be told that the proclamation must be taken to those we consider so unlike us, those not a part of our culture and values, those we otherwise avoid because they are "unclean" (our modern day "samaritans"). If we could but stay at home with our proclamation, we could nestle into a preoccupation with doing the practices and rituals of the church. When we are asked to take the message beyond home, we are being asked to risk and to change. Yet it is our duty and delight "as each has received a gift, (to) employ it for one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace." (1 Peter 4:10)



ASKING QUESTIONS

Why did early Christians have a controversy over preaching to the Gentiles?
Who are the foreigners, the unclean, the Samaritans of our time?
Do we exist for the sake of our members or for the sake of God's world?
Who are the neighbors of your congregation?

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

What would your congregation look like if it transformed itself for the sake of the "neighbor?"
What if we really were a missionary people? What would happen if the Priesthood of All

Believers really took itself completely seriously? How would we change our modes of work in order to be focused on mission? What would it feel like if your congregation was not distracted by doing its tasks and business, but was caught up in a spirit of joy and anticipation about the future?

Do we realize that if we want to make deep and lasting change, it will only happen after a long time of careful, prayerful, intentional work that keeps *mission* as the number one objective?

Sometimes, to bring about change, you just need to start behaving differently, even before you know exactly what it is you are trying to become. You need to dare to *be* what you are *becoming*. In the book, *Good to Great*, the authors maintain that U.S. businesses that have really taken off have been radically single-minded, vision and purpose-driven, and guided by the right leadership in the right places. Here are some great questions to ask of your congregation's life and work:

- Does your budget reflect your priorities? At first glance, does it support mission or maintenance?
- Are you working from a model of scarcity or a model of abundance as you pursue your mission and ministry?
- Is there something that your congregation is not doing in ministry that you want to start doing?
- If you were to stop a particular task or ministry, would you miss it – which ones?
- What is central and what is peripheral to mission?
- Are you doing the same things over and over again but expecting different results?
- Are you willing to give up even treasured things in order that the church and God's mission can live?
- What would it look like if the pastor did not spend time putting out fires, but was engaged only in lighting fires?
- What is God dreaming for your mission and ministry?

PRAYER

O God, bring to our minds and hearts the conviction that our lives are not about ourselves, but about you and the Kingdom that you are drawing together. May we see beyond our own experience, and experience instead the saving work you are doing through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, among all the peoples of the earth. Amen

CONTEXT: WHO, THEN, IS OUR NEIGHBOR?

Within the congregation?

Within the community?

Within the wider church and world?

sent

CONVERSATION WITH COMMUNITY LEADERS

We live in the context of community. Before starting a plan for mission, a congregation should look at its context beyond the church doors. (Context is the area around the church where members live and work. Context is also global, especially if you are a companion congregation with a parish of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malawi or Sinodo Centro Campanha Sul, Brazil.)

One way to discover more about your neighborhood is to make contacts within the community. This may be done in a number of ways:

1. Individual contacts - take a community leader to lunch, or better yet, make an appointment to meet them in their place of work.
2. Group conversation - bring a number of community leaders together for conversation and a meal. (Some congregations have done a series of meals for a month with targeted community leaders and groups. They also invited spouses and provided childcare.)

Who are the leaders in your community? Here is a partial list of leaders who have valuable insights and information about the community. You will want to select a few of these leaders from your community. Working together with other congregations may provide opportunities for a greater number of conversations.

Chief of Police	Fire Chief	Mayor
Township Supervisor	Teachers	School board
City Council	Parent groups	Civic Groups
Chamber of Commerce	Bankers	School Officials
Congressional Representatives	Social Workers	Realtors
Boy/Girl Scouts	Business owners	County Health workers

Before making contacts in the community, decide whether it might be more helpful to join in these conversations with other Lutherans or your local ecumenical ministerium. **The goal is to gain a better understanding of community needs and opportunities.** You will also want to learn how the church is viewed by the community.

It will be helpful to prepare a list of questions before meeting with the community leaders. Always start off on a positive note. Be realistic about how much you can discuss in the time period agreed upon. Here are some questions to start you thinking:

1. What are the strengths of our community?
2. What are the population trends?
3. Do you see “fears” that people have?
4. What would you consider to be three major challenges in this community?
5. Where have you seen churches helpful in addressing community needs?
6. Where can the church help today?
7. Do you have an impression of our congregation?

Listen carefully and with an open mind. Ask questions to clarify. Take notes to refer to later. List things that you learned about your community that are important to ministry planning.

EVANGELISM

Going Back to the Future

Evangelism. What does this word bring to mind for us as Christians? No doubt, many of the images that come to mind are centered around the firebrand preachers we see on television or on street corners or in pulpits of US American churches that call themselves conservative evangelicals. But, is that what the scripture writers refer to when they speak of those who have good news to share?

Evangelists were people who brought the *good message* of Jesus Christ to a community in word and deed. Like Paul, evangelists shared the good message not only in spoken and written word, but also in their lives, how they lived. The *good message* was shared with gentleness and kindness. We, in mainline Protestantism, especially with the first-mentioned understanding of evangelism, have a tendency to distance ourselves from it. But, for us, especially when we call ourselves Evangelical Lutherans, evangelism is a core part of why we are here! Luther, in his explanation of the Second Petition of the Lord's Prayer in the *Large Catechism*, puts it this way:

"We pray here at the outset that all this may be realized in us, and that God's name may be praised through his holy Word, and our Christian lives. This we ask, both in order that we who have accepted it may remain faithful and grow daily in it and in order that it may gain recognition and followers among other people and advance with power throughout the world."

We should want the Lord's Kingdom to be realized now! In us! In our words and deeds! In other words, in the relationships we establish with others. Evangelism is the *good message* of Jesus Christ manifesting not just in our breath, but also in flesh and bone, in our very being! But what is to be manifested in us?

John gives us insight when he records Jesus' charge to his disciples as he prepares to leave them, *"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for others."* (John 13:35) Love of others is a key element for our identity as Christ's messengers. So Christian evangelism can be nothing other than relational, and within the scriptures relationships are to be lived out rightly or righteously. Righteousness means right relationships, and relationships must be lived out with others and right relationship must be lived out for others.

"Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness." (Philippians 2: 3-7)

So evangelism is not programmatic marketing techniques, but rather it is pragmatic interactions with others as Christ's loving relationship with his church is lived out in his sisters and brothers here on earth. How do we, the ecclesia, the church, live out this practical understanding of evangelism as an ongoing outgrowth of right relationships? It is then that we will truly be living the *good message*, evangelism.

MISSION PLANNING

Once we have grounded ourselves in prayer and Scripture, we can truly explore what it means to be the people of God in a particular location. Hearing from local community leaders adds insight into the specific needs and opportunities that are present in our context. Now it is time to ask ourselves what God is calling us to be about in this place, at this time.

We know that as Christians we are called to be disciples of Jesus Christ. Our primary mission is to make the love of God known to others in our world. So, we need to look at how we are sharing God's Word in our ministry. Does our worship provide an opportunity for people to return thanks to God and receive inspiration for Christian living? Do we provide opportunities for young and old alike to learn more about the Bible and grow in a faithful relationship with our Lord? Does our congregation build up the bond of unity through opportunities for support and fellowship?

We know that as disciples of Jesus Christ we are called to move out into the world. Through the years, Christians have discovered that interacting with people in need is one way to faithfully witness to the love of God. What have we learned about the needs of people in our community? Are there people with needs that are not being met by others? How can we show Christ's love through our presence here in this community?

We know that Jesus defined "neighbor" in a very broad way. How are we participating in service and witness to people who are not in our immediate neighborhood? How can our global outreach and accompaniment demonstrate to people of our local community that God's love is active today? How do our local and our global outreach efforts support one another?

By asking ourselves these questions, we can begin to formulate a specific plan for how this congregation will intentionally fulfill the mission of Christ. It isn't *our* mission, it is Christ's mission. We are the hands and feet of Christ at work in the world. What is the mission that can best serve and point to Christ in our context?



A GUIDE FOR DOING MISSION PLANNING

If your congregation already *has* an adopted mission plan or mission priorities, begin by reviewing those plans. Renew your commitment to your priorities or make necessary changes by asking:

- Do our priorities still make sense in light of what we've learned in our conversations with community leaders?
- Are our priorities in line with the call that we've heard through participating in prayer and Bible Study?

If your congregation does *not* have a plan for carrying out specific mission priorities, this is an opportunity to begin. As you develop your list of mission plans or priorities, keep in mind the three components introduced in the beginning of this booklet: Identity, Context, and Purpose. Mission planning happens when these components are considered in relationship to one another. Ask these questions:

- As we prayerfully consider God's call to us in Scripture, what is our primary purpose as God's people in this place?
- As we listen and discuss the strengths and needs in our community, where are the places (what are the issues) that create opportunities for us to witness to God's presence through service to others?
- What specific ministries and activities would strengthen and renew our congregation?
- What specific ministries and activities would allow us to reach out into the community more effectively to make Christ's presence known?

Answering the above questions will enable you to brainstorm many ministry possibilities. Trying to do them all will not be realistic, so depending on the size and energy level of your congregation, you will need to select a few specific ministries on which to focus for the next year. Be sure to agree upon who will be responsible for seeing that each priority gets put into action. Submitting the plan to council for approval and sharing widely in the congregation will build ownership and excitement among more people.



REPORT OF OUR CONGREGATIONAL MISSION PLANNING PROCESS

Congregation: _____

Location: _____

Person submitting the report: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

1. Prior to the request that we engage in *Beyond Our Doors: A Congregational Mission Planning Process*, we:
 - ___ were already carrying out the results of an intentional planning process
 - ___ have been engaged in mission planning in the past, but are not currently following those plans
 - ___ had never engaged in intentional mission planning
2. As part of this process, we engaged in the following:
 - ___ called our congregation to participate prayerfully
 - ___ completed the three Bible studies offered in the materials
 - ___ met with community leaders
 - ___ shared with other congregations in our conversations with community leaders
 - ___ designated specific mission goals
3. Who participated in your planning process? (select all that apply)
 - ___ congregation council
 - ___ pastor
 - ___ other rostered leader(s)
 - ___ one or more committees of the congregation
 - ___ a committee especially formed for this process
 - ___ interested members of the congregation
 - ___ other: _____
4. List the community leaders (and their positions) with whom you visited.

5. List things you learned about your community that are important for your ministry planning.

6. List the mission goals that your congregation will be working on in the next year.

7. List any long term mission goals that your congregation will be exploring further.

8. As you review your mission priorities, look at your congregational budget. Are those priorities allocated financial support?

9. Does your congregation teach members about proportionate giving as a grateful response to God's presence in their lives?

10. Do your members understand how the three expressions of this church — congregation, synod and the churchwide organization — work together to share God's boundless love with the world?

11. What portion of your members' weekly offerings will be shared with the synod and the churchwide organization for mission and ministry beyond your doors?

	2011 ACTUAL	2012 PROJECTED	% CHANGE
Weekly offerings pledged by members	\$ _____	\$ _____	_____ %
Mission support* budgeted for sharing with the synod and churchwide organization	\$ _____	\$ _____	_____ %
Percentage of mission support (mission support divided by weekly offerings)	_____ %	_____ %	_____ %

*Mission support is the portion of weekly offerings that your congregation shares with synodical and churchwide ministries for God's mission beyond the local congregation.



Our gift to the Synod Resource Center is in the amount of \$ _____

Thank you for sharing your experience with *Beyond Our Doors* with others in our synod. Please return responses to the synod office.



Northwest Synod of Wisconsin
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 God's work. Our hands.