

# Southwestern Texas Synod, ELCA

## 2018 Strategic Plan

**Purpose Statement:** *God's grace **transforms** and **connects** us to learn, to love, to lead!*

Trusting that God's grace will **transform** individuals, ministries, systems, and institutions, and that God calls us to more deeply **connect** ministries throughout the synod, we intend to learn together, loving each other, and be strong and faithful leaders in the joint mission of Jesus Christ in the Southwestern Texas Synod. To do so, we will focus on these areas of emphasis in the strategic plan:

### Pastoral Care of Leaders

- To Learn Accompany leaders in developing and executing a plan for growing in their faith and leadership.
- To Love Promote healthy self-care, because healthy leaders grow healthy ministries.
- To Lead Create a culture of leaders who identify and equip other leaders.

### Congregational Vitality and Sustainability

- To Learn Support congregations as they teach the faith, deepen discipleship, create diverse leadership, and work for a sustainable future.
- To Love Facilitate congregational processes to determine strengths and weaknesses and help them question and clarify their purpose and values.
- To Lead Serve as a catalyst to help congregations hold significant conversations to determine their future.

### Justice and Peace

- To Learn Train people to listen, speak, and act on issues of injustice.
- To Love Encourage concrete acts of service and advocacy to reduce human need and suffering.
- To Lead Confess and confront our blind spots and sinfulness around race, gender, age, sexuality, culture, and ethnicity.

### Engagement with Neighbors

- To Learn Motivate both urban and rural congregations to move beyond their comfort zones to build relationships within the neighborhood.
- To Love Following the commandment of Jesus to love our neighbor, we collaborate to identify the marginalized in our midst and take action.
- To Lead Facilitate opportunities to work together to meet the needs of and with the neighborhood.

Pastoral Care for Leaders					
		Celebrate	Adjust	Add	Delete
<b>To Learn</b>	<b>Accompany leaders in developing and executing a plan for growing in their faith and leadership.</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. New behaviors of Dwelling in the Word, sharing God stories, action/reflection learning throughout the synod.</li> <li>2. First Call Theological Education has been transformed into First Call Accompaniment.</li> <li>3. Healthy Congregations training is ongoing.</li> <li>4. The Candidacy process is more integrated with the missional objectives of the synod.</li> <li>5. Transitional ministry training.</li> <li>6. LEAD Toolboxes &amp; other leadership resources.</li> <li>7. Missional River (teaches adaptive leadership).</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use the Rostered Minister Annual Report (RMAR) as a way to indicate commitment to deepening discipleship and growing missional leadership.</li> <li>2. Emphasis on continual learning through cohorts and learning loops.</li> <li>3. Provide sequential offering of Healthy Congregations in the same geographical vicinity.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use Tiemann Endowment Fund for Leadership Development to fund people/projects.</li> <li>2. Identify primary missional and adaptive competencies necessary for church leaders. Support coaching and learning cohorts that increase these competencies.</li> <li>3. Ask on RMAR: What is getting in the way of your growth in faith and leadership? What are some concrete ways the synod can best accompany you in the coming year? Then, develop strategies based on results.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Parish Ministry Training Program in its current form; combine face-to-face with a technological training venue.</li> </ol>
<b>To Love</b>	<b>Promote healthy self-care, because healthy leaders enhance lives.</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue to promote Portico Health Assessment.</li> <li>2. Continue asking on RMAR, "What are you doing for your own wellness? Where are you focusing?"</li> <li>3. Continue Rostered Minister cohorts.</li> <li>4. Continue to promote Mutual Ministry Committees.</li> <li>5. Continue to promote use of Fitbits throughout synod.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reimagine conferences as communities of care and learning that claim a common mission field.</li> <li>2. Do seasons of focus on different aspects of wellness during Bishop's Office visits to deaneries.</li> <li>3. Advertise Employee Assistance Program through Portico Benefit Services and the difference it makes in people's lives.</li> <li>4. Use remaining Wellness Award Funds strategically to maximize benefits.</li> <li>5. Promote sabbaticals, Sabbath, time off, boundaries for Rostered and Lay Leaders.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Share resources for spiritual direction in each conference with the assistance of the deans or other persons.</li> <li>2. Develop a system that leverages gifts of chaplains and support them in their unique ministries.</li> <li>3. Develop a network of care for children, youth, and family leaders in congregations.</li> <li>4. Encourage respectful and just employee practices in congregations.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Children, Youth, and Family Coordinator as primarily emotional support for youth leaders; transition to Faith Formation Coordinator.</li> </ol>
<b>To Lead</b>	<b>Create a culture of leaders who are identifying and equipping other leaders.</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Youth workers are encouraged and supported through synod's Children, Youth, and Family Coordinator and activities.</li> <li>2. Focused Transitional Ministry cohorts that multiply.</li> <li>3. Lay preaching and visitation modules.</li> <li>4. Trained coaches for "Congregations Cooperating for Mission."</li> <li>5. Campus and Outdoor Ministry efforts to raise up leaders.</li> <li>6. 2018 Synod Assembly education and offering focuses on Fund for Leaders.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Intensify identification of seminary candidates in all venues.</li> <li>2. Promote proven leadership development programs for young people. (Disciple Project, Camp Hope, Cross Trails' LYLE program, Young Adults in Global Mission, etc.).</li> <li>3. Encourage development of Latino lay leaders using networks in Region 4 and using the Academia Ecuemica de Liderazgo.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Find bright spots - share stories.</li> <li>2. Ask on the RMAR, "Who are you identifying and equipping for lay and rostered leadership? How are you doing it?"</li> </ol>	

## Congregational Vitality & Sustainability

		Celebrate	Adjust	Add	Delete
<b>To Learn</b>	<b>Support congregations as they teach the faith, deepen discipleship, create diverse leadership, and work for a sustainable future.</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Dwelling in the Word &amp; sharing God Stories as synodical spiritual practices.</li> <li>2. Introduced spiritual practices into the Call Process.</li> <li>3. "Missional River" as a process to transform evangelism.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Actively recruit and encourage more diverse leadership within synod, conference, and congregational leadership.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Expand role of the Children, Youth, and Family Coordinator to be Faith Formation Coordinator: explore ways to leverage excellent resources across congregations/synod; deepen partnership with LEAD, Vibrant Faith, FaithInk, ELCA faith practices, Cross Trails Ministry, Youth Ministry Network, Campus Ministry, etc.</li> <li>2. Encourage congregations toward generosity through facilitating generosity projects.</li> <li>3. More engagement via social media for discipleship.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Children, Youth, and Family Coordinator as primarily emotional support for youth leaders; transition to Faith Formation Coordinator.</li> </ol>
<b>To Love</b>	<b>Facilitate congregational processes to determine their strengths and weaknesses and help them question and clarify their purpose and values.</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Encourage Vitality and Sustainability surveys.</li> <li>2. Partner with LEAD (Living everyday as disciples) and others to offer multi-congregational processes such as Tune-In, Annual Roadmap, etc.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Offer "Congregations Cooperating in Mission" events in more conferences.</li> <li>2. Measure vitality across the years, especially using questions around "the other" in order to see how we are growing in our capacity to love.</li> <li>3. Partner with LEAD to offer "Wake Up and Dig Down" processes to congregations.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Move from "lag to lead" metrics, e.g. measure things that congregations can both influence and celebrate. The difference between the two is that a leading indicator can influence change, while a lagging indicator can only record what has happened.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Drop the focus on numbers as often as possible and refocus on where God is leading us.</li> </ol>
<b>To Lead</b>	<b>Serve as a catalyst to help congregations hold significant conversations to determine their future.</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Events like Small Congregation Exploration, Congregations Cooperating for Mission.</li> <li>2. Use the results of the Vitality and Sustainability Assessments to have significant conversations about their future.</li> <li>3. Video on "Closing and Leaving a Legacy."</li> <li>4. Multiple consultations between the Office of the Bishop with congregations and their leaders.</li> <li>5. Development of the Part-time Ministry Guidelines.</li> <li>6. Working on ecumenical cooperative opportunities.</li> <li>7. Using transition and call processes to promote vitality and encourage sustainability.</li> <li>8. Video on "Congregations Cooperating for Mission."</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Promote cooperative ministry and collaborative opportunities through rostered minister deaneries and conferences.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Videos that call congregations to significant conversations around vitality &amp; sustainability.</li> <li>2. Digital networks of resources.</li> <li>3. Actively engage entire synod in looking for places where new faith communities can be planted.</li> </ol>	

**Justice and Peace**

<b>Justice and Peace</b>					
		<b>Celebrate</b>	<b>Adjust</b>	<b>Add</b>	<b>Delete</b>
<b>To Learn</b>	<b>Train people to listen, speak, and act on issues of injustice.</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue our work in the Lutheran Legislative Event, ELCA's AMMPARO program, WELCA's "Today's Dream: Tomorrow's Reality" program, the synod's PEACE task force (Partnership for <u>E</u>quity, <u>A</u>wareness, <u>C</u>ommitment, and <u>E</u>ducation).</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Synod office offers radical support when leaders encounter tough issues.</li> <li>2. Promote ELCA social statements (perhaps synod-wide emphasis/study of particular statements).</li> <li>3. Encourage response to the social statement draft for "Women and Justice: One in Christ."</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Create and share a collection of personal testimonies of our blind spots and how we unknowingly participate in marginalizing women, LGBTQ persons, immigrants, etc.</li> <li>2. Partner with LEAD (Living everyday as disciples) and others for equipping congregations to adopt structures that facilitate sharing power.</li> <li>3. Add seat(s) on Synod Council for persons of color and primary language other than English.</li> <li>3. Persons of color, immigrants, LGBTQ, etc. to be guest speakers/workshop leaders at Synod Assembly to talk about discrimination from their perspective.</li> <li>4. Actively seek out more diversity, especially age, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity on ministry teams and staff.</li> <li>5. Encourage exploration of systemic and structural injustice in Texas.</li> </ol>	
<b>To Love</b>	<b>Encourage concrete acts of service and advocacy to reduce human need and suffering.</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue to promote and share stories of "God's Work. Our Hands."</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. More reporting (Facebook, eNews) to highlight serving opportunities and to encourage congregational networking with other congregations, agencies, institutions.</li> <li>2. Celebrate congregations that serve and sell Fair Trade coffee and products.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Model advocacy and lift up people in the synod, especially lay people, who are already invested in this work.</li> <li>2. Partner with agencies and institutions that promote anti-racism and multi-cultural understanding and encourage congregations and leaders to use their resources.</li> </ol>	
<b>To Lead</b>	<b>Confess and confront our blind spots and sinfulness around race, gender, age, sexuality, culture and ethnicity.</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue work in Synod Council to confront racism and encourage each council member to do the same in their areas of influence.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Deepen relationship with our Companion Synod, the Lutheran Church in Costa Rica (ILCO), so as to be able to receive their gifts of justice ministry.</li> <li>2. Broaden conversations with African-American judicatories and encourage conversations among local ELCA and African-American congregations.</li> <li>3. Take steps to know and honor the popular piety of the Latino culture.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Encourage Reconciling in Christ efforts within the synod to promote dialogue and understanding around gender issues.</li> <li>2. Provide liturgical materials annually for prayer services and other ritual acts of confronting racism.</li> <li>3. Offer readings and artistic resources that encourage racial and ethnic understanding.</li> <li>4. Make alliances with Lutheran Seminary Program of the Southwest, Mexican American Catholic College, WELCA and ELCA anti-racism resources, Reconciling Works, and others to increase our capacity to engage with others around race, gender, age, sexuality, culture, and ethnicity.</li> </ol>	

Engagement with Neighbors					
		Celebrate	Adjust	Add	Delete
<b>To Learn</b>	<b>Motivate both urban and rural congregations to move beyond their comfort zones to build relationships within the neighborhood.</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Offer maps, demographics, trend reports, and other statistics as ways of making people aware about their community. Good experiences with the Neighborhood exercise.</li> <li>2. Missional River.</li> <li>3. Congregations Cooperating for Mission.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use Bishop's Convo and other avenues for cross-cultural immersion of our leaders.</li> <li>3. Offer introductory experiences to build trust with one another and to give courage to try new efforts in their communities.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Encourage ecumenical worship/prayer services.</li> <li>2. Share news and video stories of congregations who are doing this work.</li> <li>3. Step up/into technology and social media to meet the "online" culture/neighborhood.</li> <li>4. Make the practice of one-on-one conversations a hallmark of the synod.</li> </ol>	
<b>To Love</b>	<b>Following the commandment of Jesus to love our neighbor, we collaborate to identify the marginalized in our midst and take action.</b>	Continue to partner and lift up work of the ELCA's AMMPARO program, the Interfaith Welcome Coalition, Upbring (Lutheran Social Services), and Texas Impact.		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Make workshops and conversation forums available at synod gatherings to continue to focus on the neighbor.</li> </ol>	
<b>To Lead</b>	<b>Facilitate opportunities to work together to meet the needs of and with the neighborhood.</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. "God's Work. Our Hands" Sunday. Lift up ideas and examples of neighborhood.</li> <li>2. 500th Anniversary of the Reformation ecumenical events.</li> <li>3. Local strategic planning among Lutheran churches to maximize resources.</li> <li>4. Starting new ministries.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Connect organizations doing justice/peace work with interested congregations.</li> <li>2. Promote "Missional River" and make it available in diverse local cohorts.</li> <li>3. Provide workshops at synod assembly and conference meetings to familiarize congregations with simple listening practices and other tools for neighborly engagement.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish a yearly award for congregations engaged in loving their neighbor or collaborating with them.</li> <li>2. Video interviews with congregations telling stories of neighborly engagement and use social media platforms to celebrate.</li> </ol>	