

MISSION DISCOVERY ROUNDTABLE

Twenty six people attended the Mission Discovery Roundtable held at St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Clarksburg, WV on March 20, 2010. Of the 26 participants, fourteen were lay members of our congregations and 12 were rostered leaders. Bishop Ralph Dunkin, Pastor Marjorie Lauver, Pastor Linda Muhly, and Mrs. Helen Harms were leaders for the event. The agenda included devotions and Bible study led by Bishop Dunkin, two interactive exercises on God's mission and the purpose of our congregations, a demographic overview, a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis of our mission field-the West Virginia Western Maryland Synod, and Asset Mapping of our synod's resources. The results of the various activities are included below.

God's Mission Activity

In response to the bishop's Bible study, participants in small groups completed the sentence below in 8 words or less.

God's mission is . . .

To have everyone love him and each other
About drawing his people to new life
To reconcile creation to God's self
To bring all his creation back to him
Mercy to the lost, least and forgotten
His telos (end purpose) for the human

God's Purpose for My Congregation Activity

After the mission activity, participants completed the sentence below.

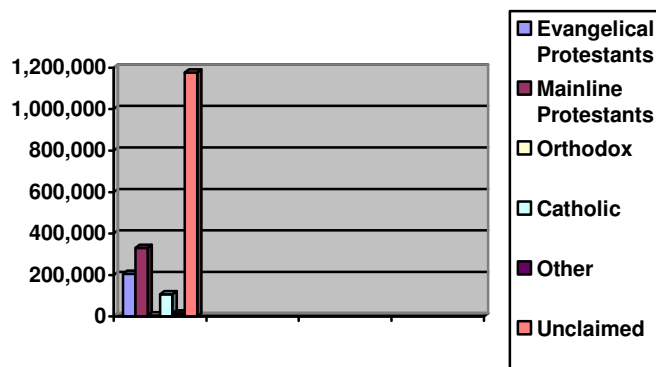
God's purpose for my congregation is . . .

To merge with another

Connect people with God and one another
 To be ministers of his reconciliation
 To get over itself
 To find how we are Christ in our community
 Participate in God's calling to show God's love
 To welcome, help and proclaim as God did
 To give God's mission a human face
 To mediate justifying grace and increase sanctification
 To equip the saints for the ministry of the gospel
 To teach and preach the good news
 To share the gospel and love the neighbor

Demographic Overview

The Research and Evaluation Unit-ELCA prepared a demographic profile of our synod. A packet of the information prepared can be obtained from Helen.harms@elca.org. In addition, information about our synod from the Association of Religious Data Archives was shared. Although the information from the census data was not surprising, it gave the participants an opportunity to talk about how this data relates to day to day ministry in congregations. The data regarding church membership in the West Virginia Western Maryland Synod (the state of West Virginia and Garrett County, MD) revealed a startling number of un-churched people.



Evangelical Protestants-205,371
 Mainline Protestants-330,660
 Orthodox-4,461
 Catholic-106,729
 Other-14,602
 Unclaimed-1,583,281

Exploring Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats for our Mission Context

After the demographic overview and discussion, participants participated in a SWOT analysis of our mission field (the state of West Virginia and Garrett County, MD). Using a SWOT analysis helps to focus on the context for mission before engaging in planning through Asset Mapping. The results are on page 4.

Asset Mapping

The next activity involved the participation in a planning process called Asset Mapping. The full results of the Asset Mapping are on page 5. Three areas of focus for our synod were identified in the Asset Mapping. Those areas are:

1. "Spreading the Gospel" through:
 - ❖ equipping the laity through lay education programs, revivals, and congregational retreats;
 - ❖ regional self studies.
2. Increasing the Lutheran presence in southern West Virginia.
3. Ministry to the Homeless
 - ❖ Supporting housing programs such as Habitat for Humanity
 - ❖ Providing homeless shelters in ELCA congregations.

What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges we observe in our mission field-the territory of the West Virginia Western Maryland Synod-ELCA?

Strengths "Thinking" church; families, Jesus; gospel; music liturgy; Bible Belt-Godly heritage; stable economy; communications systems-willingness to use electronic age; resourcefulness of individuals/willingness to share; small enough we care and know each other; faith-based community organizations; open, friendly culture; ELCA Social Statements; tenacity, faithfulness; wise elders; willingness to serve; environment; wide open mission field

Weaknesses Sparse population; biblical/doctrinal illiteracy; stubbornness; low income; age; extractive industry; few Lutherans, small congregations; attenders-not members; too many churches in Wheeling; many single parent homes; closing of coal mines/slow down of lumber industry; resistance to change, stagnation of educational system; weather; geography; insular systems; education approach; multiple generations of unchurched; relevancy; timid/afraid to risk

Opportunities Large number of unclaimed; increased spirituality; functionally unchurched; older population; church as a respected institution; other days are available for church beside Sunday; spiritual hunger, fraternal organizations for contacts; retirees; potential for new beginnings; Community Lutheran Partners; lower income population, older population, de-churched; all weaknesses and threats are opportunities; ministerial alliances

Threats Distrust of authority/institutions/strangers; apathy; the idea that we can save ourselves by our own works, prosperity gospel, not time (working 24/7), Gen X=not joiners; endowments, economic downturn in communities, outnumbered unchurched, relativism, ELCA social statements; lack of recognition of our sinfulness; fear mongering; fear of failure as a Christian; divorce; sports, congregational conflict; weather-snow (one county in synod had 260 inches of snow this past winter); outsiders unwelcome-Appalachian culture; don't need church to worship God; American civil religion, no sense of responsibility to go to church-Sunday temptations sports, leisure.

Asset Mapping Results

Action Items		
<p>"Spreading the Gospel" through:</p>	<p align="center">Increasing the Lutheran presence in southern West Virginia.</p>	<p>Ministry to the Homeless</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Supporting housing programs such as Habitat for Humanity ❖ Providing homeless shelters in ELCA congregations.
Strategies		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ equipping the laity through lay education programs, revivals, and congregational retreats; ❖ regional self studies. 	<p align="center">Through the work of Community Lutheran Partners</p>	<p align="center">By developing a template for congregations to follow, providing information through the Roadshow and connecting those who want to do something with those who are already engaged.</p>
	Assets Identified	
<p align="center"> Vacation Bible School Lay Leaders Hymnals Revivalists/evangelists Campus ministry Teachers Churches open to </p>	<p align="center"> Ecumenical partners Vacation Bible School State Council of Churches </p>	<p align="center"> Habitat for Humanity Colleges and Universities Family Resource Center Churches with money Active lay people </p>

<p>community organizations Catholic sponsored scriptural workshop Community Lutheran Partners Publishing institutions Congregational Committees for Evangelism and Social Ministry (Outreach) Accessible Bishop LARC Ecumenical Conference Pastors God's love Grace Gettysburg Seminary Helen Harms Sharing ideas and listening to other ideas Tour de Revs</p>	<p>ELCMA Bibles Thrivent Social networks on Internet Charleston ELCA congregations Virginia Synod-ELCA Bishop Dunkin Sherrie Schafer Schools Lutheran Youth Organization Hunger Agencies Qualified Clergy Lay Worship Leaders Sunday School ELCA St. Luke Bluefield congregation</p>	<p>WVU Campus Ministry Committed Church Members Camp Luther Andrea Dalton WV State Government Thrivent Community Lutheran Partners Federation of Appalachian Housing Enterprises (FAHE) Church buildings</p>
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Unassigned Assets

Maureen Corrigan, synod institutional assets, Thiel College, WELCA, Pastor Nielsen, Joint services between congregations, synod council, Physical assets in the synod, Lay professionals in various career categories, disaster fund, synod assemblies, Melissa Bannister, synod committees, seminarians, synod office, ripe population, Interstate system, the memory of George Weirick, diversity of education of population, conference monthly gathering of pastors, laughter, working as partners, Lutheran Disaster Response, endowments, Lutheran Social Ministry, Chaplain Reigel, David Westphal-spiritual director,

EVALUATION RESULTS



Mission Discovery Roundtable Event Evaluation

Circle your responses below with 1 meaning "totally disagree", 2 meaning "agree" and 3 meaning "wholeheartedly agree".

1. This event was helpful in understanding the challenges and opportunities for mission in our synod.
1-1 2-14 3-7 No Answer-1
2. This event will be helpful to our synod in assisting congregations as they reach out with the gospel.
1-1 2-15 3-6 No Answer-1
3. The Bishop's Devotions and Bible Study helped me to understand the biblical foundations for mission.
1-0 2-8 3-15
4. I was able to understand the demographic information presented.
1-0 2-8 3-15
5. The event was designed so that I was able to participate and have my ideas and opinions heard.
1-0 2-10 3-13
6. I will be able to use what I learned in my congregation.
1-1 2-13 3-8 No answer-1

7. The Asset Mapping planning process is something I could use in my own congregation.
1-3 2-10 3-9 NA-1 If it becomes needed.
8. I hope we can have other events like this in the synod.
1-0 2-11 3-11 NA-1
9. I would be interested in being involved in the implementation of the ideas that came out of this event.
1-6 2-10 3-3 NA-1 But perhaps another time.

Please add any additional comments you feel would be helpful to the organizers of this event:

- ⇒ Good event. Could we train leaders in each conference to go into congregations and do workshops like this?
- ⇒ Thank you.
- ⇒ I want help locally-but agree it would be helpful for the synod to be a source of info for how to serve needs. Find out what congregations are doing that are working. No one needs to reinvent wheels. I misunderstood the purpose of the workshop, thought it was to help congregation, not the synod. Another need congregations' have-transportation to drs appt. food, etc-how to organize this in a community.
- ⇒ Roundtable discussion ought to be around round tables. Unfortunately, I have heard this again and again-only as the laity of the church begin to gain a vision for outreach do things move forward in the church.
- ⇒ A mid-morning stand up and stretch break-5 min.; put directions in the Road Show Registration Sheet to the church.
- ⇒ Garrett County wasn't in the notebooks of county stats.
- ⇒ Need to get more specific as far as how the Lutheran church can relate to un-churched people. How specifically do we do that?