

Southwestern Texas Synod Vision

Data as of May 16, 2017. Percentages are based on 312 responses, unless noted.

1. What is your congregation celebrating right now? Attached

2. With what is your congregation struggling? Attached

3. For what is your congregation hoping? Attached

4. The synod's governing documents (S6.03.01 to S6.03.04) assign a variety of responsibilities to the synod in carrying out the work of the church within our geographic area. How would you rank the importance of the following to the life and ministry of the synod? (sorted by "highly important")

	<i>Not Very Important</i>	<i>Somewhat Important</i>	<i>Important</i>	<i>Highly Important</i>
Providing for pastoral care of congregations, ministers of Word and Sacrament, and ministers of Word and Service. (N=304)	1.3%	5.0	24.0	69.7
Encouraging congregations to respond to human need, work for justice and peace, care for the sick and the suffering, and participate responsibly in society. (N=302)	2.0%	16.9	37.4	43.7
Developing of new ministries, redevelopment of existing ministries, and support and assistance in the conclusion, if necessary, of a particular ministry. (N=297)	2.0%	15.8	41.1	41.1
Leading and encouraging of congregations in their evangelism efforts. (N=301)	3.0%	12.3	49.5	35.2
Assisting members of its congregations in carrying out their ministries in the world. (N=295)	4.7%	22.4	45.8	27.1
Encouraging financial support for the work of this church by individuals and congregations. (N=294)	3.1%	19.7	50.3	26.9
Providing resources for congregational life. (N=299)	4.4%	20.4	50.5	24.7
Providing ecumenical guidance and encouragement. (N=260)	4.2%	25.4	46.9	23.5
Maintaining relationships with and providing partnership funding on behalf of seminaries and continuing education centers. (N=295)	5.8%	22.7	48.4	23.1
Fostering supporting relationships with camps and other outdoor ministries. (N=295)	3.7%	22.4	52.2	21.7
Providing for leadership recruitment, preparation, and support. (N=301)	4.5%	35.1	38.8	21.6
Providing for discipline of congregations, ministers of Word and Sacrament, and ministers of Word and Service. (N=291)	4.5%	35.1	38.8	21.6
Fostering organizations for youth, women, and men, and organizations for language or ethnic communities. (N=299)	8.4%	29.8	40.4	21.4
Participating in churchwide programs. (N=292)	3.8%	22.9	53.4	19.9
Developing relationships with social ministry organizations and ministries, participating in their mission planning, and providing partnership funding. (N=294)	5.8%	33.7	41.5	19.0
Fostering relationships with ecumenical and global partners. (N=292)	6.2%	31.5	44.5	17.8
Promoting interdependent relationships among congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization, and entering into partnership with other synods in the region. (N=299)	9.0%	31.1	42.5	17.4
Supporting relationships with and providing partnership funding on behalf of colleges, universities, and campus ministries. (N=294)	9.2%	31.0	42.8	17.0

	Not Very Important	Somewhat Important	Important	Highly Important
Interpreting social statements in a manner consistent with the interpretation given by the churchwide unit or office which assisted in the development of the statement, and suggestion of social study issues. (N=264)	16.7%	29.2	37.1	17.0
Grouping congregations in conferences, clusters, coalitions, or other area subdivisions for mission purposes. (N=301)	11.7%	34.9	39.2	14.3
Fostering supporting relationships with preschools, elementary schools, and secondary schools operated by congregations of the synod. (N=293)	14.4%	31.4	39.9	14.3
Cooperating with other synods and the churchwide organization in creating, using, and supporting regions to carry out those functions of the synod which can best be done cooperatively with other synods and the churchwide organization. (N=288)	10.1%	30.9%	46.8	12.2
Providing for archives in conjunction with other synods. (N=294)	21.1%	48.6	26.5	3.8

5. Did you know the synod was responsible for and engaged in these ministries? (N=306)

46.7%	Yes, I knew about most or all of them
44.8	Yes, I knew about some of them
8.5	No

6. Does the synod have a strong sense of mission? (N=303)

50.5%	Yes
10.6	No
38.9	Not Sure

7. The Synod should focus on supporting congregations and leaders in the following three ways (N=312):

%	
60.3	Help congregations increase vitality and sustainability
37.2	Help congregations connect with their communities
32.7	Encourage identification and development of leaders
29.2	Identify ways congregations can collaborate
26.9	Promote spiritual behaviors and discipleship
20.8	Provide training for elected congregational leaders
17.3	Support social justice efforts
13.5	Coordinate youth and family ministries and events
13.5	Promote Youth and Family Ministry
10.6	Promote outdoor and campus ministries
9.0	Support and equip congregations in communication technologies
8.3	Deepen financial generosity
5.4	Promote Young Adult Ministry
5.4	Other
4.5	Deepen connections with global partners
2.6	Promote Men's Ministry
1.3	Promote Women's Ministry

8. Please rate your outlook on the future of the following (using the scale provided):

	Pessimistic	Neutral	Optimistic	Very Optimistic
a. My Congregation (N=304)	12.8%	16.1	43.1	28.0
b. The SWT Synod (N=301)	4.7%	30.9	48.1	16.3
c. The ELCA (N=301)	5.3%	23.3	46.8	24.6

8d. Please explain your responses. Attached**9. How do these phrases describe your congregation? (sorted on average, descending order)**

	Hardly at all	Some-what	Very Well	Average		
Worship nurtures peoples' faith. (N=305)	1.6%	1.1	9.8	40.0	47.5	4.31
This congregation helps people deepen their relationship with God. (N=304)	2.0%	5.6	19.1	45.0	28.3	3.92
This congregation is a positive force in the community. (N=303)	2.6%	8.3	25.7	32.7	30.1	3.81
This congregation is great at helping members live out their faith in their daily lives. (N=299)	2.3%	7.4	28.8	41.4	20.1	3.70
There is a clear sense of mission here. (N=305)	5.9%	8.9	29.2	31.4	24.6	3.60
There is excitement about the future here. (N=304)	6.6%	12.5	26.6	31.9	22.4	3.51
We do an excellent job of managing disagreements in a healthy, respectful manner. (N=303)	9.2%	16.2	26.1	31.7	16.8	3.31
This congregation is always ready to try something new. (N=304)	9.0%	16.4	29.6	28.6	16.4	3.27
This congregation works for social justice/advocacy. (N=300)	11.4%	19.3	26.3	26.0	17.0	3.18
We are great at equipping members to share their faith with others. (N=304)	12.8%	19.4	36.8	21.7	9.3	2.95

10. In what ways has your congregation interacted with the SWT Synod in the last two years? (choose all that apply) (N=312)

%	
88.5	Sent participants to a synod assembly
54.2	Visited by Synod Staff
50.0	Sent participants to a youth event
46.8	Visited by the Bishop
41.3	Call Process/Transition/Mobility
23.1	Visited by other synodical representative
20.5	Hosted a synod event
14.1	Someone from the Synod Office visited to celebrate an anniversary
11.2	Another way
1.9	Not at all
1.0	Disciplinary Visit

11. What is one thing you think the synod does really well and should continue? Attached

12. What is one thing the synod does not do well and should stop? Attached

13. What is one thing the synod does not presently offer you think it should start? Attached

14. Does your congregation partner with the following? (choose all that apply) (N=312)

%

49.4	A faith-based non-profit
44.2	A church from another denomination
39.7	Another ELCA congregation
34.0	A non-church organization
10.9	We don't partner with any other groups
9.9	A congregation or church located another nation
9.0	Other:
7.1	A group or worshipping community of a faith other than Christianity

How are you partnering with the above organization(s)? Attached

15. If you were to set one goal for the synod for the immediate future, what would it be? Attached

16. Finish this sentence: I hope that five years from now the Southwestern Texas Synod is... Attached

17. Which of the following best describes you? (choose all that apply) (N=312)

%

76.9	Member of an ELCA congregation
59.6	Hold or have held a leadership role in an ELCA congregation
25.6	Served on a synod committee, team, task force or council
23.4	Rostered Minister in the ELCA
9.6	Staff member of an ELCA congregation
8.0	Other

Please complete the following table.

18. What is your name?

19a. What is the name of your congregation? A list of participating congregations is available here.

19b. In what city is your congregation located?

20. How old are you? (N=295)

%	
0.7	20 or younger
2.7	21-30
5.4	31-40
10.5	41-50
18.0	51-60
38.0	61-70
24.7	older than 70

22. How many years have you worshiped at a congregation which is part of the SWT Synod? (N=298)

%	
2.4	less than 1 year
13.1	1 to 5 years
9.1	6 to 10 years
10.7	11 to 15 years
6.0	16 to 20 years
9.7	21 to 25 years
49.0	more than 25 years

21. What is your ethnicity? (choose all that apply) (N=312)

%	
86.9	White
3.8	Latino/Hispanic
1.0	American Indian/Alaska Native
0.3	African-National/African-Caribbean
0.0	African-American/Black
0.0	Arab/Middle Eastern
0.0	Asian/Pacific Islander

23. Which of the following best describes the context of your congregation? (N=292)

%	
28.8	Large City (>250,000 people)
18.8	Small Town (<10,000 people)
17.1	Rural
16.4	Small City (10,000-50,000 people)
14.7	Medium City (50,001-250,000 people)
2.7	Other
1.5	serve in a specialized ministry

Is there anything else you'd like to share? (attached)

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey. Your feedback is very important to us and greatly appreciated.

Return completed survey to

Research and Evaluation
ELCA
8765 W Higgins Rd
Chicago, IL 60631

10 or more responses

- St Andrew Lutheran Church - Canyon Lake
- St Peter Lutheran Church - Goliad
- Good Shepherd Lutheran Church - San Antonio
- Peace Lutheran Church - New Braunfels

5 to 9 responses

- Galilean Lutheran Church - Corpus Christi
- Holy Cross Lutheran Church - Austin
- Grace Lutheran Church - Bandera
- St Mark Lutheran Church - Cuero
- MacArthur Park Lutheran Church - San Antonio
- Emanuels Lutheran Church - Seguin
- Living Word Lutheran Church - Buda
- Christ The King Lutheran Church - Universal City
- Christ Of Elm Creek Lutheran Church - Seguin
- Our Savior Lutheran Church - McAllen
- St Paul Lutheran Church - Karnes City
- Grace Lutheran Church - Lockhart
- St Peter Lutheran Church - Marble Falls
- Amazing Grace Lutheran Church - San Antonio
- Lord Of Life Lutheran Church - Austin
- Love Of Christ Lutheran Church – Weslaco

2 to 4 responses

- Good Shepherd Lutheran Church - Bastrop
- Immanuel Lutheran Church - Pflugerville
- Faith Lutheran Church - Taft
- First English Lutheran Church - Austin
- Gethsemane Lutheran Church - Austin
- House Of Prayer Lutheran Church - San Antonio
- Faith Lutheran Church - Austin
- St John Lutheran Church - Austin
- St Peter Lutheran Church - Elgin
- St James Lutheran Church - Ganado
- St John Lutheran Church - Robstown
- Lord of Life Lutheran Church - San Antonio
- Grace Lutheran Church - Round Rock
- Spirit in the Hills Lutheran Mission - Spicewood
- Spirit Of Joy Lutheran Church - Seguin
- Prefer not to respond
- Grace Lutheran Church - Harlingen
- Palm Valley Lutheran Church - Round Rock
- Christ Lutheran Church - Fredericksburg
- St Peter Lutheran Church - Doss
- First Lutheran Church - Edinburg
- Zion Lutheran Church Of Helotes - San Antonio

- St Paul Lutheran Church - Nordheim
- Grace Lutheran Church - San Antonio
- St Johns Evangelical Lutheran Church - San Antonio
- Faith Lutheran Church - Beeville
- St Mark Lutheran Church - Adkins
- People Of Hope – Victoria

One Response

- Messiah Lutheran Church - Austin
- Prince Of Peace Lutheran Church - Austin
- St Mark Lutheran Church - Corpus Christi
- Bethlehem Lutheran Church - Elgin
- Good Shepherd Lutheran Church - Kenedy
- Bethel Lutheran Church - Lyford
- St Luke Lutheran Church - Goliad
- Trinity Lutheran Church - Victoria
- Shepherd Of The Hills Lutheran Church - Austin
- Triumphant Love Lutheran Church - Austin
- Abiding Presence Lutheran Church - San Antonio
- Zion Lutheran Church - Cuero
- Ascension Lutheran Church - Austin
- Salem Lutheran Church - Austin
- Good Shepherd Lutheran Church - Elsa
- Bethany Lutheran Church - Fredericksburg
- Zion Lutheran Church - Fredericksburg
- Christ Lutheran Church - Georgetown
- First Lutheran Church - Gonzales
- St James Lutheran Church - Harper
- Peace Lutheran Church - Austin
- St John Lutheran Church - Cuero
- St John Lutheran Church - Marion
- St Paul Lutheran Church - Mason
- Bethlehem Lutheran Church - Hondo
- Gethsemane Lutheran Church - San Antonio
- Shepherd King Lutheran Church - San Antonio
- First Lutheran Church - San Marcos
- Grace Lutheran Church - Sinton
- St Johns Lutheran Church - Stockdale
- St John Lutheran Church - Westhoff
- Peace Lutheran Church - Woodsboro
- Abiding Love Lutheran Church - Austin
- Triumphant Lutheran Church - Garden Ridge
- Trinity Lutheran Church - Luling
- Grace Lutheran Chapel - Giddings
- Holy Cross Lutheran Church - Rockport

Southwestern Texas Synod Vision Survey Comment Summary

Research and Evaluation

Office of the Presiding Bishop

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America May 2017

Introduction

Between March 1 and May 15, 2017, the Southwestern Texas Synod conducted a survey of its members and rostered people, asking them to share what their congregations are celebrating currently, with what they are struggling as well as ways respondents feel the synod should support congregations and leaders. Additionally, the questionnaire asked how well phrases describe respondents' congregations and how congregations interacted with the synod office in the past two years.

The survey was available in English and Spanish, both in paper and on line. Respondents were invited to participate via an email invitation and the surveys were available on the synod's website. In total, 312 responses were collected and analyzed. A summary of the questionnaire is available elsewhere, what follows is a summary of the open-ended questions. Responses were read and coded into broad topical categories.

Congregations

Respondents were asked to share what their congregation was celebrating:

- 26 percent of respondents indicated their congregation was celebrating Lent or Easter;
- 19 percent indicated new things in the congregation such as members, pastors, or buildings; and
- 16 percent said their involvement in the community.

When asked with what their congregation was struggling, the common responses were:

- 39 percent indicated declining membership or low attendance;
- 18 percent said a lack of money or financial resources; and
- 14 percent shared their congregation lacked an identity, relevance or purpose / vision.

Respondents were asked also about what they were hoping for their congregation. Again, various responses were received, however the most common were:

- 30 percent indicated growing or increased membership;
- 13 percent wanted to improve their outreach; and
- 12 percent hoped for a good pastoral fit.

Synod

The questionnaire asked respondents several open-ended questions about the synod:

- What is one thing you think the synod does really well and should continue?
- What is one thing the synod does not do well and should stop?
- What is one thing the synod does not presently offer you think it should start?
- If you were to set one goal for the synod for the immediate future, what would it be?
- Finish this sentence: I hope that five years from now the Southwestern Texas Synod is...

About a quarter of comments indicated respondent felt the synod engaged or communicated well with them, 19 percent of comments suggested respondents were unsure of what the synod was doing well, and 11 percent thought gatherings like the synod assembly and youth events were done really well.

Regarding what the synod should stop doing, more than half indicated they weren't sure, nothing or did not know what the synod should stop doing, 11 percent of comments were around how communication could be improved, and 8 percent suggested the synod favors some when it comes to applying rules or placements of rostered leaders.

Regarding what the synod is not currently doing, but should consider, 30 percent of coded comments indicated respondents were not sure, nothing or did not know. About 19 percent of comments suggested the synod should support members and pastors, while 15 percent of the comments wanted more training of leaders, council members and lay leaders.

Southwestern Texas Synod should, in the immediate future according to comments, develop partnerships between congregations, members and leaders (18%), focus on mission (17%) and teach evangelism / tell people about Jesus (11%).

In five years, respondents hope the synod is vibrant / thriving / growing (39%), more diverse (14%) and/or stronger or more relevant (13%).

Lastly, respondents were asked to share anything else, about the synod, congregation or themselves:

- Twenty eight percent of the comments suggested the synod is doing well and respondents are thankful for the synod;
- 26 percent of the comments were critical about some issue;
- 23 percent of comments were positive, typically about something good the synod has done.

Comments were edited for clarity and spelling.

1. What is your congregation celebrating right now?

- Youth leadership, music
- Young Pastor Meaningful, vibrant Worship Great Lay Leadership
- Worship
- Will be celebrating new members with service & luncheon
- we paid off our loan. We are debt free.
- We just had our commitment Sunday and raised much over half of our budget for the year and more than in recent years. We are continuing in our growth and ministry with our transitional pastor. growing our skills and talents to continue to be church. We have a contract and are waiting to get on with rite up and running again
- We just celebrated our 50th year. Right now, we are celebrating Lent.
- We have opened The Karnes County Music Academy with 24 students and 3 teachers. Karnes County Texas had no one who was giving piano/organ/voice/guitar/woodwind lessons. We determined this as a need and as a possible outreach ministry. We opened the academy after months of planning on March 15th and have 24 students and 4 instructors on board. The congregation has found new energy and are enthusiastic about this development as is the community.
- We have nice facilities and are making them available to the community. There is a lot of usage.
- We have completed the process to become a Reconciled in Christ congregation. We will have a barbecue and craft fair in conjunction with our neighborhood, an excellent outreach. Our pastor has begun a dialog with a local Muslim group and a cordial atmosphere exists for joint projects to benefit both groups.
- We have been through a significant building and renovation project that had major problems. The congregation has handled it very well and is excited about the future once these tools for ministry are in place.
- We have been looking at the 500 Reformation events and celebrating our history. We recently had one of the book sales sponsored by Augsburg, we are looking at a celebration here in The Valley with other Lutherans, Pastor used the Small Catechism as the basis for our Lenten mid-week services.
- We celebrated our 50th Anniversary in October 2016. We are celebrating a year of Luther and the Reformation.
- We celebrate the fact that we are an open, welcoming, and diverse church. We celebrate the fact that we are growing despite our urban location which means that most members commute 10 - 25 miles to attend services.
- We celebrate continuing new membership. We also celebrate our monthly outings to have lunch together along with great fellowship.
- We aren't celebrating an awful lot right now. I would say we are expectantly waiting for a new pastor to be hired. In the meantime, we are visioning and dreaming for the future.
- We are trying hard to develop face to face relationships in our surrounding community, a community made up of people living in poverty and a very ethnically diverse community. Having a weekly Food Pantry which welcomes people living in poverty to our facilities is a beginning

that needs to be strengthened with socially-driven services to community youth and families as well.

- we are still rejoicing the Risen Christ. We have a new secretary
- We are paying off a large loan that funded improvements to the church and parsonage. In just a few months, we raised \$20,000 toward that. We have a growing number of youth involved in the congregation.
- We are observing Lent with Lenten, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday services in preparation for Easter. Our Easter service is touching and meaningful every year.
- We are learning about being stoned, and celebrating the confirmation and all the kids who went through it.
- We are into the Lenten Season, having Wednesday night suppers with Table Talk after. It is just great. We have talked about importance of everyone having a voice at the table. Every voice is important and important that they be heard.
- We are in the Lenten season. We are planning for the 500-year anniversary. We spend time together at Lenten lunches and suppers. We will celebrate welcoming new members on the 5th Sunday in April.
- We are gearing up for the 500-year anniversary. Also, soon--new members and confirmation.
- We are experiencing some growth in those attending the church services and other events.
- We are debt free and growing slightly. Building is in good repair. Good response to our VBS in summer and our Art Camp program.
- we are celebrating the third week after Easter. Shortly following that we will be celebrating Pentecost.
- We are celebrating the season of Lent. We will soon be celebrating becoming a "Reconciled in Christ" congregation.
- We are celebrating the Lenten Season with our Interim Pastor Sharon Wiggins. We are also, excited about the possibility that our Call Committee has a candidate to be the pastor of our church.
- We are celebrating the 500th anniversary of the reformation. We have a designated a project every month in celebrating the Reformation. We just hired a youth minister and are excited about the future. We are excited about upcoming VBS.
- We are celebrating the 500th anniversary of the reformation.
- We are celebrating the 500th anniversary of the reformation by beginning monthly mission emphases to organizations and people in our community and world. We are also celebrating the hiring of a new youth ministry for Jr. and Sr. High that will begin around May. We are also celebrating a better functioning council as we improve communication and the governance model to better align with our mission and purpose. We also just took on a monthly commitment to lead a short worship at one of the local nursing homes. Our worship team folks have been excited and taken the lead in doing all this.
- We are celebrating that we have had three new families join our rural congregation and one of them has four children!!! That means we now have 7 - 8 young children in our Sunday School on a regular basis. We rarely have older children -- those from the families were the adults don't attend. See next question.
- We are celebrating our unity and diversity

- We are celebrating our graduating seniors, a new pastor, the nearing end of Sunday School classes and new members participating in New Member's Class.
- We are celebrating our generous stewardship, our embracing of diversity, our expression of support for the marginalized, especially refugees, our service in the community, our lively and meaningful worship, our healthy relationships.
- We are celebrating new members, discerning how we can best expand service in our community, and learning new worship styles.
- We are celebrating Jesus as the Messiah of God; the God of the powerless, the God of Life.
- We are celebrating Easter.
- We are celebrating a good year with many winter Texans attending the services of worship. We are looking forward to a great Easter event.
- We are celebrating a 20th Anniversary and another season of worship with many Winter Texan visitors. We continue a good Word and Sacrament ministry and are a generous church in benevolence.
- We are celebrating 54 years of ministry and we are celebrating God's love and grace.
- Variety of mission opportunities in the community and through the ELCA.
- Upcoming Easter festivities and Palm Sunday too. Choir is preparing special music. We have a wedding on sat. Lots of Lutheran World Relief kits and quilts. Probably a ton. VBS too is coming and we are gearing up. Great young families. We had a welding recreate last sat. And was that ever fun.
- upcoming Easter advent
- Throughout 2017 we have planned a series of studies and worship activities celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. During this season of Lent our mid-week services are focusing on Luther's Small Catechism.
- This congregation is celebrating finally ending a fiscal in the black for the first time in many years. This was accomplished by cutting nearly all programs and dramatic staff reductions. This congregation is also celebrating that downward trends in attendance seem to have plateaued for the time being.
- Thinking about new ideas for the church.
- The variety we have in worship with a new associate pastor who is female. (The senior pastor is an older male.)
- The procedure to employ a new pastor. Easter
- The possibility of hiring a preacher after utilizing substitutes for two years
- The possibilities through Missional River. We are exploring ways to serve the neighborhood and get to know the people who live close to the church. Not an easy task, but we are taking it one day, one step at a time.
- The participation of the Winter Texans over the last several months. A well-received mortgage reduction fundraiser.
- The love of God we experience in our daily lives and the strong relationships we feel to those in our worshipping community.
- The Lenten and Easter Season
- The Lent season.
- The joy of Grace and the reforming of the choir.

- The Good News of Christ Jesus. Lent, Holy Week
- The fact that we are the only Reconciling in Christ congregation in all of San Antonio. We are also celebrating the fact that we are a TEEM ministry site and we are blessed to have Enedina Vasquez in our midst.
- The diversity of ministries in which we are involved. Our worship is lively. Our outreach is to everyone in our community.
- The continuing love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ despite who I am.
- The continuing growth of the Boy Scout troop, Cu Scouts, and Venturing Crews.
- The consistency of membership growth, activation of new members to Council, a new children's worship program and welcoming 10 new members on Easter Sunday!
- The congregation is celebrating its 100th year of organized ministry in 2017. The congregation is celebrating a new capital improvement to their building (that is close to paid off). The congregation is celebrating a shift to weekly Communion, which has been well received.
- The conclusion of Christ's ministry and the ascension
- The church was founded 50 years ago.
- the birth of several babies within the congregation
- The anniversary of the Reformation.
- the ability to carry on with our mission while searching for a full-time pastor
- The 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation.
- The 50 days of Easter.
- That we will be getting a pastor soon.
- That we have had more visitors who keep returning to worship with us and who want to dive deeper into the life of the congregation and explore their faith.
- That we have a bright future, with a pastoral leadership that is caring, forward looking, focusing on growing ministries that benefit all ages (especially young families), and provides excellent spiritual, life centered, messages and leadership.
- That we are still in existence!
- That we are still have our doors open!
- That Jesus Christ is with us each day.
- Sustained, life after the departure of a beloved pastor
- Survival with a renewed sense of commitment to the future and the community.
- Sunday's service was on Psalms 23. The Lord is our Shepard.
- Success in feeding 120 students every Monday a free, hot lunch.
- Still in Easter
- Start of formal children's education on Sunday morning. Recent reception of several new members.
- Stability and optimism in transition with a capable interim pastor and an active congregation, active church council and active transition team. Congregation worship program is great, fellowship is good, still involved in community outreach, and budget still on track. For a congregation of ~ 35 - 50 active worshippers we also have ~ 5 - 10 children in Godly Play each Sunday. There is also a growing group of children at mid-week story time.
- Stability and continuity of leadership. Absence of conflict.

- Spirit of Joy just welcomed 57 new members to our congregation! We are celebrating that we have 43 benevolences to our name and give a very large portion of our offering to our community and those in need around the world. We are celebrating the love we share in our congregation.
- Several members have returned to attending and participating in church activities.
- Serving local community and global community Support of local food bank, meals on wheels Support of LWR - Project Promise
- revitalization of the congregation.
- Retiring a mortgage.
- Retirement
- Renewed energy and an excitement about the future
- Reached school fundraiser goal
- Raising a lot of money for charity and confirmation camp.
- quality pre-school, community advocacy, staff stability
- Preparing to move into a newly remodeled sanctuary and with it a new emphasis on invitation and hospitality.
- Preparing to hire at new Youth Minister. Looking ahead to a possible building renovation.
- Prayer Shawl Ministry
- Persistence
- People care about one another.
- Paying off the mortgage on the house that is used for community services, bible study, Sunday School
- Pastor's 20th anniversary of ordination.
- Owning church, carrying out daily mission, ability to have 2 services
- Our involvement in the community and with one of our ELCA missions.
- Our involvement in interfaith activities in support of local poor and immigrants.
- Our dynamic pastor with us 1 year; continued growth in membership numbers and contributions; growth in benevolence dollars and hours; being without a building; and a sense of purpose.
- Our diversity; community outreach, spiritual and healthy relationship. Participation in community activities. Groups meeting each evening in the church.
- Our congregation supports and is active in many mission activities (SOAP, School Kits, Quilts) and this is certainly a celebration.
- Our congregation is celebration inter-generational faith formation and retreat ministry
- Our congregation is celebrating engaged ministry within the outside and local community, the strength of relationships and caring with our faith community, and strong mission with guiding principles that are "working". We have strong leadership at the church as well, and a LARGE percentage of people who attend worship regularly and/or participate in the number of ministries we offer.
- Our congregation is celebrating a growing ministry with children and young families. We are celebrating making efforts to connect with our community in new ways. We are celebrating growing in faith and in new ways of experiencing God.

- Our congregation has been in an interim status for nearly two years. After a period of intense struggle, coupled with an active movement to leave the ELCA, things have largely settled down in the ongoing life of the congregation. Coming to terms with the new normal of a smaller membership and diminished resource expectations, the congregation is now poised to call its next Pastor.
- our 50th anniversary; Lent and Easter
- Our 40th anniversary as a congregation.
- Our 20th anniversary. Success of outreach ministries.
- nothing, not even Martin Luther
- Nothing
- Not sure
- New ways of doing things.
- New things: -new pastor -new council leadership -excitement that comes with these new
- New Pastor, new growth, new hope for the future.
- new pastor, Lenten service with the kids
- New opportunities to do Ministry Shared with other churches in the area. Growth with new members
- New ministry possibilities with being in a transitional period.
- new leadership, youth programming
- Mutual good feeling, hospitality and new members, new missions internationally and locally, personal growth in learning and leadership, life milestones such as upcoming confirmation and first communion groups.
- Music, worship, service.
- Moving from a SAWC to a CHURCH
- Many of the programs/ministries that have been going on for years continue like the quilting group and Spring and Fall Barbecues that benefit the Church Building Fund. Greater is the influx of younger families who are bringing some vitality. Only a small percentage of those who go off to college return home to develop their careers and those who are either in agricultural business of oil.
- Many Children and families
- Luther and Christ for all
- Love of Christ is celebrating its' 20th Anniversary year. It is Church with very dynamic benevolent Ministries that are greatly supported by its worshipping congregation.
- Looking at continuing ministry through a Shared Ministry approach. Growth of our children's education program.

- Lenten Study based on Luther's works in celebration of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation.
- Lenten services and in preparation for 500th celebration
- Lenten season
- Lent.
- Lent, Wednesday Evening Lenten Worship with soup and sandwiches, a new church musician and joy-filled worship.
- Lent, we are using the ELCA World Hunger study in adult Sunday school, attendance 7 to 9. We are using the worship resources in Sundays & Seasons for Sunday worship - avg. attendance - 8 to 12; and Wednesday evening worship - avg. attendance - 14. We are also participating with the 2 other ELCA congregations in our county and planning a joint celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.
- Lent, the coming of spring, expectation of Easter
- Lent, Easter, Renewal
- Lent, Easter, looking forward to camp work weekend
- Lent Birthdays once a month with covered dish dinner
- Lent and the grace of God
- Lent and Easter
- Lent & the 500th anniversary of the reformation
- Lent - Easter - camp work weekend
- Lent
- Larger attendance, new members, babies being baptized. Also, we have jumped into the Missional River.
- Just had its 95th Anniversary
- Joint services with neighbor Roman Catholic Church with joint reformation worship New member welcome New Confirmands First communion students welcomed to the Lord's Table New generation in leadership Have adopted Hopkins elementary to encourage teachers and students
- Its 100th year anniversary.

- It's caring and loving one another in an aging congregation.
The attempt to work with three other congregations, one of which has closed, another that has sold their building. The development of a plan to serve, share ministry in this area.
- It is in an interim place right now and just going through the season of Lent as can be expected from all congregations.
- Intern ministry, spiritual direction groups, lots and lots of baptisms
- Increased activity among members, increased benevolence
- Increase in attendance, success of day school.
- Inclusive congregation designation
- In my view these are our activities that are cause for celebration: outreach through LWR ministries (soap, quilts, school kits, etc.), through Metro Ministries (soup kitchen), through devotionals at a nearby assisted living facility, Bible study opportunities, updating our website so that worship services will be available online.
- I don't know. Is Easter over?
- I cannot speak for the congregation on any of these issues. These responses from me are only my observations. the hope of calling a new pastor this calendar year
- Hosting activities that welcome the community's involvement.
- Holy week
- High school and College Graduation Martin Luther's 500-year Celebration
- Having found a primary candidate to fill the pastoral vacancy
- Having become a Reconciled in Christ congregation.
- Having a new pastor; getting a couple new families
- having a couple of new families joining our small rural church
- Growth, fellowship, and wonderful people
- growth strong pastor good lay leadership good atmosphere of community
- Growth of our city, more young families, our strategic plan
- Growth in mission church attendance.
- Graduates, confirmation, over a ton of soap and over 179 quilts for LWR
- Going live on Facebook with Sunday morning worship services for our shut-ins and for those who might want to worship with us via Facebook.
- God's unconditional love.
- God's grace, mercy, and forgiveness in the observation of Lenten worship. Even though this is common throughout Christian congregations, it is special in the sense that we get closer to others in our Lenten meal celebrations, communion, and the pertinent teachings for this special time.
- Getting ready for Easter
- Getting a new full time pastor. Welcome Pastor Sam Brannon
- first communion, bible school
- fellowship together, communion
- families, fellowship, faithfulness
- Facilities where we can offer worship and communion services, bible study, Sunday schools and a variety of opportunities for all ages to participate and grow in faith and service. willing caring knowledgeable and talented members supply pastors and transitional pastor; funds to help send

13 youth to summer camps; donations toward a good shipment of kits and quilts to Lutheran World Relief; planning summer VBS; planning to host 2018 blue bonnet conference spring gather for women; confirmation for 3 youth at first community for 7 youth and celebrating our risen lord - Easter!!!

- Exploring ministry opportunities; exploring the ministry of the laity without being dependent on Clergy.
- Excellent worship, sound education, the building of a strong faith community, a committed food pantry, the welcome and inclusion of people from many different backgrounds.
- Even without a pastor, our members are still active in the community (food pantry, community worship, etc.), knitting prayer shawls, quilting and making kits for WELCA, observing Lent, planning for celebrations (Easter, baptisms)
- Estamos celebrando que hay gran interés en aprender bien la Doctrina Luterana y conocer además el trasfondo de la liturgia. Celebramos una liturgia apropiada para esta cuaresma también. Celebramos que estamos a punto de concluir con los clases de Academia de Lideres del ELCA en español.
- eight weeks of Easter
- Ecumenical and interfaith relationships. Babies. The arts.
- Easter this week and every week
- Easter season, the beginning of a new pastorate,
- Easter Season
- Easter
- Diversity, non-traditional families,
- Creative leadership from our pastor of one year and our new youth minister
- Continuing the celebration of the resurrection of our Lord. Enjoying accepting new members - often!! Celebrating the gift of a wonderful spiritual leader in our pastor, Paul Miller. Becoming more aware of opportunities to help in serving others - especially whose needs are much more pressing than ours.(Family Promise, AA, Blue Star Mothers Rejoicing in our quilters completing 200 quilts for LWR Becoming a part of the Habitat for Humanity Organization - to build a home Acceptance of new members in our Choir and enlarging our music/worship opportunities Opening our facilities for use during the week for community activities, especially AA (- hosting since 1974), Girl Scouts, Cub Scouts, Brownies, and Boy Scouts, Family Promise, special gifts to improve our sound system, especially for those hard of hearing Excellent study and lessons for Adults Providing our youth opportunities for camping and special events Organization of

Visitation teams (lay members) to assist pastors with visitations (new members, visitors, shut ins, hospital visits, communion distribution)

- Continued life and ministry in the place where God has put us!
- Continuation of local ministry. Involvement in local community health outreach. Sponsorship of Island mission outside of our immediate serve area.
- Consistent slow growth rather than consistent slow decline as is more common amongst most congregations.
- Community work through food pantry and clothes closet and English as a second language classes. A thriving adult Sunday school program. Inclusive and welcoming environment for all.
- Community involvement, a few younger new members
- collecting money and soap for LWR First communion class
- Church history in community. The restoration of the outside of our church to its original rock structure.
- Christ has rose from the dead
- Celebration that we continue to grow in faith, in fellowship, in love of Christ, in our worship attendance, in serving our community, and in the overall daily existence. We provide food for kids home during spring break. We provide water to people at the Walmart parking lot. We support a strong Christian front with other churches in our area.
- Celebrating have Pastor June and (something) Weld as we anticipate calling a new pastor
- Can't really say that we are celebrating anything right now.
- building debt is paid, relatively new pastor and fresh directions
- Both the 500th anniversary of the Reformation and an anniversary of the congregation's existence.
- Bethlehem Lutheran will celebrate the 120th. anniversary of its founding --perhaps combining this celebration with the 500th. anniversary of Luther's posting the 95 theses.
- Being outwardly focused in mission / giving mission support to a variety of causes
- Being a Reconciling in Christ Church
- baptisms, new members, successful festival, the ability to help the community through the food pantry, abundant (but not overabundant) rain
- Anticipated arrival of a new pastor. Easter preparations. Lenten attendance at Lenten Worship. Anticipated delivery to LWR of 300 quilts and many school kits. Preparations for Summer Day Camp at the church. New informal Worship Service each Sunday. Hopeful planning for the future of our church.
- Anniversary of the founding of our church.
- An increase in membership
- an anniversary
- After years of drift, decline, and just generally discouraging feeling, this congregation is finding new hope as we have undertaken an intention interim/transition process, developed a strategic plan, and are engaged in the call process.
- Accepting new members with an after-service dinner.
- Absolutely nothing. There's more negativity than anything.
- A sustained focus on the Gospel and a missional and welcoming environment makes St. Mark, Adkins a wonderful place to grow in faith. We have 8-10 kids and their families which helps to

make us a thriving witness to Jesus Christ in our neighborhood. We have solid biblical preaching and the good fortune to have so many talented people willing to share their Holy Spirit-driven gifts. We emphasize the importance that we are gathered members in the Body of Christ while recognizing the value of our synod and wider church.

- a successful youth rummage sale.
- A successful mortgage reduction BBQ effort.
- A growing membership, Family Promise and community outreach.
- A renewed sense of purpose - extending the Gospel into new community areas, refocusing our worship and music ministries, maintaining our financial solvency while trying new methods for growth of monetary resources.
- A new pastor. Over fifty years as a congregation. My husband and I have been members for over thirty of those years. A thriving group of children and young families. A deep desire to be a service church within our community.
- a new pastor; large bubble group of young families
- a new pastor
- A new beginning with a new pastor!
- a million things! Confirmation, baptisms, Easter, feeding the homeless, packing backpacks with food for the school kids, Water for Africa, plans for reaching out into the neighborhood.
- A member Transition Team developed new Mission and Vision Statements along with a Strategic Plan. With a sense of direction established with the help of an extremely involved interim pastor, the congregation appears to be somewhat energized rather than "drifting". It appears that we may be close to calling a new senior pastor. We have seen a few members return to worship that had not been seen in a while. There is minimal growth in the number of Sunday School/younger aged children. Young families are becoming more engaged.
- a coming celebration of 150 years of service
- 65th anniversary, reformation, confirmation
- 60th year celebration
- 50th Anniversary
- 50th anniversary
- 500th Anniversary of the Reformation
- 500th anniversary of the protestant reformation, Lent, getting ready for Easter
- 50-year anniversary
- 30-year anniversary of the opening of the child care center. Young families joining the church and lots of children during the children's sermon. Success of our food pantry. Well received "Seeking God" sermon series. Committed music team. Commitment to hire new staff to facilitate children's/youth & worship arts ministry
- 20th Anniversary Celebration and Fund Raiser for our support of Runn School Children. Runn School is a school where children are struggling.
- 130 years of existence. Possible Long Range Planning and all the ramifications that go with this.
- 120th Anniversary on June 11th
- 1. That we are a congregation focused on being engaged in the community. 2. Congregation open to reflection and looking to the future.
- Other than lent, I'm not sure

- Adding new members

2. With what is your congregation struggling?

- Youth membership
- young people's attendance
- Worship attendance.
- With membership growth. As I am sure it is true for many congregations, our membership consists of mainly elders and the (fewer) younger members seem not to remain or move to other areas once they finish with their local education and move on.
- With members realizing the importance of their monthly tithing.
- With changes from the Synod and within the church
- With attendance, finances and no youth or even young families.
- What to do about meeting the needs of Round Rock. The Texas biggest Water Park and convention center will be built very soon. It will be located near our church on Palm Valley Blvd. How can we help with people coming to build it and after the completion -what will the needs be?
- What is our place in the community? What is our responsibility to the people in our church neighborhood? What does it truly mean to be disciple of Christ?
- Welcoming elementary school into our facility (different from school housed in our facility)
Adult education
- We're struggling to find a Pastor
- we want to serve more people and families
- We struggle with goal setting as well as finances for calling a pastor full-time.
- We see the Winter Texan population diminishing a bit each year. The people are faithful but are retired and the age of the members continues to be older. Some return to the north-land each year and stay, unable to return to winter with us. Clergy shortage in the Valley is serious and none are available for pulpit supply during vacation time. Lutheran Churches are small and the compensation package for a full-time pastor is impossible.
- We need more & younger members
- We lease the building for services and activities. A major concern is what will happen when we are no longer able to lease the building (an old dairy creamery building). We are concerned that in it will be sold for development. We have researched for other possibilities but have not been able to locate any other spaces in the community. Rental spaces are very limited with the growth of the area. We could use more space in our present location.
- we have no building - do we need one? Why? What would change if we owned a debt?
- We have been struggling with the hope for a permanent pastor for our church.
- We have a lot of good programs, sometimes it's difficult to find enough volunteers. I would like to see more diversity in our congregation.
- We continue to work to serve our community and our membership. We are defining ourselves as disciples and are working to learn what that really means. We are all trying to be more spirit-led as disciples, as leaders and as givers.
- We are struggling with the divide in our congregation between those with a mentality of staying in our pews and showing up to service to receive the word AND those who are looking for opportunities to go out in to community to do outreach work. We have those who are wanting to be involved with social justice issues and those who do not think that social justice issues should be discussed in the church.
- We are struggling with low attendance of children for Sunday School. And yet we have one person (building bully) that is convinced that if we build a huge new building for Sunday School

that it will solve the problem. "Build it and they will come." Our Sunday School program is floundering. Lack of teachers is also a problem. A few children come, teacher does not show up. Teacher shows up and children do not come. Everyone gets discouraged. Most children are being brought by the grandparents, not the parents. This has been ongoing problem for past four years. We had a great Sunday School program going. Dedicated teachers, about 20 - 25 children attending regularly. Got new Pastor in 2012. He immediately criticized teachers and what was being taught. Then he allowed a toxic teacher to come in and criticize everything that was being done and working. Between the Pastor, Toxic Teacher and the Building Bully (who was president of Council), they drove away 6 families, 26 people, and the whole Sunday school program. Our new Pastor is working on ways to find solutions to the program and attendance. He is talking to the parents to get their views on what may and what not work in today's schedules. Also, talking with possibly partnering with other churches.

- We are struggling with low attendance and financial support
- We are struggling with long-time members leaving the church because of the ELCA's statement on homosexuality, identity with the new members, and lack of storage space in our facility to accommodate our mission.
- We are struggling with growing our congregation and with finances
- We are struggling to more fully engage with the immediate community around us.
- We are struggling to find a permanent home.
- We are struggling financially, and with a part time retired pastor. It seems like we are slowly declining in members.
- We are significantly challenged with attendance in part because the congregation is in a neighborhood made up of people living in poverty and a very ethnically diverse community. Given that these two audiences are not present in our Lutheran congregations because we Lutherans have not been that intentional to reach out among these populations, we find ourselves at the crossroads of significant uncertainty and new hope.
- we are now struggling with the resignation of our Pastor in June. We have lost our piano/organ player (two teen girls that also sang like angels), they will be sorely missed. we are not sure what this "co-op", being integrated into other churches will do to our congregation. Our attendance is already dropping as well as our tithing.
- We are losing people
- We are going through the process of making our church building more functional. We are struggling with keeping the general operating fund functional
- We are a congregation of Mexican descent of old age who are struggling to fund ourselves as a Church/congregation. We are Bilingual English and Spanish.
- Ways and means
- Volunteerism and some leadership.
- Vision. Mission. Focused and strong senior pastor leadership. Transparency. Pay equity between male/ female staff and pastors.
- Understanding our role within the local community and the larger culture. We are also struggling with discerning where God is calling us to serve. We are struggling with grief over members who have left our community for reasons that are difficult to understand.
- understanding how to receive and keep new members understating mission and how that relates to the congregation
- unable to call a pastor
- Trying to live in the 21st century in a rapidly changing society or church.
- Transition of a new pastor; financial realities

- Transition into new lay leadership, from long term leaders
- To identify more ways to reach out to the community
- time for volunteerism
- This congregation is struggling with a near-total lack of mission, vision, and identity after the painful, yet necessary, closure of our nursery and day school programs. Compounding these identity issues is a cumbersome and inefficient governance structure that was built on the assumption that the congregation was larger and had a significant pool of dedicated volunteers who were nearby and willing to meet regularly during the week to make decisions and to do much of the work in keeping the congregation going. As the congregation has declined, this governance structure is now strangling what little ministry remains. The most immediate struggle is that the culture of congregation that remains is one of foundational mistrust after years of fiscal and personnel mismanagement by the clergy.
- There has been a fair amount of pain engendered by the struggle, accompanied by the fracturing of old friendships and the absence of long-term partners within the congregation's ministry. We continue to pray for those who have chosen to absent themselves from our midst, that if they can't walk with the Lord beside us, that they might find those with whom they can.
- The need to purchase a permanent worship facility but cost of land and building is so far out of our ability to secure property.
- The last person to serve here, a SAM, left in anger and many members are still struggling with that. A few families left at that time, including several children and youth, so they are mourning their loss in the congregation.
- The grieving of long term pastor. Aging membership. Financial concerns. Lack of communication. Disorganization.
- The future of the congregation. Looking back and not forward. Lack of lay leadership, always looked to the pastor for decisions and/or ideas. Lack of involvement by more members of the congregation. Communication.
- The direction of the congregation. Some members are worried about financial sustainability of the congregation and argue we need more members. Some members are worried that our leadership isn't taking us in the right direction.
- The congregation THINKS they are a friendly, welcoming congregation, however, they really aren't that friendly or welcoming.
- The congregation is struggling with declining attendance. The congregation is struggling to maintain a property that is currently too large for its size. The congregation is struggling with an obligation based theology of church as they try to understand why more people "just don't go to church/Sunday school anymore."
- The congregation has been in decline for many years and has not been able to develop a new vision that concurs with what is happening in the community. Consequently, there are almost no members who participate in Christian education. Children's attendance in church is down to about and average of 5.
- The age of the average member is well older than the general population. Also, we have had day school/preschool program for decades but major facility changes are needed to keep it viable.
- that change is good for us. I don't see that our church has a mission for doing God's work. Yes, we have a women's group that makes quilts for LWR but that is about all the excitement.
- surviving
- stewardship
- slow growth, call process

- Slow growth
- Shortfall of money because a group has moved to the Missouri Synod church. The blessing is we are getting some new people but they aren't big givers.
- Shifting focus from sustainability to mission and community engagement. Full incorporation of new members, retention of long-standing members in a quickly-changing church culture. Raising up financial stewards. High program expectations by both members and prospective members. Matching intentions with concrete commitments. Managing aging facilities.
- Same people stepping up to lead ministries / aging population
- Right now, money. We are behind a little.
- Right now, we are not having any struggles. Our Pastor is retiring and so will be struggling to have a new Shepherd of the flock soon.
- Retaining members Attendance
- replacing our full-time pastor. the issue of same sex marriage
- Raising enough money. The sins of implicit racism, classism, and sexism. Staying connected through difficult times. Distributed leadership/care.
- raising enough money to have a full-time pastor
- Poor attendance, aging members, apathy, need to update buildings, finances,
- physical plant, facilities, ADA, overzealous code compliance
- perhaps not a struggle/a new challenge - getting a pastor after 10 years with John D.
- people showing up for church
- Participation of members that are under 30. They continue to hold membership with our congregation, but rarely attend services except Christmas & Easter. As a German visitor said these are U-Boat Christians -- popping up every occasionally, like a German U-Boat
- Participation and Membership Finances Aging Congregation
- participation
- Our mortgage is preventing us from paying more staff. I wish our council was more motivated by spiritual means to pay it off.
- Our Day school enrollment is expanding and experiencing some growing pains--a good struggle. Keeping the Church general fund in the black is an ongoing challenge, but God is good.
- Our constant struggle is the upkeep of our aging church building. It is nearly 100 years old and is in constant need of repair. Frequently those repairs are quite expensive.
- Our Congregation is Struggling with Spiral Leadership from the Pastor about half of the congregation feels that the Pastor needs to move on to a congregation that would be a better fit for him. the other half think there nothing wrong. I must give the folks that don't care for the Pastor credit for hanging in there. The ones that work with the pastor are the ones that don't care for him except for one.
- Our Congregation is 95% over 65. We rely heavily on Winter Texans for helping with the daily running of the church.
- Our congregation continues to struggle against forces of racism. We are struggling to increase our stewardship and meet our financial goals.
- Our church has a tendency of keeping a pastor too long to the point of no return. Meaning she runs people off that have been members forever. Never makes any effort to find out why people are upset. Just keeps saying her smart remarks. I don't think she realize how she sounds. Also, she will walk through the church before church begins speaks to some but not ALL. I don't know if she realizes that bothers a lot of people! One Sunday the usher forgot to lock of alter in place. She announced to the congregation as soon as the alter is fixed we will begin

communion. I felt bad for the man that was ushering. He is the nicest man ever placed on this earth. Its little comments like that!

- Organization
- Ongoing losses in congregational numbers. Our congregation is extremely dependent on Winter Texans and other retired people for numbers and income, but new Winter Texans are not being replaced at the same rate with new Winter Texans.
- Numbers, attracting more people to join us
- Numbers - membership, attendance, \$\$\$, etc.
- Nothing to my knowledge
- nothing I see
- Not so much a struggle, but we are in transition as we have an interim pastor. We have been told that because our call is for a part-time pastor (3/4 call) the list of names will be small. So, size is an issue. We are in one of the fastest growing areas of Texas, yet we are not growing. Property is so expensive that we cannot afford to buy land, so we rent. Members of the congregation love the facility we rent, (an old dairy barn), but it does not look like a church. So, the financial situation of not being able to call a full-time pastor nor buy land in the community are the struggle.
- Not really struggling with anything
- Not having good attendance
- Not having a Pastor
- not anything that we are aware of
- No definable struggles.
- need more youth in our congregation
- Need for a building of our own. We are hampered by not having enough space in our rented facilities.
- Morphing old traditions into family friendly new ones
- Money. Upkeep of older buildings. Older buildings that do not fit our use (inaccessible stairs, rooms that do not serve the needs we have, hazardous areas that do not reach the code of the city). Attendance. Lack of the active, energetic 30-50-year-old families with children and youth, Older people's needs. Outreach to community--what should we do? Planning for the future--stepping out on faith to create new resources. Serving our own congregation while reaching out to new people.
- Money, pastor retiring.
- money and youth attendance
- Money
- membership/finances
- Membership/\$
- membership and diversity
- Membership
- membership
- membership
- Members are having a hard time with council focusing on listening to God and less of the day to day which is being passed to the ministries
- Member attendance
- Making worship meaningful for people under 50 and people over 50 at the same time.
- Maintaining our buildings and managing our costs.

- Maintaining membership, pastor resigning
- Maintaining energy as we continue to explore the new things into which God is leading us.
- Lower church attendance and participation
- Low attendance.
- Low attendance, aging membership, lack of a full-time preacher
- Low attendance on Sunday. I love to see the place packed every Sunday. I wish we could get debt reduction, but it's easier said than done. I think it's kind of senseless to keep so many small churches in our neighborhood going. Maybe a merger is in the future. Many churches are without a pastor now too. This response should be in the following box.
- Low attendance (lower than last two years) Loss of several key members (transfer out due to ELCA focus on human sexuality) reduced budget (not meeting expenditures due to above) apathy of members (those that are not involved in the life of the church)
- low attendance (average 28 per Sunday) can't fill council positions lack of enthusiasm, and participation in the few activities that we try to have poor communication between pastor, council and congregation
- Long time healing process and the lingering effects of the decision to remain in the ELCA when the long tenured pastor wanted the congregation to leave the ELCA. He followed through on his decision to go to another Lutheran church body. The resulting vacancy was demoralizing and the next pastor had skills not valuable to this congregation. The present interim pastor has helped to heal the wounds, but will retire at the end of this month. It is difficult for a person who is set in their ways to make significant changes in life style. It is also true for a congregation.
- Long term financial picture. Mainly due to our indebtedness and the rising cost of having a pastor, especially a full-time pastor. Congregational growth is an ongoing concern, especially as some of our older members continue to get older. The desire to be a thriving church knowing that church membership is often going in the direction of a less traditional form of worship.
- Like many congregations, attendance, active commitment from members, church events in competition with sports and other activities, ways to be relevant in our community. Active relationships with congregations around us.
- letting go of hurts from the past between members
- Lack of youthful and active families. The congregation is aging.
- Lack of younger members
- lack of younger member/families
- Lack of pastoral leadership Combining two congregations maintaining a very old building
- Lack of attendance. Aging Congregation. No Young Families. Not attracting new members
- Lack of a coherent vision
- Knowing how to plan
- keeping youth engaged.
- Keeping young families with children involved especially for our Sunday School Keeping teen-age children active after their confirmation
- Keeping up our aging congregation and servicing those who are elderly.
- Keeping new members interested and participating in church activities other than just attending church on Sundays.
- Keeping attendance up
- just beginning Call Process for a bilingual pastor
- Increasing outreach and evangelism with the goal not so much to get new members, but to spread the word of God

- Increasing membership
- inadequate income from member giving to fully fund the missional plans of the congregation
- idk
- Identity and Membership
- I think we still haven't moved any further in welcoming all followers at every table our church has.
- I haven't been told any of that.
- I have no idea.
- I have a sense that everyone feels "old and tired" and doesn't really have energy for anything outside of worship.
- I don't really see my congregation having any serious struggles right now. We are getting to the time of year (summer) when people are gone on vacations so attendance is down and therefore it a little more challenging to meet financial obligations, but in past years, we have been blessed and everything works out.
- I do not know.
- I do not consider anything a struggle.
- I cannot answer for the pulse of the congregation. I can say that I believe we struggle with the lack of adult Christian education.
- How to stay open
- How to come up with enough funding for all our plans-- a new youth building, a new preschool building in the future, a new sanctuary, maybe even senior housing.
- How to better reach the influx of new residents to our growing community.
- How to attract younger families in an aging neighborhood.
- Development of a plan of shared ministry
- how do we minister to children?
- Growth, we have a steady and faithful core group and there is some turnover in that as new members join then we seem to lose a couple due to job change and/or relocation.
- Growth, getting volunteers
- Growth in new members
- Growth and staffing
- Growth and sharing the Gospel
- growth and finances
- Growth
- Growth
- growth
- Going through transition as they prepare to call a new pastor
- Getting our young couples with children to attend Sunday School and Church-too many other conflicts that were not there years ago.
- Getting more involvement of parishioners. Especially the younger ones. The older generation is afraid of change and fights it whenever it is brought up, i.e. more modern music, more modern topics, changes on how things are done in general.
- getting members to attend
- Getting members to actively participate in any/all church activities.
- getting a youth program off the ground. Working to establish the criterion for a part time pastor.
- getting a pastor to replace John D

- gaining new membership and pledges
- For too long, the members of the congregation had no connection to the pastor. Members gradually drifted away as there was nothing to connect them. There has been a loss of identity in the community and a loss of organization within the congregation. With the median age of the congregation being 60, far too often we hear, I'm getting too old and have had to do "whatever" for too many years. I'm tired. Being known in the community for the number of funerals held at the church every year is telling. Although the church, financially supports many causes, there is minimal outreach beyond the walls of the congregation. Then there is the upkeep of an old facility which is not easily handicap accessible.
- Finding purpose and Ministry. Keeping up with the finances
- Finding our mission! We are taking part in the Congregation Initiated Community Based Advocacy training and hope through conversations inside and outside the congregation to see where we need to be.
- Finding an organist
- Finding a permanent home.
- Finding a pastor and reduced worship attendance
- Finding a new permanent pastor.
- Finding a mission in the community;
- Financially. Thousands under last year, which was very low Finding leaders and greater participation in congregational events
- Financially we have plateaued. Attendance has remained about the same as in the past years, but a few large givers have moved for family or other life issues and that has been a struggle as we hire a new position and are looking at rethinking our facilities for the future.
- Financially struggling
- Financial support, changing contexts for ministry.
- Financial strength. Also, how to appeal to the megachurch generation without losing the truth of Lutheranism.
- Financial giving - low attendance
- Financial ability to get necessary repairs done at church.
- Finances. Building upkeep. Many congregation members passing away.
- Finances. Attracting new members
- Finances.
- Finances!
- Finances: there always seems to be too much month at the end of the money
- Finances, finding church leaders
- Finances, declining membership and lack of depth in emerging leadership within our congregation's membership.
- Finances, attendance, how to better engage people in education opportunities
- Finances are never good in a SAWC.
- Finances and low attendance.
- Finances and dwindling membership!
- Finances and attendance.
- Finances and attendance, although it is stable for now.
- finances and attendance
- Finances and a legacy building that needs major maintenance.
- Finances

- Finance and membership
- Filling all leadership positions. Recent vacancy in music ministry leadership.
- Finances
- Falling Attendance, lack of new people being active, too many couch potatoes Direction of faith, it seems to please everyone, were not focused on the one thing that is common and that is the Bible,
- falling attendance and finances
- Expenses exceeding non-designated giving.
- everything
- Evangelism and equipping our sisters and brothers to share the Word.
- Enrollment / community growth with new area subdivisions; congregation stable
- Engagement of younger members and lack of activities for youth and young adults
- Dwindling membership and financial resources. Some desperation from a few leaders over this situation.
- Dissention splitting congregation into factions
- discerning God's will for St Peter's: in calling a pastor, same sex marriage, and how St Peter's will deal with upcoming issues on immigration, sexism, racism, and a variety of other social issues.
- Diminishing numbers. It celebrated 70 years last year. Elderly congregation with one Spanish speaking service that also has low numbers. The pastor was basically a maintenance pastor with no programming to reach out to the community. I have been a member there for 17 years and did not see any proactive movement to serving the neighbors in the community other than through a food pantry and formerly a day school for children. I don't know how we can reach the community if there are no programs to serve the community. That is the complaint of a former member who moved to another church where there is more programming for both children and adults.
- Decreasing membership and attendance
- decreasing attendance in church and Sunday School, smaller financial offerings, smaller numbers of volunteers for serving
- Decreasing and aging membership.40% of members over 80.
- Decreased attendance from years of conflict and transition. We have had 6 pastors (2 called associates, 2 called senior or solo, 2 interims) in the 21st century. Several families who were at the center of conflict left, which while lowering the level of conflict and anxiety has left a hole in leadership. History of inward focus.
- Declining numbers
- Declining membership. Diminishing resources. primarily individuals. Lack of interest beyond Sunday worship
- declining membership, enough people to do things, aging membership, financial concerns
- declining membership and attendance, aging congregation, lack of participation
- Declining and aging rural demographics.
- decision of council/pastor to allow pastor to marry gays/lesbians has caused people to leave the church and we've taken a financial hit
- Debate problemas economicos y la posibilidad de unirnos a una comunidad Anglo. Como lo son MacArthur Park y/o Gethsenane Lutheran Church.
- Continued growth, and keeping up with Youth Ministry.
- consistent member involvement with growth and daily activities in our church. (housekeeping / lawn maintenance / building upkeep)

- Connecting with our community. Shape of pastoral leadership since the departure of our associate pastor. Mortgage of last building project. Communication within the staff, council, and congregation.
- Congregation wide participation Aging population, lack of youth
- Community involvement!
- Communicating governance changes. Developing a new web presence. Leadership and pastor overwhelmed with so many things to do. Balls are sometimes dropped. We need a deeper and wider volunteer pool. Volunteer burnout is on the horizon.
- Committed people
- Changing patterns of involvement in the church
- Change, worship style, becoming a Reconciled in Christ congregation. Money, surprisingly, is not the biggest issue.
- Change with new pastor - gay marriage is legal in Texas
- Calling a new pastor. Maintaining membership during absence of Winter Texans during summer months.
- Bring inactive members back and attracting youth
- Being without a building (also a joy); connecting all members into active roles; narrowing our focus on projects and mission support.
- Being able to purchase land for our church.
- Becoming smaller and not having the people or resources to do many things we would like to in ministry; having little synod support or resources for the small congregation except to push us in directions that seem to drive people away, not bring them into relationship.
- Attracting youth
- Attracting young families
- Attendance/participation, especially with young people and children. Making ends meet financially. A strong pastor who doesn't promote lay leadership.
- attendance, age of congregation, commitment
- Attendance, participation, giving.
- Attendance, finances, new members
- Attendance, finances, loss of long time members
- Attendance, and reduced youth participation in Sunday School
- Attendance, and along with that is shortage of offerings.
- attendance is down
- attendance giving
- attendance and dwindling numbers
- Attendance
- Attendance
- Attendance
- Apathy, no volunteers, limited financial support, a church council that's more concerned about hiring contractors that are community members than those with experience and a solid track record
- Apathy, aging, fear. No Ft pastor, lack of mission and curiosity
- An older building needing repairs.
- Although we have made some headway we are still struggling with becoming less pastor-centered.

- Although we are operating in the black, we have significant property debt we are working to pay off early. This limits our financial support to the synod and community.
- Aging. Moving away or dying of longtime family membership. Still fallout from ELCA positions on social issues and influence of hard line conservative media editorials and personalities.
- aging population no children little volunteering
- aging membership has decreased outreach opportunities involving physical work. we have not been able to increase younger memberships
- Aging membership
- Aging membership
- Age is our number one issue. Age between 70 and 90, as people die, only replacement is from babies being baptized from other communities outside of an Antonio, A few new members are Picked up from the surrounding congregations that are closing.
- Adult Christian education is a struggle in my opinion. We have instituted Faith Generations and I am told it is successful. I have been three or four times and I don't understand it. Of course, we don't have small children in our home, so perhaps that is why. There are no adult Christian education opportunities except for the monthly women's circle meetings. I was not raised in the Lutheran church, so I miss weekly bible study/adult Christian education.
- active membership; church attendance; limited new members
- Accepting that some old habits must be done away with, that the church will no longer be able to attract new members simply by opening its doors and being open and friendly. Finding us through this will be our challenge.
- a split between the younger and older members of congregation and what they see as the future of the church.
- A new Capital Funding campaign to renovate the property
- A few folks in our community are upset and anxious about the new changes. AND living in debt as a congregation has become a way of life
- to find another pastor; 2) to continue to retain all our members
- *Adapting to the new challenges in today's world that pull our young parent's and children's time and involvement away from the Living Word and Sacraments, therefore failing in the task set before us as the members of the Body of Christ. *An aging congregation finding itself more and more out of touch with the youth of today and having difficulty due to decreasing energy and physical ability to provide activities and education of the younger generation. *Lack of parent involvement in the church and in the fulfillment of the Baptismal promises made on the behalf of their children.
- "membership" and attendance. we are an aging congregation and I am a 40-yr. old employee of the congregation. my generation does not buy in to the idea of membership the way we used to do it and still try to. My generation also wants to interface with the church in ways other than only on Sunday morning. As a church employee, I try to address these issues with programming, but the older more established membership is very resistant to these changes.
- ?? Seems complacent.
- We struggle with the meaning of discipleship in this confusing age we live in. We struggle with how we are to share and nurture faith with our neighbors and each other (who sometimes seem very uninterested). We struggle with trying to keep our church family functioning as a faith community when many do not have the skills or desire to help assume the responsibilities. We struggle with declining and/or sporadic attendance.
- Losing longtime members to churches that don't accept members of the LGBT community
- Declining membership due to age and death of members

3. For what is your congregation hoping?

- Youth membership and growing adult membership.
- To have our very own worship space to serve Jesus and our neighbors
- working with other small churches in shared ministry
- working on a site plan and future design of bigger worship center
- We recently conducted a visioning process resulting in several prioritized operational and spiritual issues. The Spiritual Issues are: • Integrating new members / inclusiveness • Being a team / focus on goal, not process • Communication • Community outreach • Increase fellowship opportunities • Personal spiritual growth • Developing a culture of trust • More youth involvement The Operational Issues are: • Capital improvements • Additional staffing • Clarity in operational authority • Vision/Goals of the Day School • Salary Administration • Church vehicle • Respect for the building
- We need change! I am not sure the way the Methodist Church move preachers every few years wouldn't be a good policy to start in the Lutheran Church.
- we hope to serve many more people and families
- We hope to maintain our welcoming attitude and our joyful focus.
- We hope to find a pastor that will strengthen our faith and serve our congregation for several years.
- we hope to continue worshipping, celebrating the preaching of the Gospel, and the sharing of the Table of the Lord.
- We hope to burn the note on our Day School building project within the next year or so. Within the next two years we hope to celebrate with our Youth and Family minister as she graduates from Luther Seminary with an MDiv and looks toward ordination. We hope to expand our presence in the community as the population continues to grow around us.
- We hope that this city and area continue to grow. Growth has been here, but with this being a city with a cultural identity, (German- Lutheran/Catholic) identity it is somewhat slower than many newcomers would like it to be.
- We have made some inroads into the local non-white/ Hispanic indigenous population.
- We have been so blessed with our two Interim Pastors. But, we have been without a permanent pastor for over two years. Naturally church members are going to fall away and look at other churches. We hope to have a pastor that will pull us all back together.
- We find ourselves trying to think about our past and living in the future. How do we appreciate what has been, take the best parts of it, and move on to the future?
- We continue to hope for members. But, realistically, I think we are mostly looking at ways to "stay afloat" and how we can use our resources to reach out. Our congregation is very generous with special collections, but sometimes the day-to-day finances are stretched.
- We continue to add members who love the church, most are Winter Texans who are unhappy with present church. We hope to add younger people however with older people it's hard to have programs and different worship services that appeal to them, i.e. no Sunday School or Vacation Bible School or youth programs.
- We are working through these issues and are developing a new statement of mission that will take some doing to implement. The congregation has been pretty much stuck!
- We are working on co-op ministry models to see if one will work for us and our surrounding churches.
- We are praying that each member will give what they can and that it will be enough to continue in our local ministry

- We are operating with a 1/2-time pastor. This is based on financial resources and as importantly, the amount of work available for a pastor to accomplish. We hope to increase both the ministry of the congregation and the resources to gainfully employ a full-time pastor. (I use the word employ not in the sense as employment vs call, but in the meaning of "fruitfully occupy the time.")
- We are in the transition/call process and we hope and pray it will be seamless. Growth to have more individuals to participate in church and community activities. Also, that we would be able to support a full-time pastor.
- We are hoping to see our congregation's continuing growth.
- We are hoping to increase our membership and be welcoming to all
- We are hoping to find a permanent home.
- We are hoping to be more inclusive and representative of our neighborhood. We are hoping for greater involvement in our state and community and greater impact on peace and justice. We are hoping to be a congregation that has impact. We are hoping for growth.
- We are hoping to be a place for transformational faith that stirs us to love all and serve the community.
- We are hoping to be a major church in our area again. But the last few years we have declined.
- We are hoping that with our TEEM ministry status that we will now have more effective outreach into the community surrounding our congregation.
- We are hoping that our acceptance of everyone enables us to grow
- We are hoping that others join our small congregation to enrich their lives and for additional support.
- We are hoping for more communication between our members and a solution to low attendance of our children, and developing a strong Sunday school program.
- we are hoping and praying that Christ will lead us in the right direction, that He has a plan for our church and congregation. we realize that most churches are having the same concerns and that Pastors are in short supply and that it has become necessary to take a different approach for the survival of our churches and its people.
- We are hopeful that this congregation is big enough that sinners of all descriptions can stand together beneath the Cross of Christ.
- VISION STATEMENT (What do we want to achieve?) With thankfulness for our heritage and the blessings bestowed upon us by a gracious God, we trust in the Holy Spirit to guide the Church to a hopeful future. As we strive to be the Church God calls us to be, we envision that by the year 2020 we will:
 - Be a vibrant, growing, multi-generational congregation that welcomes all people and faithfully proclaims – in the Lutheran tradition – God’s love through inspired worship, preaching, and teaching and through the administration of the Holy Sacraments.
 - Better reflect the rich diversity of the community in our membership.
 - Even more faithfully minister to our members’ spiritual, emotional and physical needs.
 - Be more fully engaged in the life and lives of the community.
 - Expand our support of national and global ministries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
 - Improve our facilities so they can be fully utilized to support the activities of this congregation and the local community.
- Vibrant expression of our catholic-Lutheran identity, opportunities to minister to people in need as the border area continues to undergo change.
- unification and a new pastor
- Transition to new ways of doing ministry
- To survive, to keep its doors open and can provide something to our neighborhood and/or area.
- to survive and flourish in the post-Christendom world

- To still be around for the foreseeable future
- To stay alive
- to stay active
- To spread the love of Christ to our community and to the world where we can.
- to serve the community that surrounds us.
- To remain Healthy and Grow.
- to regenerate so we will be able to call a pastor
- To reach out to unchurched area children through VBS and activities, and to offer small group ministries to welcome unchurched adults, or folks who have stopped attending any church.
- to reach others and tell them about God's love and grace
- To prosper and thrive within our community and to serve and support the parts of our community that are struggling. That the union with our new pastor will be one that brings our congregation a sense of renewal and energy to be a source of Christ's light to Austin and the world.
- To make us better known in the community and helping our fellow man. To keep us growing and thriving. To expand our school. To develop a post confirmation program for our youth.
- To listen to God's intentions for this church
- To increase the evangelization of our community.
- To have enough money to meet the budget
- To grow in numbers and spirit
- To grow and spread the Gospel to more people
- to grow
- To get the congregation together as a family church and keep it together.
- To get some money to fix up a few things up, and to add some more.
- To get more young people with children involved in our church
- To get a Sunday School started for Children to draw in younger members
- to fulfill our call with a leader for everyone to grow our congregation as one unified body with our individual differences
- to focus on God's ministry to be outward rather than inward focused
- To find a good-fit pastor with whom congregation will be as happy as during the present pastor's years here.
- to expand outreach
- to engage more members into the daily life of the church through a small group or committee within the church. members forming a relationship with other members of the church on a deeper level. Not just a Sunday morning relationship.
- To draw people into the Church. To help or assistance with the people in this area.
- To continue to use the gifts God has given us to share with and to serve others To Continue providing opportunities for more study, for mission work, and share the Good News in more ways in our community That God will continue His gift to us- our pastor - Paul Miller That we will grow in our desire to be diligent in His Word and share that Good news with others
- To continue to grow as we have been these past few years.
- to continue to grow and share God's word and benevolence
- To continue to be who we are: "Living in God's Grace, caring for ALL people, sharing God's Love, we ARE Living Word." Continue to be involved in and work in our community. Growth.
- To continue in Grace
- To continue doing God's work actively and vibrantly (and of course, hoping to grow)

- To become stronger in Christ. To become a stronger family. To involve more people in Christ.
- To be inspired, for an awakening
- To be in a cooperative with 2 other congregations and can call a full-time Pastor
- to be able to continue in our own place with the continued help from the co-op and the service of our excellent SAM
- To be able to continue grow and learning about our neighbors
- To be able to be in the location we think is best and gain more financial stability.
- to be a welcoming place where all can come to worship deepen their faith in God, enjoy fellowship and appreciate the joy of sharing and serving in God's name. To call a pastor that will work with us and help lead and inspire members and future members as St Peter's grows
- To life up financial stewardship and evangelism this year in a way we haven't before.
- Three things that I hear: to survive, to grow, to remain true to the message of the Gospel.
- the successful blending of new members
- the Second Coming! We are hoping to make a big impact and introduce more and more people to Jesus.
- The passion. Of Christ can be experienced ad grace for living each day.
- the gulf coast cooperative to work well and perhaps aid in outreach to our community
- The end of Lent and a pot of gold.
- The congregation would like to increase stewardship of gifts to become more aware that all that we have is God's gift and that because this is so that they would like to center their hope in continuing the one Gospel and sacraments ministry at this site.
- The congregation wants numerical growth above all other things, however the good news is that mission and discipleship are not too far from their hearts.
- The congregation is hoping the pastor can fix their downward trends in attendance, membership, and giving. The congregation is hoping a renewed conservative political atmosphere on the national level will revive small town living and small town religiosity.
- the become debt free in the next couple of years.
- The ability to establish a permanent location and building.
- That we will still be around in 10 years
- That we will grow, continue to nourish ourselves and be a blessing to our larger community.
- that we know what God's vision is for our congregation and that we follow that vision
- That we do the work Jesus has left us
- That we can grow and continue to be a vibrant ministry in Christ.
- That we can continue to provide our community with a spiritual base, and pray that we can keep our doors open.
- That we can continue to grow in our partnerships with other ministries doing like work here at Texas State.
- That we can continue to be a presence in our community and bring people into the faith and the church so that we have enough members to support ministry.
- That we can continue as a congregation
- That we can be of service to the needs of the people near by
- That the new pastor will bring in new families with young children.
- that the love of Christ is spread throughout our city and beyond.
- That the finances remain stable with the budget.
- that something magical will happen to bring new people into the church
- that people will return to Christ from the propaganda and materialism of America

- That our pastor will stay and lay leadership will step up to the demands of a growing congregation
- That our exploration of a piece of property to purchase goes well.
- That our community involvement and the excitement of our new members to change how things have always been done will get other new people involved.
- That God will inspire the community and our members to further His mission
- That a pastor will fill our open position & magically change everything
- take the church our lord is calling us to be declaring his love serving others and embracing all
- sustain current level
- Survival and growth
- Stronger connections with neighborhood
- Strong spiritual leadership in the pulpit
- steady growth in numbers, faith and outreach
- Spiritual centered worship and programs; growth, especially in young families; growth in children's ministries; growth in attendance; growth in members - not just for the sake of numbers, but for the spiritual growth of those individuals who don't have a meaningful church home.
- Spirit's leading
- Slow and steady growth.
- retain our pastor
- Renewed sense of mission as we seek to fill a "niche" in God's larger mission - as a liturgical, grace focused, servant minded congregation that welcomes all people. And all means all!
- renewal of interest by members
- Remodeling
- reinvigorated membership, with a renewed service attitude.
- Reach outside our walls
- peace and the love
- Our Pastor is retiring and I hope that we will find a Pastor that will be equally as good as our current Pastor.
- Our own building; transition from 'members' to 'disciples'; bringing down more barriers to truly embrace "all our welcome!"
- Our congregation is hoping for deeper relationships with our community, with one another, and with God.
- Our congregation is hoping for continued growth within the church in the form of new members and increased number of our children/youth enrollment. We also hope for more conversations within our congregation about social justice issues
- Our church is hoping the new younger members' giving practices will begin to measure up to the long-time established givers practices so that we will not have to scrimp by on our budget.
- Our church family has a wide range of ages. We have an opportunity to have a Christian elementary school use part of our building. Some of us hope that will happen. Some hope it will not happen. Some hope we will not change. Some desperately want change. Some want old traditional music. Some want upbeat contemporary Christian music. What are we hoping for as a congregation? The common thread is our faith. That is our hope. However even that is fragmented because we are at different stages of growth and understanding.
- nothing
- nothing

- Not sure. The council is hoping for financial sustainability.
- no idea
- New, dynamic senior pastor
- New playground, prayer area outside, another garden, more connection to the food pantry.
- new pastoral leadership, new energy for mission and service
- New members. Return of members who have left
- New members.
- New members
- New Life in Christ
- New life and breath into the congregation and in its ministry. Direction. Reversing the current trends.
- New governance structure will enable the congregation to more productively engage in visioning activities. New governance structure will reduce volunteer burnout. New governance structure in combination with new staffing will improve and invigorate our worship experience. New governance structure in combination with new staffing will improve and invigorate our programs for children and youth. Greater outreach to the community (Local, national and international)
- New energy
- My hope is that this pastor would move on before he splits the congregation. I feel he has no idea how people feel about him.
- My hope is that the next called pastor will be a good fit for this worshiping community. But most of all my hope is that there will be a growing understanding that this congregation is part of a wider body, the Body of Christ and that everyone has a vocation outside the walls of the congregation's worship space. Further, that "going to church" is not necessarily to be entertained, although enjoyment at worship important, and that "being the church" celebrates doing justice, loving mercy and walking humbly with God in the world, at work, at play, at school.
- Muy buenas expectativas de crecer y de hacer misión en nuestra área. Compartir los dones de los lideres con otras congregaciones y/o misiones.
- Most of are wanting the Church to return to a more traditional service, Getting God presences back in School, home and families. We are a Christian nation of laws, we must protect these values.
- more young families
- More unity. Less discord.
- More people attending and better participation
- More outreach into the community and sharing the good news with others in new ways.
- more new families and are getting some
- More members. But I don't think that should be our focus. Getting pew warmers should not be the goal. The goal should be learning how to be the best person/friend I can be to whomever I meet each day.
- More members who want to be active members in the life of our church.
- More members and long term a new building
- More members
- More commitment from members through financial contributions and participation in various ministries.
- Membership to grow. Participation to increase in all we do at church and in the community.
- membership and diversity

- Long Range Planning to the year 2050; be a service, light, place of welcome for our community
- Keep open.
- Keep going in the direction we have been for the last few years.
- Increasing relationships
- increases in membership
- increased stewardship Someone to bring us all together
- Increased participation of all our members. Programs that fit needs. Guidance about what works and how to implement it in our own community. Increased collaboration with other ELCA congregations in our community--we are stronger together. Increased outreach to our own community--we have so many local needs. Growth in all areas.
- Increased attendance, and resulting income.
- Increase the size of the congregation and increasing Sunday School attendance by children.
- Increase outreach.
- Increase attendance at Worship and Sunday School
- In my conversations with church members, the number one hope is that the congregation will find a way to continue to exist at all, much less do anything that matters.
- idk
- I'm not sure there are any long term hopes or dreams
- I think that we will soon get together to figure that out. We really need to update our goals and get excited about working toward common goals. My hope is that we will emphasize evangelism--talking to friend neighbor and inviting/bringing them to church.
- I have no idea.
- I do not know.
- I can only tell you what our mission statement is. It is "To engage our community with the amazing love and grace of God, so that all may become committed followers of Christ.
- I am hoping for an inspiring opportunity to directly help the community. Not just "toss another dollar in the basket"
- I am hoping for a clear and final mission/vision statement so leadership has a plan to move the congregation forward and to become more important in the community.
- hoping that St Peter's will continue with our mission statement
- Hoping for connection, community, leadership for the staff. We are also hoping for stability.
- Hoping for a new direction in ministry, looking outside ourselves and how God is calling us to connect to our neighborhood. Missional River seems to be a good process so far.
- Hope to be witness to God's presence in the community and in and among those in our neighborhood. Hope to be faithful, to the "the church God is calling us to be." (Mission Statement)
- Heaven
- Having people able to help lead activities
- Guidance from God and maybe even the Synod.
- Growth.
- Growth!
- Growth, more involvement from younger families.
- growth renewal of faith new pastor
- Growth in our community, more helping hands
- Growth in membership, renewed discipleship by all members, welcoming the stranger, and establishing a sounder base for financial struggles.

- Growth in membership, especially young families. A forward-looking Sunday School program with more volunteers. A Confirmation Program that is exciting for our youth. A pastor who is youth orientated with ideas and a willingness to work with them.
- growth and youth
- Growth and revitalization of a younger community
- Growth and new ideas
- Growth and more children
- Growth and more attendance
- Growth
- Growth
- growth
- growth
- God's guidance and a clarity of purpose for us to be able to hear and obey that guidance.
- God will send us ministry to do in no matter what circumstances we find ourselves.
- Given the current situation of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church here in Austin, TX, we hope that acting in evangelical mission outreach and solidarity as Austin City Lutherans, as Southwest Texas Synod and as ELCA, together we may participate in mission outreach, mutual learning and transformation as result of being missionally engaged in face to face ministry relationships with and among people living in poverty and an ethnically diverse community. In fact, we are hoping that gradually but proactively, an urban immersion mission pilot project could be developed at Prince of Peace. Prince of peace is located at the intersection of South and North, West and East Austin and offers a privileged location for such pilot project. Part of such pilot project could also involve St. John's/San Juan Lutheran Church. Real issues of poverty, racism, diversity and new ways of being church could be addressed.
- for the wisdom do love our neighbors as ourselves
- For some, return to a stabilized congregation the way it used to be. For others, new directions in cooperative ministry with the community.
- For our congregational to get more involved in community activities that will help the less fortunate
- For more involvement.
- For more growth and for a bright future.
- For More coming to Christ
- For continued outreach / outward focus
- For additional young families to join the congregation.
- For a new Pastor, we have had an interim Pastor for over a year.
- For a new Pastor to lead the congregation after June 1,2017
- Financial stability New members
- Financial security and a full-time pastor.
- Faithful walking within the community through times of transition (globally, nationally, locally). Integration into our local community instead of being a geographically diverse community only. Deepening relationships with ecumenical and interfaith partners. Greening the congregation through solar panels and more... Witnessing to the world works of justice, both online and in the flesh.
- Ever hopeful for new members.
- Enough \$ to finalize repairs

- Depends on who you ask. Pastors are hoping folks rally around the new YM hire. We just see a big opportunity in this position as 20-25% of our congregation is under 18, and we are right next to an elementary and middle school and the boys and girls club. Some in the congregation are hoping for a new kitchen. Our kitchen is over 20 years old and needs some love. Others are hoping for more space for ministry. We have maxed out the use of our facility on Sundays, but underutilize it generally through the week.
- Currently our congregation is hoping for the building of new settings for worship and expansion. We are only at the beginning stages and we will just have to see how this goes.
- Continued vitality and sustainability. The transmission of faith and hope across generations (both directions). Smooth pastoral and staff transitions. Sharing our unity and good feelings with our fragmented community and nation. Making an impact on the children of our community.
- Continued strong leadership in the congregation. Renewed passion to be a vital ministry in the community and love for each other in the congregation.
- Continued strength of witness.
- Continued program development and emphasis on some new social issues.
- Continued ministry in our location.
- Continued ministry
- Continued growth through a shared ministry approach, continued success of day care program.
- Continued growth of the Lutheran church. We need more diversity
- Continued growth in discipleship and involvement in the community.
- Continued growth and relevance in the church, community and world
- Continued financial stability and for the town to not die.
- Continued fellowship and participation
- Continued fellowship and making a difference in lives and community
- Continued consistent slow growth.
- continued blessings
- Continue to grow and make a difference in the community.
- Congregational growth, especially through a focus on our youth program, as well as a growth in social outreach and cooperation with area churches for the good of all.
- build new church
- bilingual pastor
- being able to afford a full-time pastor
- Become a more active presence in our community. Develop programs and projects that attract younger worshippers.
- Attendance
- At this point, sadly, survival. I don't think it has a vision for how to best serve the community. The elderly can only do so much. There are few baby boomers left in the congregation and few youth. Survival is not a healthy place to be for any congregation.
- At most coupling with other Lutheran Churches in the area to share a called Pastor
- as people grow in discipleship and generosity, we will bounce back in mission!
- An awakening of interest and participation, increase in membership.
- All worshiping members will participate in the congregation's ministry.
- a way to move forward as a united body...maybe this is what I am hoping
- a rich benefactor and more babies
- a rebirth of sorts

- A permanent pastor
- a pastor who will heal the wounds
- a pastor sent by God to lead and guide, us to an even brighter future doing God's working with our hands
- A pastor like the one they lost. Not much visioning now - although being encouraged to do so.
- A new permanent pastor.
- a new pastor
- A new leader- one that can bridge the gap between the generations and move us forward
- a move toward a more part-time pastor from Sunday supply only.
- A growth in membership, attendance, and involvement
- a full-time pastor/increase Sunday worship attendance
- A full-time called pastor.
- A coming together of all minds and talents to move our ministry forward to effectively impact our community.
- A clear path for climbing out of debt
- to survive to 100th Anniversary. Hope is for new members, but highly unlikely. The ELCW which was meeting over 20 members, closed when no leadership could be found.
- To increase our outreach to our neighboring communities
- some hope for more social justice awareness and involvement. Others hope for someone to lead a youth program.

8d. Please explain your responses.

- You can't box in God! WE are all part of what God is doing. God is doing things beyond our control or imagination.
- Worried about growth. Why are these non-denominational doing so well when ELCA offers so much more?
- With our new pastor, we have a bright outlook for our future. Not sure in what direction the Synod and ELCA are headed and whether "traditional" churches can survive in the future.
- With declining membership and so many ELCA congregations at risk for closure or merger with other congregations, I am neither pessimistic nor optimistic about the future of my local congregation, the SWT Synod and the ELCA
- With an aging membership, I have concerns about sustainability. Need to find ways to appeal to younger folks.
- We walk in the Presence of the Lord in the land of the living, according to the Psalms. This spiritual adventure is exciting as we make plans and God directs our steps. This is the Golden Hour for the Church. The message of love and truth has never been needed more. The digital age leaves the heart empty. We have all kinds of evil forces to contend with but knowing personally the meaning of the Easter event gives us unlimited hope. May the blessings of God be ours to enjoy.
- We seem to be listening for God and watching for the movement of the Holy Spirit. I enjoy the increase in inclusivity and work for unity being done at all levels of the church. I think if we can put our words into practice and our listening moves properly toward action, God has great things in front of us.
- We seem to be doing the same things over and over even though they are not successful
- We seem more and more distant from the work of Synod and ELCA.

- We see and hear little at the congregational level from either the Synod or the ELCA. My impression is that only the pastor has any direct contact on a regular basis and selected church lay leaders on a very intermittent basis. Newsletters and other types of communication never seem to reach the masses. Therefore, congregations are "out of the loop" and have no way to form an opinion on the outlook for the future of either the Synod or the ELCA.
- We have decided not to attend services in our congregation unless there is a visiting pastor. I have been listening to the sermons over 4 years' w no change even though have filled out surveys asking for style changes. The pastor gets defensive if question or tell to c.f. hane orr tell doing wrong. I continue to teach Sunday school there but am attending services nearby w a much better pastor for our family
- we have a wonderful interim pastor and have called a new pastor much good people working on the (something)
- We have a good message and just need to figure out the best way to get the message out
- We could always use help in equipping our leaders & identifying new leadership.
- We are in a transition phase having been unable to call a pastor for 2 yrs. now. The congregation has become divided into separate factions and we are having dwindling attendance. As in most congregation the few do the most and the loudest are the complainers not the doers.
- We are in a time of transition in all our ministry - perhaps a new reformation. Ministry will look very different 100 years from now. Until then all we can do is remain faithful to what God wants us to do in our various settings and be very observant of what God is doing.
- We are hopeful of future growth and community engagement. The Synod is constantly at work in these areas of commitment and mission. The ELCA leads the way in our endeavors with encouragement and support.
- Vibrant congregation in a growing community. Synod seems intent on looking at ministry related to the community in which churches are located. Continued focus on the church being engaged in community and social justice.
- Unless there is a major change I see our congregation slowly disappearing
- Unless our congregation embraces the idea that things can't operate the same as they have for the past 65 years, I doubt our congregation will survive only about 10-15 years. I have been involved in the synod level in another synod, but have not done so here, yet. Most folks in the pew have no concept of what the synod is or does. Most have never been to an assembly. That blows my mind. The ELCA is a world leader from a social justice standpoint. It is a voice of reason in a very confused world. I'm also very excited about the YAGM program. It is giving our young people an opportunity to experience the world and other cultures. Only by learning about each other and accepting each other for who we are and what we believe can we get along. I may not agree with your opinions on an issue, but I can still respect you as a fellow human being.
- Unless my congregation finds a mission and purpose we will die
- Times ebb and flow, as does the influence of the Church. All churches are struggling a bit now, bit I feel firmly that if we remain faithful and continue to reach out with the Gospel, God will bless our work and our church will thrive.
- Though we find ourselves in times of significant transitions and labor pains as we seek to be faithful to God's calling and mission in a multi-ethnic, multi-faith, in fast-changing environment and world, we are abundantly blessed already with a realistic theology and with wide ministry relationships among congregations, colleges, seminaries, social ministry organizations & companion global relationships that if intentionally explored and cultivated, may bring a rich harvest of renewal, creativity, transformation and mission vitality. Becoming a multicultural

church and addressing realities of racism are vitally important if we are not only to survive but also to thrive in this century.

- This synod feels overly committed to traditional hierarchical structures, and creating unique programs which it promotes. I like the ELCA model which is more and more leveraging technology for direct constituent communications. The ELCA grapples, appropriately, with ways to better leverage existing resources... questioning, for example, whether churchwide has the resources to subsidize each synod with a full time equivalent DEM. in many cases serving as an adjunct additional staff member for the synod without cost... often performing functions which are ancillary to their intended portfolio responsibilities. Congregation seems to be doing well. It has continuous flow of folks from diverse ages, ethnic backgrounds, and experiences. The question is whether its leaders can be skilled enough in management that the possibilities of many people working together can expand ministries, or if it alternatively, continues to be directed and staffed by relatively small group of people.
- This congregation meets in a densely populated, culturally diverse, politically relevant geographical area. The synod's focus seems to be too much disconnected from what is culturally relevant in our area, i.e., immigration and sanctuary, natural gas boom and consequent ecological/economic/social destruction, oil and gas culture in a time of deeply needed transition to renewables, deplorable public service structures in the state, poorly funded public education. How does the synod address these issues on behalf of and in cooperation with congregations? The ELCA doesn't have 'Christ' in its name. I fear its focus on "Lutheran Identity" is a form of self-turned in on self.
- This congregation has been through some difficult times emotionally. They are optimistic for the future and are moving toward it rather than backing away. They have contact with the Synod Bishop and Assistants at least 3 times a year. This is through visits to promote programs or for a celebration. Pastor brings information back through quarterly interactions and reports. They seem to be distant from the ELCA due to geography. However, we participate in Global Ministry, Water Project, World Hunger, and Malaria nets. Pastor keeps them inform but this is world ministry and not in their back yard.
- Things aren't great, but the faithfulness I see in all three expressions of the church give me joy.
- These are times when it is difficult to be optimistic.
- There is no other reasonable choice but to be very optimistic. And by very optimistic, I mean looking forward in a positive manner. Forward, march!
- There is a social conscience which exists throughout the ELCA leadership and at the synod level. While we may not all be on the same page, we are reading out of the same book. This gives me Hope. If we aspire to set the world on a more Spiritual path, it must begin with individual approaches backed by resources provided by the church leadership. This has been begun but must be continued, nurtured and grown.
- There is a good future available for all of us.
- There are areas of both strengths and weaknesses at all three levels. I'm committed to remaining optimistic that weaknesses can be strengthened and the strengths can propel us into a vibrant future of ministry.
- The young people in their 20s are not staying/coming into the church in large numbers, and the "other" evangelical churches are giving Christianity a bad name; I think something will change eventually; I am optimistic that the church will survive, but not sure in what form. I am sure our congregation will survive if I am alive.

- The Synod should focus on wellbeing of small congregations and following their own rules and bylaws. Not making excuses for not following their written rules. Some Bishops seem Lacking when it comes to executing Synods Rules and Bylaws
- The reason for my responses is that I am the visitation pastor for Palm Valley Lutheran and therefore am limited in my observation of the issues which this form brings up. Our senior pastor Dave Kopple would be better informed and could answer differently. However, being retired and yet working as a visitation Pastor probably limits my perspective. I just don't receive the information from our Synod of which this form is asking. In the past I have been Dean of a Conference for several years and therefore received the information from the Bishop which I enjoyed. So, my answers may be helpful or you may want to disregard my report.
- The hurdles are many for our congregation and our delayed response to those hurdles has made it more difficult. However, I am optimistic for the synod, because of regardless of what happens to our local congregation, opportunities exist for the future. And I am very optimistic for our church, the ELCA. The voice of grace to all people that we project is desperately needed and being searched for.
- The ELCA needs to re-evaluate its foundational roots-that is proclamation of the Gospel and focus on Scripture and our Confessions. The picture I have in my mind when I think of the ELCA is that of a marching band with its drum major. However, the drum major is turning right and the band turns left. I really think the Senior ELCA leadership is out of touch with most the congregations.
- The ELCA is out of touch with rural congregations and the reality of our rural way of life.
- The ELCA here needs to truly be reflecting on what it is and represents in SW Texas. And be honest
- the congregation where I worship is a vibrant congregation in a growing community the synod has many leaders committed to its mission the ELCA has a reserve of vital leaders to guide it into the future
- The congregation is strong both spiritually and financially. The Synod has had good leadership from the Bishop, staff and various committees. The ELCA continues to strive for ecumenical partnerships which I favor. It continues to be active in the social issues and cares about the hungry, hurting and the poor.
- The congregation is doing well but this could change overnight if the pastor gets sick or leaves. There are few to no pastors waiting to fill a 1/2-time call. There are rumors of talks about the need to reconfigure the 65 existing synods, but even so, the synod will continue in some form. I believe the legacy of Martin Luther (saved by grace through faith) is a thing that has been given by God to the Church and this will continue no matter what else happens.
- The congregation I serve is optimistic about their future with me as their pastor. We are situated in a growing area of the synod. The congregation's leadership model is patriarchal in nature. But even so, they seemed to flourish under the care of a female interim pastor for the past three years. Part of that is because she focused on accountability and did exactly what her contract stated. They came to trust her. I am pessimistic about the outlook of the SWT Synod and I don't think a new bishop will fix everything. The current bishop, like many of his colleagues, is hampered by an unrealistic congregational and ecclesiastical model of polity. Congregationalism is a system born from a bygone age; it is outdated and ineffective. It appears a congregational system could make a church body more adaptable and nimble, because congregations are autonomous and not tethered to a central authority. But the reality is that most congregations are not nimble and they fixate on a survival "club house" mentality; furthermore, many are on life support and won't accept the fact that they need a serious congregational hospice. Mission

oriented thinking is an alien concept to most congregations. The synod is ineffectual because it has apparently had no authority to, or chooses not to help congregations with serious conflict resolution. There is no synodical body in place to help congregations and pastors find just resolutions. The bishop comes in, does some process, encourages the congregation to allow three months' severance (when six or more is needed.) Then the congregation goes into a drawn out self-searching process that is generally ineffective and from my experience disingenuous. At the same time, many pastors are forced to go on leave from call and suffer significant financial losses. Congregations get anything they want, especially if they have money, and pastors get treated like the trash; tossed to the curb with no way to provide for their families. In situations of conflict, I have feared the congregation's ability to act unilaterally to "make me leave" and the bishop's ability to remove me from the roster. I think the system is unjust and needs serious reform. If the synods are collections of congregational bodies, then the ELCA is an even wider collection of the same. To be sure there are some bright spots out there, maybe the little congregation I serve will be one of them. But like most congregations, they rarely have contact with synodical structures and almost never with church wide. Interpreting social statements and explaining church wide operations lands on deaf ears in south Texas. That said, I like what the ELCA church wide body is doing, generally. I think they are working to be faithful to God and respond to the Gospel.

- The congregation must ask new questions about purpose and commitment of members. The leadership doesn't hear that and continues to repeat and repeat the same ideas. The Synod is being innovative. That is future thinking. The ELCA is being innovative.
- The congregation can be stuck and toxic at times as it defaults to a mentality of caring only for its own existence when things get difficult. At other times, the congregation can be very generous. Their missional behavior at the current time is highly dependent on the pastor's ability to positively motivate an outward focus. The Southwestern Texas Synod recognizes that the religious landscape has dramatically changed over the past 15 years. This synod has lived on the front lines of a strong confrontation between a denomination that functions progressively and a geographic region that largely embraces an extremely opposite ideology. Yet the Synod has been pastoral in listening to congregations across the spectrum while continuing to keep a missional vision where Christ goes before us. I believe that the Synod is very strong in that regard, and this makes me feel optimistic for the future of the Synod.
- The competition between traditional denominations and non-denominational or "independent" worship communities will continue to increase as apathy within generations of the population increases. Though I think the ELCA and the Southwestern Texas Synod will continue to provide evangelical ministry and mission, the influence they have on congregations, especially those beset by dwindling attendance, membership, and resources will diminish unless support can be refocused to those struggling congregations.
- The church will survive!
- that's just the way I see it
- Texas and the SWT Synod is too conservative to be involved in social justice and the search for peace.
- teach bible, don't let social issues change view of synod
- Synod's office and staff expenses is such a waste of time, resources and money. Congregations could be just as well served with information directly from the ELCA headquarters.
- Sustainability and growth must occur in our congregations.
- Staying strong and vibrant is difficult, but I think creative brainstorming and trying new approaches might help. A Lutheran dating service. Dog rescue. Sounds crazy and these are

weird but we might have go a bit further in attracting non-believers. The community is growing and we are not. I am optimistic that we can do it.

- St Peter's remains strong and growing but we have lost some members that felt judged and excluded because of their firm opinions against same sex marriage. It will take time and a more open attitude for change to be made. I have good friends and family that have left the ELCA and they continue to do good works in God's name. God, we ask that you guide us and show us your way! Teach us to be more discerning without being judgmental.
- Spiritual leadership in pulpit is weak and not encouraging. SWT Synod and ELCA information is only communicated through newsletter
- Some of the ELCA policies have fractured congregations and caused dissension so that some congregations in the area have withdrawn from the ELCA.
- so out of touch it is ridiculous.
- Rural congregations are facing declining membership because of declining rural populations and aging membership. Young people move to cities and urban areas when they have completed their education because pay is better. The family farm is history, ever since Ear Butts said, "Get big or get out." We now have agribusiness--some of the family farms are working 4 to 5,000 acres.
- Right now, we are concentrating on getting our congregation back on track, as a vital part of this community and within our own congregation.
- Pessimistic because of things that have happened in our congregation- Neutral because the congregation doesn't seem to care about what is going on-
- Our numbers are reducing, our debt is high in our congregation.
- Our congregation will continue to go downhill. We have very few young couples that come to worship. They live in the community but do not attend any church.
- Our congregation supports many special projects each year. We have just hired a youth minister. We are just starting a building and capital campaign
- Our congregation representatives that go to Synod and ELCA meetings always come back to us with positive attitudes. That makes me optimistic that with faith and prayer we will continue as a congregation
- Our congregation is struggling
- Our congregation is doing very well. It looks like the synod is struggling. The ELCA is in steady decline. We keep training pastors to be social justice warriors, when we should teach them to love the people and to share the gospel and to help the members share the gospel. People don't want to be told that they are wrong and have been doing things wrong for years. People want to be loved and included, and then when they realize that, we can help them grow in their discipleship. So many pastors right out of seminary seem to want to scold people when they should be offering love and hope and healing.
- Our congregation is a very strong and dedicated group committed to fulfilling our mission statement. I am concerned that our congregational growth is not proportional to the population growth of our community. From what I see, I believe the Synod and ELCA are headed in the right direction and that God will provide for those who do His work.
- Our congregation has not had success getting and keeping young families. As the elders pass on, a congregation cannot sustain itself. It's difficult to see a family one week, but then never again.
- Our congregation has attracted several new members over the past year, but I worry about long term engagement and our affiliation with other local Lutheran congregations and the greater church. We have an engaged but aging population, and I would like to see more activity that

energized our youth and younger families. Many of our younger members in our small country church are part of multigenerational families who have been part of the congregation.

- Our churches have all experienced changes through the years - some a bit troubling - others quite positive. I feel that God has blessed the ELCA and our synods in many vital ways - never leaving us to make changes or decisions on our own. It is so blessed to read of all the work being done and people being reached (as shared so well in our VISTA). I believe we have "turned the corner" in experiencing the "splits" that took place but only through God's grace and our willingness to serve Him, following what He desires of us as His body - to work together, knowing each of us as His children and each individual church has a specific purpose to make His Word become alive in our lives and in those around us. Sharing with each of the churches in the synod the information about other churches and the awaiting opportunities for each of us and our churches gives us that sense of family - as each part of the body of Christ has its own specific purpose, Together - we are His body. Prayers are the vital link for all of us - may we continue to help each other up and we use those specific gifts He has given us - to continue to live the Resurrected Christ each day - in every way He gives us to serve.
- Our church has begun discussion with other ELCA churches (small congregations) in our area to form a cooperative so I am very optimistic about the future of our congregation
- Our church doesn't seem to be growing. Lack of younger adults taking part in the church, and our workers are aging.
- No comment
- no comment
- no comment
- Need innovative leadership Need. To be taught and encouraged in local levels by offering opportunities to hear and benefit from leaders like Rob Bell, Leonard Sweet, Brian McLaren and others
- My outlook has been based upon how each of these entities thinks about itself. New ministries, ways of working with communities that aren't attending a church every Sunday, a society that has grown inward rather than outward to others, is a basis for my outlook. "We can't do this or that" is not in my vocabulary.
- My congregation is struggling with moving forward. the majority still operates in the 60's mentality. Most only want church on Sunday for 45 minutes and 'don't ask me to serve on any committees because I have already done that' attitude. there is no excitement about doing God's work. I feel we don't have a plan of our church. I feel we need more positive leadership to lead us to "go out". The synod is doing an excellent job with the call process. I feel the synod has a strong and positive leadership group (staff and synod council) and offers many opportunities to all our churches. I feel the ELCA is doing good things. Bishop Eaton is a positive force in leading the church.
- My congregation is so small and the members are mostly in their 70's & 80's. Their building and land are paid for, so their only financial obligation is ongoing expense. All it would take is a few deaths and with no new members, I suspect they would be forced to close their doors. I like the direction of the ELCA, its presiding bishop, the magazine. We are still in a decline with numbers and eventually that will cause us more pain than it has already caused and continues to cause. I believe the SWT Synod is far behind where it should be with cultural diversity and cultural sensitive among its predominantly white members. Part of that is because of me and people like me--to lazy and scared to get outside of ourselves. Part of it is a lack of courageous leadership for years.

- My congregation is small and consists mostly of people 50-80 years of age. We offer nothing inviting or encouraging to bring in young families. There are many churches in our area that have great attendance. The one thing that keeps us going financially is a small day care and our building is paid for. We have repairs that need to be made but no one is interested in taking care of them. Our pastor shares very little about the SWT Synod and the ELCA so we really have no idea about what is going on there unless we read it in the paper.
- My congregation is going through a rough period while trying to be optimistic.
- My congregation is old and we have hardly any young people, we only have two children so without getting more families or even just younger people, I don't know how we will survive. I don't know much about our SWT synod to answer. I feel like in other areas the ELCA is still strong.
- My congregation is elderly and there are no youthful energies to make it attractive to young families. It has lived on a maintenance model for the past 17 years that I have been a member there. I did not see or hear of a vision to reach all the Latino and Latina neighbors of the immediate neighborhood. I think it has been protective of its ethnic majority Anglo members rather than "rock the boat" and reach the Latinas of the community. The Synod does a lot with little but I feel it lacks the energy to make a difference in reaching folks who are not "native" to the Lutheran Church. It lacks passion. I don't know how to cure this given the size of the synod and the vast distances for travel from north of Austin all the way to the U.S. Mexico border. How does a synod of this size bring a unifying thread to its mission and ministry? I think there is too much autonomous ministry among church leaders rather than cooperative ministry. Not sure how to solve this. As for the ELCA I think it is large enough to weather the declining membership numbers for a while. It has been addressing the lack of people of color percentage but needs more work in that area. It is struggling to make an appeal to the many unchurched and NONES who are distrustful of institutions. I think it will survive for the sake of the purposes of the historic church, but don't know for how long with increasing secularization of the country ...
- My congregation is declining in number attendance wise but I have hope that SWT and the ELCA can help us with strong leadership.
- My congregation is a very small and new. It epitomizes the 'Preach the Gospel and Live it.' attitude, but it has a way to go to really establish itself. I see this same attitude across the synod, but with the loss of numbers in the first half of this decade, we are in a period of transition. I see so many positive trends in our synod that I am optimistic, but we need to continue our path a little longer to be able to add a 'very'. I feel that I can be very optimistic about the ELCA in general. I am impressed with the leaders I have met and their actions reflect my sense of God's calling for our church.
- My Congregation if things don't change it will not be here in three years. The Synod is following the ELCA lead. Thinking more about what mankind wants than what God would like for us to do.
- My congregation has many caring and thoughtful people who desperately are trying to sustain and increase our church body. I pray they will succeed. We have faithful people who support to the best of their ability and would do more, if they could, both physically and financially. Their prayers and love sustain us. Our community is growing, we have potential, but the demographics and social structure are changing from the sources we once grew our church. Our vision must adjust to what we must draw from if we want to continue. I think we can do this. While the Synod has assisted in the calling of a new pastor, we receive very little assistance by way of how to grow our mission, how to set up viable programs, and the sustaining of our congregations. The focus is on immigration problems and other outside issues that do not help

us. While the global mission of the church might be visionary, the infrastructure of the sustaining church is crumbling. Our synod has taken a blow from the ELCA decision to ordain homosexual pastors; many strong congregations left the ELCA in our synod. About 40% of our synod congregations have a part-time pastor. Our synod also allowed another ELCA congregation to organize in our community (Community Population: 28,000). We now have four Lutheran congregations in the city limits of our town. The Synod needs to be cognizant of the congregations' needs. The ELCA is the Lutheran body of which I want to be a part. It needs to support and build what it has if it wants to sustain. When Bishop Eaton visited our city, she was not even aware there were two ELCA congregations here. She praised the one and ignored the other (which has existed 148 years) and was surprised to learn after her presentation that there was another! ELCA needs to look after what has supported it through the years.

- My congregation has been a leading presence in the community for over 140 years and I am optimistic that it will change and grow with the community. I am optimistic that God will continue to bless the SWT Synod's willingness to change and adapt to social justice and ministry opportunities all around us. I am optimistic that the ELCA will not remain stuck in the past but will be a progressive force in leading the Holy Catholic Church in this century.
- My congregation has an extremely difficult time imagining change, let alone risking it. I am very impressed with Pastors Briner and Spindt, who have excellent skills in rising our awareness of possibilities for out-reaching ministry. I am excited about Bishop Eaton's vision for building our identity, desire for cooperation across denominational barrier, and challenging everyone in the ELCA to be a minister.
- My congregation has an easier task in thriving in our community compared to the challenges of both Synod and Churchwide since we do not have the massive array of geographic and cultural differences. Our growing relationships with other local congregations and groups and identifying many levels (local, area, national and global) of mission and ministry give our members ample opportunity for involvement. We are also blessed to be a new congregation with less historic challenge.
- My congregation has a focus for the years ahead and the capability to carry out our mission. The synod is more and more limited in their resources, but provides a vital function in assisting and connecting congregations. The ELCA I am very proud of in their global consciousness and emphasis on God's grace and welcome! Younger generations are far more open minded and far less dogmatic than previous generations and that bodes well for our future.
- my congregation growing due to people to rural areas; SWTs has strong leadership in key positions; ELCA - becoming more forward looking
- My congregation, the synod and the ELCA all do great work but I do believe there is always room for improvement.
- My church is more and more relying on "fundraisers" to meet basic needs for the church. The presence of retired ministers in our membership stifles the leadership of new pastors. Currently we are failing to have enough income to pay a full-time pastor and are relying on those rather elderly retirees to pastor us. We have limited mission programs, with very limited outreach into the community. We have a negative view of LGBTQ people, driving them away. I'm not familiar with the Synod's work and I wonder if that is because we're not involved or if our part-time pastor is not keeping us informed or encouraging us to get involved. I'm optimistic about the ELCA. I joined my church because of what I learned about the ELCA's relatively liberal views on social issues and was delighted to find we had an ELCA congregation during our very conservative community. But it seems to be ELCA in name only.

- Most of what has gone wrong with the ELCA was rooted in the "special-interest group" process that dominated the merger process. Rather than thinking theologically about church, wherein our politics grew out of our theology, we have unfortunately reversed the process, with theology growing from politics. From 2003 with Called to Common Mission, and 2009 with Sexuality, the decisions of the larger ELCA have significantly impacted this Synod resulting in many leaving our fold, and with on-going rumblings among those who've stayed with us. A small piece of the larger pie, our congregation has come through a very difficult few years, and given the call of the right Pastor, I'm more optimistic about our future. The same, I supposed should be said of the Synod, given the election of the right Bishop. I'm far less optimistic about transforming the entrenched bureaucracy in Chicago or the faculties of some of our seminaries. Still, God is in charge and remains in the miracle business.
- mientras que las congregaciones hispanas estan muy optimistas en cuanto a trabajo, evangelización y misión, y nuestro Sínodo demuestra optimismo, no estamos tan seguros de como nos esta apoyando ELCA
- many Sunday school organizations, rummage sales accessible and very helpful not much dealings
- It seems to me it is the older generation that makes the decisions and I believe new blood with new ideas need to be included to make sure our next generation can be included.
- It seems the Synod and ELCA dictates what they believe to be the direction of the church with out input of the individual churches themselves, by looking for some many answers on ways to please special interest they are now drifting. They think they have all the answers and tell everyone they have all the answers, when they don't know what is going on at the grass roots of the congregations
- It seems our synod is just flat. What are the experiments we are trying? What are the progressive ways we are trying to speak to a changing world? Thinking in more ways of just change of racial make-up and language. What about the overarching notion that religion doesn't make up most people's worldview any longer? How are we called to be church to a post-Christendom culture?
- individually my congregation (when gathered as a group) is not very vocal in belief or statements, almost like they are afraid of being judged. SWT seems to be strong in their commitments ELCA in our congregation and community churches have a voice and gather regularly
- In response to my congregation: My congregation is an aging congregation however they are a willing group of Christians who care deeply about their church, the church, and mission. In response to the SWT Synod: Our synod has been and continues to be strong in its leadership and in mission. Its direction continues to look forward to the future of the Church through the Living Word and Sacraments. The Synod is involved in its congregations and therefor brings them together in unity, supporting them as individual members yet brings all congregations together as one forming them into the members of the Body of Christ. Its programs support unity and mission making it a formidable force in mission in our Father's world. In response to the ELCA: The ELCA is in mission with the world and walking in the light Jesus the Christ has put before us. To have anything except optimism would be contradictory to His teaching of the Living Word. The mission we undertake and the members of the body we come together to form may change in appearance, or in direction and we remain one in mission. We are ecumenical, our doors are open to the stranger, our hearts beat as one.

- In my opinion the ELCA is politically way too liberal, I think that it neglects its roots to seem progressive. Eventually, I think the ELCA will splinter and dissolve. I think the ELCA has sought to determine who it is socially before it determined who it is as a worshipping body
- I've been with my congregation for 12 years. We can't seem to get over the hump and maintain enough membership to generate enough offerings to support purchase of property and a permanent building to call home.
- I'm ignorant. But I see a great pastor and steady growth. I participate in the memorial luncheons so I note the last generation is clearing out and being replaced by new retirees.
- I'm optimistic about the future because this is God's church.
- I'm of the opinion my home church will grow and thrive. We include congregants without judgement and by not falling for the feel-good logic professed by the ELCA. The synod too is allowing the feel-good liberalism to enthrall them. I'm afraid our ELCA has been hijacked by leaders who do not know what the real world is. Does not know what real grace is. They strive real hard to push away the loyal members to include delusional Liberal trained people. The ELCA is trying real hard to lose me and my family. They elect a woman Bishop who does not have the ability to lead and foster our declining membership. I love our women Pastors but this one is out of her league.
- I'm concerned with country-wide decline of church attendance, but hopeful people will return to God's word, and their churches.
- I'm an optimist at heart, but I also like to be cautiously optimistic. I believe the reality is that the Church (global Church of all denominations), is going to continue to struggle with attendance, commitment, and identity for a while longer (10-20 years). I think that the ELCA's struggle with a classic Lutheran identity won't be helpful, either. Yet, as the new generations come up, they are not so interested in seeing their church as a social club, but rightly as a place to worship and an entity that is to be a force for God in the world. I will take a while for it to happen, but I think that the new generations will give the church a sense of its classic identity and a renewed sense of God's mission and purpose.
- I was born into the Lutheran church. I've seen changes that have been positive for the growth of the church and some that have not. Changes are a part of life and I feel that the higher up in the leadership/organizational pyramid you go the more likely there will be change. That is why I feel more optimistic on the lower levels and as you rise the pyramid, I get less and less optimistic about the outlook of things.
- I think we're doing good work, but there's always something we can do better. I'm concerned about how well the ELCA, the Synod, and my congregation are adapting to an increasingly multicultural nation. In some ways, we're doing this well, but we're still overwhelmingly Anglo.
- I think the future of our church depends on its members being optimistic about the future and what it holds for all of us.
- I think the church would become more visible if the emphasis on preaching God's Word and administering the sacraments were of the highest priority. The church is where that Gospel is preached and the sacraments are administered according to that Gospel. The church would do better if it would move away from analytical assessment toward more intentional mission focus in pastoral leadership training.
- I think my congregation is in a good place and has a positive outlook for the future and growth. I know the synod and national offices are doing some very amazing work which will continue to benefit God's Kingdom.
- I think my congregation is at a point where it could go either way, into decline or continuing to thrive.

- I sense no goals or direction in the larger church.
- I see opportunity in Shared Lutheran Ministry that has provided me with a hope and joy that I have not looked at the same way prior to a presentation. My congregation has been sustaining and growing. The Synod has been so very supportive and provides the information and leadership experiences that will move us forward and we need to choose to do so and keep working in faith. The ELCA is the glue that provides the bridge to the greater Body of Christ. I am proud of our leadership!
- I see good leadership by individuals and groups at each of these levels.
- I see all the work being done in these three divisions and I am optimistic that the good work is going to continue!
- I refuse to feel pessimistic about the greater Christian Church (Roman Catholic and all Protestant Denominations), but I do think we are during change. If the individual congregation (mine, specifically), our Synod and the ELCA do not keep up with societal changes, we will fall apart. I see all three working at that goal, but I continue to see numbers declining in all three areas.
- I really haven't a clue as to what our Synod does. I am discouraged by some of the social stands the ELCA has made public via social media.
- I like to think of us as a "glass half full" congregation.
- I just arrived as pastor one month ago. For years, this congregation did not have a called pastor and they felt somewhat neglected. The majority are elderly and while still active in worship and a few ministries, they do not have the energy to go out. I believe they are more optimistic than they were two months ago, and I pray together we can lift and encourage each other as we discover our gifts and strengths that have no physical bounds.
- I have explained at the beginning of this survey why I am neutral on the future of our congregation and why I am marking this as Neutral
- I have a lot of hope for how God is working in this congregation...however I am realistic about the challenges of debt and growth patterns.
- I feel we are all far too inward looking. Meanwhile the world is evolving and passing us by. When folks say, they don't have time to "help our neighbors" they really mean it isn't a priority. And that is our failure.
- I feel the Synod could offer more time, money and spiritual guidance to established mission churches
- I feel the ELCA all the way down to the Congregation level is taking a leadership role in being missional and making a difference in our community and the world. We just need to focus on doing more
- I feel that the ELCA and particularly the SWT Synod is interest only in numbers and what make them "Look good". They don't really care about the individual congregation and their struggles and concerns.
- I feel that that ELCA will continue to maintain its strength and health due to its generally welcoming and uncontroversial nature. SWT Synod and our congregation will continue to suffer from a lack of interest among people born in the area and reliant on Lutherans moving here for work or other reasons. There is also an alarming leftism that is creeping into congregational and synod communication in the last year or two. For example, this survey references "social justice". Social justice is a leftist concept of attempting to fight perceived discrimination with more discrimination. It is not actually "just" at all. Immigration is a source of this due to its relevance in south Texas. It is the mission of the church to help the poor and needy, which may include illegal aliens (which, I would add, is the proper legal term. "Alien" legally, means "non-US citizen. It has not ever been a pejorative). These people should receive our charity as a

church without regard to their legal status. However, we should not, as a church, take a position on their lawbreaking, or pretend that their actions are harmless. We can provide them help as a church without needing to justify their actions or take political positions on what the law ought to be. Failing to address this will continue to alienate Lutherans and drive them to Missouri Synod churches instead. I do not wish to be subject to a shaming political lecture in church, either from staff or from other congregants. The Left does not have any moral advantage on any given issue, and it is very tiresome to constantly hear from leftist fellow congregants who then rely on the unwillingness of others to risk an argument to ensure there is no response. My wife and I have discussed that we will likely leave the Lutheran church entirely for a Roman Catholic or Orthodox congregation if our church were to attempt to become a "Sanctuary" for illegal aliens. Being inclusive is one thing, becoming a center for leftist activism is quite another, and lest this be misunderstood, I will close by pointing out that I do not wish to be bombarded with conservative politics in church either. If these issues are not addressed, people uncomfortable with the political atmosphere will go elsewhere and our congregation cannot afford it.

- I feel that my congregation, SWT Synod and ELCA are still working as a team and that the future will only get better because of dedicated people that are involved.
- I feel somewhere between Neutral and Optimistic on all three. My congregation has many wonderful people. There are opportunities for service within our congregation such as Altar Guild, being communion assistants, Men in Mission, food pantry and clothes closet. However, there seems to be a dwindling number of people who volunteer each year, mostly due to aging population. And the younger families seem to be too busy in their daily lives to get very involved. I am just getting involved in the SWT Synod, so I am beginning to understand the missions. I don't believe many of our congregation's member know what the SWT Synod does or how it could help our congregation. And I guess the same could be said about the church-wide ELCA also.
- I feel our outlook is very positive with a young pastor who is daring to change things to bring the church alive again. I feel secure that the ELCA is on the right track by addressing issues as times change.
- I feel optimistic about the congregation I'm a part of now after spending 7 years in a congregation that did little more than sit in the pews on Sunday.
- I feel optimistic about all three areas.
- I feel a great deal of optimism for the gospel, particularly Lutheran theology. My lack of a "very" optimistic response comes more from circumstances and challenges that the church, as it exists, has little to no control over. Our congregations, synods, and the ELCA as they exist right now may look VERY different in 10-15 years and this may have nothing to do with our lack of creativity, reaching out, and efforts. The ELCA may not even exist as we know it and that might be out of our control given the current state of culture, both locally, nationally, and globally. However, my optimism is that the message that our current church body proclaims in the world will not die...it is the gospel message and those who care deeply for continuing to bear that good news in the world will continue to do so in whatever "structure" becomes most helpful.
- I fear for the congregation where I work for previously stated reasons. Participation and giving continue to decline, and we are a destination location for most our members (Vs. a neighborhood church) The current membership is very resistant to change, or even exploring a broad path for our future. the motto here seems to be "we only do what we have always done" synod- I am hopeful that because the synod is more connected to the whole community of South Texas, there will be more vision and flexibility applied to the future

- I don't feel like we've been very connected to the Synod at all. Especially during leadership change at our congregation, the Synod didn't seem incredibly kind, nurturing or helpful. I would love to see connection to the greater church through the Synod and especially the Bishop. Shouldn't the Bishop visit all churches on a rotating basis? I am quite certain that a greater Synod presence among individual congregations would greatly connect us all as Lutherans, especially in an area and climate where we are the minorities (among Catholics and Baptists).
- I do not understand some of the things the churchwide is doing, not sure if everything is appropriate to expect people to get on board with and follow. I like the Bishop and find her personable, inspiring and caring with a deep love of the Lord. Just not sure sometimes but what churchwide and even the synod tends to think of small rural churches as more of a cross to be borne than a spiritual resource for the larger group.
- I do not see the Synod or ELCA Church wide as being able to move forward fast enough to meet the ministry needs of a fast-changing social environment. We need to look at the "growing" churches, figure out how and why they are growing and maybe do some of the things they are doing - without abandoning our Lutheran beliefs or heritage, but recasting ourselves to meet the needs of the "ordinary" people. Isn't that what Martin Luther did. Our "church" - meaning church wide, is stuck in too many "old ways". Takes much, much too long for us to decide or change something. We study things to death and by the time we determine the best course of action, time has passed us by.
- I choose to believe that traditional church bodies can find a way to meet the needs of a changing world, individual communities, and individuals. That we will be more creative in our outreach to those who feel abandoned or demeaned by the government, traditional church institutions, and society at large. That our inclusiveness will vastly outshine any semblance of exclusiveness and we will find the ways and means to unite with all who share in God's, Christ's, and the Holy Spirit's message of our "oneness".
- I cannot predict the future. it is too uncertain. Whether my congregation, the SWT synod or the ELCA will continue to exist is certainly not certain. But what I do know is that our faith is real. We may become the remnant. But we will have the opportunity to share our faith. And we will have the opportunity to help those around us in some way. But it may look very different.
- I believe the strength of the ELCA lies in its synods and congregations. I am not that committed to the political ideology of the wider church in that it really does not contribute to my emphasis in witness and proclamation of the Gospel message. I am committed to the ELCA because of its confessional affirmation through its faith statement as prolegomena in the constitution. I am not in favor of the ELCA in its politically driven agendas which I feel lean more toward the left. But I am committed to the New Testament message and the cohesiveness that our Lutheran confessional documents assist in the transmission and proclamation of the New Testament witness in the Gospel. This should and has helped to reach many people who have felt disenfranchised by the institutional ideology that seems to take the place of the basic witness that is contained in the unique message of the New Testament.
- I believe the ELCA is moving into very political territory such as divesting in Israel that has nothing to do with the teachings of Christ.
- I believe that Jesus will walk with us all, and when necessary, will carry us, to ultimately achieving our goals
- I believe our congregation is working through a time of redefinition: who are we and where do we want to be?
- I believe our congregation is satisfied with worship on Sunday mornings. We are an aging congregation that needs new life. It is sad when the former pastor did not even know the

names of most of the children, rarely had a children's sermon. Really did not like children. The Synod communicates programs and all kinds of opportunities to become informed, and to engage in these opportunities through the on-line or printed Vista. However, it is so easy just to say that does not apply to me, or just choose not to read. Our church rarely promoted anything that the Synod was doing and that included delegates to the Assembly. If you did not read it in the Vista you were not aware of what the Synod was promoting. I receive Bishop Eaton's emails and really appreciate her communicating in this manner.

- I believe insofar as my congregation and the synod continue to be willing to experiment with new ways of doing things, new forms of church, we have a bright future. We need to continue listening/discerning. I'm less optimistic about the ELCA because I see them as continuing to try to "save the institution" and implement top down directives, rather than focusing on how they can uniquely support/equip the work of synods and congregations
- I am worried as my congregation is aging and we say the right things but don't follow through.
- I am thankful for the outreach for social justice and ministry to those in need provided at all levels. I appreciate Bishop Eaton's willingness to speak out on the mission of the church during these troubled times.
- I am optimistic, after meeting Bishop Eaton and hearing her visioning for the Church. I was Assistant to the Bishop during the time of difficulty when we as a Synod lost many congregations. I have been retired officially for several years, but I still am active Rostered/Retired as a Visitation Pastor for a large congregation in this city. I do 50-60 shut in visits every month around the area, and sporadically in further away places.
- I am optimistic that we are turning a new direction both in this congregation and the synod. In both areas are no longer focused on conflict but are now uncertain. The ELCA needs to better articulate its purpose beyond the congregation. It needs to see itself as an equipper and resource of local ministries and less as an expert on how ministry should be done. I am not optimistic that the efforts of CSM will turn from a model giver to a resource sharer.
- I am optimistic because I have been praying that the Holy Spirit would come to us in a mighty way to renew us and embolden us in spreading the Good News.
- I am hopeful for the congregation I am serving, the synod and the ELCA. We have come through some very difficult transitions and in many ways, are part of a conflicted church which is very evident in the society in which we live. I feel like the leadership is optimistic but out of touch with what the people are experience. The theological underpinnings for our people are weak now. We have been deluged with 'pop' theology and evangelical fervor mixed with anger and defensiveness about Christianity. Understanding the exciting opportunities for the Body of Christ in a very conflicted society is being kept hidden/silent. We are too afraid to be honest and live out who we are. Despite all this, I am optimistic that we will move forward with courageous leadership.
- I am hopeful for our congregation and hope and pray we are on the right track. We have a wonderful group of "elders" in our congregation. I only wish we had younger and newer members.
- I am having difficulty with the negativity in the world today as well as the contradiction of beliefs. As I said, I was not raised a Lutheran. Many recent statements by Bishop Eaton make me wonder. Biblically protecting family, home and property was/is important. I am not saying not to welcome immigrants, I am saying there is nothing wrong with vetting. I mean, does the Synod lock their office doors? This has been a real struggle for me lately.
- I am concerned that we tend to be more reactive than following any type of strategic plan even if it's for the short term. I find this esp. in our congregation. It may be a reflection on the lack of

understanding of the more global plan of the ELCA. Within our Congregation, we often seem to jump around without a good sense for what our priorities need to be to keep in line with our vision statement.

- I am cautiously optimistic that we are positioned at all three levels to move forward in service and witness as a sign of God's reign among us. This congregation is ahead of where it was a year ago. I think the ELCA is uniquely positioned as a "big tent" institution where diverse perspectives are welcomed to live side-by-side, and this is unusual in our societal context. As far as the synod goes, I really don't have a strong feeling on it. Lots of congregations are struggling but that's true in lots of synods. I am a bit perplexed that we are nearly 2 million less than we were at the formation of the ELCA yet we are still support just as many synods and regions, and wonder if a consolidation of administrative structures might make sense.
- I am a lifelong Lutheran but have only been associated with the ELCA for the past decade. I am thrilled with what this church stands for. I am concerned about the health of the Christian church in general though. Our congregation beats itself up a lot about not growing but I feel too many members don't realize that mainline denominational churches aren't necessarily growing across the board. I think collaborating with other churches in our town (we're the only Lutheran church) more might strengthen us--not just our congregation but the body of Christ. I think, though, this scares people in ways. I think theology is important; I think being distinct is also important. Not sure how to break down walls and remain true to core values. The example of the Lutheran church in the past fifty years or so isn't encouraging. How can we partner with other Christians when "Lutherans" continue to splinter and retreat to our own echo chambers?
- I always believe there is hope for the future, because it is God's church. However, it is a struggle but mostly because we always think it must stay the same but that may not be.
- Have not been impressed with some of the things our Synod has done in the past and some of the people who were the leaders.
- Good Shepherd sees that God has work for us to do and we want to be part of that work. We are God's hands and can aid, love and support to our neighbors just as God Blesses us.
- God is working in these, and though the future may be different than I plan or intend, it will be as it needs to be, "thy will be done."
- God is in control which makes me hopeful. But people within the church, especially church leaders, have their agendas and priorities which they focus on more than what the congregations themselves seem to need. I sat once and listened to a bishop's assistant tell our council how we were going to die as a congregation and how we had to do Hispanic ministry and not to worry about the old-time members who would leave. They'll find another church. I told him off in tears. Now another church I now is struggling and they send an SAM to be their interim and she gets up and starts preaching how that church needs to close. On her LinkedIn page the first paragraph talks about helping the congregation die. Every year our synod throws its support behind new congregations that all seem to be floundering and they ignore the small existing churches providing us nothing. This makes me pessimistic about the SWT Synod and the ELCA.
- God is in charge and he will always have been here and with us in Spirit
- God is doing wonderful things in my congregation, in this synod, and I believe across the ELCA. These are rapidly changing, and often challenging, times, however. I sense that there are big temptations for congregations everywhere when it comes to faithfully discerning the leading of the Holy Spirit as opposed to hunkering down in fear and longing for the past. I believe that God is providing us with a wonderful opportunity to witness God's goodness and creativity in new and surprising ways. I am optimistic that through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit we will be

gifted with the ability to keep up with what God is doing. (I would say very optimistic, but I know that this will not be an easy road. We will have to pray continually and rely on God's Spirit faithfully as we journey into the future of wherever it is God is calling us!)

- Given the age of our congregation and the limited amount of financial support we will have when the elders are gone, if we do not find our way soon, it will be hard to sustain in 10 years. The ELCA and Synod have human and financial resources to continue. In addition, the ELCA is active in the World and looking toward making positive social changes.
- From my point of view: my congregation meets important needs for members and for the surrounding community. The good news of God's grace is preached during each worship service. The good news includes all people, not just a chosen type of people. Differences are celebrated. The congregation is energized by the Spirit of God as she shows up in healthy, non-judgmental relationships. The Synod and Churchwide offices provide helpful support and resources.
- For the work, health, and love evident
- ELCA becoming more progressive. Synod needs to support rostered leaders more.
- Doing new things, former members who left have returned, and interest by people in the worship services has increased.
- Continuing decline and aging with no effective plans to change.
- Congregations in predominantly rural areas are always struggling to live. Large farming operations mean less and less people in the rural areas. Then take into consideration the plight of rural economy. The church will be in rural areas, but we need to figure out ways to provide quality rural ministers, once again. Big city churches will provide pastors for big cities and our seminaries are not making newly ordained pastors to be available to be available to serve the whole church. There is a little too much of a job and not a vocation involved for pastoral families. There will always be a higher structure of synod and national church. But it, too, needs to adjust to the times and get behind the church that is in small towns and rural areas.
- Congregations are supporting the Synod.
- Congregation: feeling of congregation is upset and no communication between individuals
SWT Synod: not sure where the SWT Synod is with Congregations & communication the ELCA: not sure if its strong enough to handle issues that are going on. They are involved with political and need to stay with the Scripture
- Congregation-wise, we are in a growing area outside Austin. If we plan for to grow with this growth, I believe we will, and I think we are taking important risks in staffing and serving beyond our walls to be a Lutheran witness to the gospel in the Highland Lakes Area. Neutral on the SWT because of the stats shared at recent deaneries. There seems to be way too many shrinking congregations, and so many that cannot afford full or even 1/2 time pastors to shepherd. I am concerned we will continue to become ever-distant islands in a large geographic synod. I also think the valley should be their own synod due to the specific ministry focus and size of current synod. ELCA is kind of a mixed bag. Church-wide does so much, but I'm amazed at how little folks in local congregations know. Even good communication doesn't always help in better awareness of the larger church. Folks are very local when it comes to thinking about church, yet there is so much value in seeing and feeling being part of a larger body. I don't always think the southern part of the ELCA gets as much attention as the Midwest and northeast (where most of the congregations in the ELCA reside). If we are to be a church on the margins, we need to live it more. I speak to myself and our congregation, but I think church-wide offices need to be on different margins. Chicago is fine. Yet, what about the Southwest? What about the border? What about the other margins. What if church wide's location was like the Iona

Community in Scotland...not necessarily that easy to get too...but in a place for a purpose. Maybe it's time to think multi-point with church-wide offices.

- Congregation is vital, strong, relational, willing to listen to new voices Not sure what is going on at synod level, or their outreach/ministry to our church They are good at sharing through media what they are doing, and it looks good and right
- congregation continues look inward and seems to believe the words "they will come" when they see. I believe congregations is very afraid of any kind of change.
- Can't rate because there are 9 ways of looking and responding to these questions. I will say that our congregation does not have a sense/clear picture of what their mission is
- Based on what I see at my Congregation, I am optimistic.
- At the congregational level of laypersons and ministers, there is energy and focus. The mission of the SWT Synod is unclear to me, and communication from the Synod is lacking; and I would raise up the NTNL Synod in its leadership, communication, and educational opportunities.
- At our church giving for our local ministries (worship, stewardship, Christian ed, evangelism) and the infrastructure (salaries, utilities, etc.) go under funded. Yet, the membership could give \$12,000 to retire a mortgage. At our current pace of spending exceeding income we would be broke in 6 months. However, due to a generous financial gift this has "kicked the can down the road" for a year or so. As a council, we must plead for offerings to meet operating expenses which has become more of a negative. The SWT synod has done nothing to support the local laity at our church. We only get information from our pastor or by viewing the SWT synod website. There are mixed feelings about our church's relationship with the ELCA/Synod. Some say all our benevolence budget (10%) should go to the ELCA/Synod. Others say nothing should go to the ELCA/Synod. The main issue I see is the laity nor the clergy have any desire or limited skill set to run a church business. It is my perception that the laity come to hear the gospel and pastors feel called to preach the gospel. However, the business of running a church is ad hoc. Who knows how to interpret a P&L statement? Where does one go for church business legal advice?
- As we focus on the local congregation, we help grow our regional synod which strengthens ELCA. We must constantly be focusing on the growth of all 3 which will spread Christ's message to the world as we are told to do in the Great Commission.
- As one grounded in our Crucified and Risen Lord Jesus, I am hopeful. Each of the "levels of our Church" has many challenges. Yet I am confident that with careful discernment, bold and imaginative leaders will arise and guide the church--in three expressions--in needed and new ways.
- As God through the Holy Spirit directs
- As a Council Member and a 35-year member of Lord of Life, I am concerned about the future of our Church. We have an aging congregation. We have visitors who rarely return. Young families may come for a few weeks and they leave. We are not bringing in younger families and new members. We continue to cancel fund raising events we are known for and have established - cancellation due to lack of volunteer involvement. We have cancelled our Annual Easter Egg Hunt that we have done for the last 12-15 years. We have 6-8 people who do the work of our church. We have approximately 25-30 in church on Sunday and none for our Lenten Services so those have been cancelled. We had 10 for Ash Wednesday. We need Assistance or we will join the many other Lutheran Churches in San Antonio and must close our doors within the next 5 years, if we continue this path.
- As a congregation, we are very active and have developed a healthy spiritual family. We are very welcoming to all and have a diverse and dedicated member. Our feelings in relationship to the

synod is that contact and leadership from the synod is limited. The lay leadership from synod committees is very limited. We feel very strongly about the work of the ELCA especially the focus and leadership on social and justice issues.

- As a congregation, we are struggling with low membership and poor finances. The future does not look very hopeful for us. As we struggle, the SWT Synod communicates with the part time pastor and communicates their desires with that person and how the pastor is dealing with our congregation, but there has been NOTHING from the synod that is visible and interactive that show any concern for the congregation...only that we survive, somehow within the Synod for the Synod's sake. The same is true for ELCA.
- A lot of the people are very happy with the church
- All three levels have significant challenges, but all have shown resilience and are in phases of increased focus on core missions and increased willingness and capacity to innovate.
- All are in financial problems; social ministry seems more important than Gospel ministry
- Again, I think it is time for a change! I think we should move our pastors around. I think we let them stay too long and get too comfortable.
- This congregation has little to be optimistic about. If it were not for the income provided by the leasing of public parking, it would have gone through its endowments and either closed or be in the process of closing now. Member giving is almost nonexistent. Other than Sunday worship and the occasional additional service (Wednesday evenings in Lent), there is almost nothing that takes place here. At present, other than the formation of youth on Sunday mornings there is other faith formation taking place. No adult Bible studies, no classes, no mentoring. Even the traditional worship that was once the pride of this congregation, is eroding into a lackadaisical mélange based on nothing. B) Based on my personal interactions with this Synod, it's not clear what the purpose of the Synod is other than to serve as a club for clergy and will even defend clergy who are obviously in the wrong. I have zero confidence that this Synod is interested in the well-being or the faith of its laity. C) Although there continues to be lip-service paid to the Lutheran Reformation, seminary students and newly ordained pastors with whom I have spoken have made it very clear that neither their schools, their Synods, or the national church is interested in forming them in the faith of the Lutheran Confessions. The pastor here admits to holding a heretical Christology. Our previous intern said on more than one occasion that she didn't particularly care what the Augsburg Confession says. This trend has been taking place over many years and the move from the very well edited LBW that embraced the best of the Lutheran Reformation with the rediscovered emphasis on ancient practice to the slapped together ELW is evidence of this paradigmatic shift.
- I have watched up close and from afar as my congregation has stayed the same since the early 90s. any efforts to bring new life or direction are met with apathy. when a member does step up an interesting phenomenon occurs where that one becomes in their mind and the churches as the only one who can or will do anything. this is not healthy behavior but does continue to happen. in this I see there is still hope, as members do step up and are invigorated to do and share God's work. On the other hand, is precedent and history which do not bode well for the future. b) the leadership of the Synod and its subsequent work point towards continued growth and development of our church. continued growth and progress have been seen in previous years so it can be expected to continue-growth may not mean numbers specifically c) same as b
- there are leaders in the congregation. My optimism is grounded in their growing ability to work together. b. our bishop has been very quiet on issues that have impact on the whole country, or perhaps his thoughts have not been expressed in the media which I use. He has indicated that he will not be a candidate for re-election at the end of his term. The two additional leaders in

the synod office have been, and are, cause for optimism. c. Bishop Eaton is providing very good leadership. The Living Lutheran truly is alive because of editorial leadership and well written contributions. The church wide call to live the faith encourages optimism. Holy Spirit is working.

- our congregation is strong loving sustainable and self. b. SWT synod works to keep congregations together and thriving struggles with direction. 3. ELCA struggles with results of loss of (something), these to be on our seeds of all issues and is left with weakened position on interpretation of scripture.
- Our congregation has a strong and growing membership, strong leaders and volunteers and a good pastor although he is retiring. b. Not really acquainted with the synod nor knowledgeable about it. c. The ELCA is strong but fighting indifference and generally falling memberships and attendance.
- My congregation is a great place to explore the meaning of the Scriptures and God's purpose for us. b. The Synod is still recovering from its divorce a few years back, We're alive but weak. c. The ELCA is like any big organization and big organizations don't adapt very well.
- With a Mission, Vision and Strategic Plan the congregation has a goal to work toward. With an engaged interim pastor, members are returning. Having a Strategic Plan in place has helped in the process of Calling a pastor who will continue to be engaged and work toward growing the church as if we are a new Mission congregation. B. The SWT Synod, until recently, has been relatively unresponsive. This congregation is not trusting of the Synod. Some of this could have been the lack of connection between the previous pastor and the Synod, however, there have been several instances in the past 10 years when the congregation felt pretty much thrown under the bus. C. The ELCA is felt to be all inclusive. However, this congregation is not a group of activists. We will be the 1st to feed and clothe the poor and hungry, but you will not find members of this congregation marching on the state capital. It was extremely disconcerting to hear in the video "Harvest of Empire: the Untold Story of Latinos in America" that the US has caused all the upheaval in Cuba, Dominican Republic, Latin America due to greedy American corporations--really? This type of political activism is extremely off putting.
- we are in transition with young, new pastor & changing congregations b. I am very optimistic about the Gulf Coast Synod, more so than ours. Would like to see more social contact & notification of events, I would love for our bishop to be more energetic and out-going and informative. Let us know lots more about what is happening in our synod and opportunities for networking and events that we may collaborate on. Despite the 150 yr. Anniversary, there has been very limited, if any, information come out and how we can celebrate this milestone. c. I have been very impressed with Bishop Eaton's statements, thoughtfulness, engagement in the church. She has put "Lutheran" out there! Was privileged to meet her at TLU this spring and listen to her in Q & A from the audience.
- always optimistic about my church. b. feel like sometimes the Synod tries to inflict its political views on my church.
- a - congregation is struggling b - synod is willing to try 'out of the box' possibilities c - I love what our ELCA stands for; yet we must come to terms with Why we remain the 'whitest' mainline denomination. We don't seem able to comprehend or accept the importance of addressing racism & privilege, especially in the geographic strong-hold areas of Lutheranism in this country (my ancestors & history). Our church sadly does not reflect the rich diversity of our communities.
- Our church: Certain members think it's their church and are resistant to change. Our church is too inner-directed. The Synod: Needs to do a better job of managing and knowing it's pests.

Having pastors do their own assessment takes out objectivity and leaves out input from the members. Leadership needs to visit all its congregations with meet and greet sessions; tell us what you're doing & why. Synod should encourage and imitate strategic planning for congregations that are struggling and FOLLOW UP on process/progress. ELCA: Needs to do a better job of marketing itself. Should encourage congregations to become involved in community issues. The issue of gays turned many members off; had it been addressed as congregation being welcoming to all regardless of their race, color or sexual orientation folks would have been more open. Pushing change on folks generates resistance; getting them involved on how to make their congregation more welcoming creates ownership of change. Should encourage younger women to be one involved in WELCA; like many congregations, it has mostly an older membership.

11. What is one thing you think the synod does really well and should continue?

- Youth gatherings and organization
- Wrestling with and confronting while privilege/ racism
- Wow. Hard to say. The Trisynodical Leadership Conference is useful.
- works to provide good pastoral care and programs to educate support and equip lay leadership for congregations.
- Working with a congregation individually when needed
- work to keep congregations engaged excited and informed. camping ministry
- Willingness to let congregational leaders 'think outside the box'
- When I figure this one out I will let you know,
- Wealth of experience in developing leaders through candidacy and call of rostered leaders, and equipping of all leaders.
- We look to the synod as a resource when we need an interim. They do that well.
- We don't really see them
- We do not know
- VISTA is an excellent tool to provide the info about synodical happenings and individual church and camping info
- Very Visionary, willing to step out and try something new. Willing to experiment with new ideas.
- Very nice synod assembly
- Using talents of individuals in congregations.
- Trisynodical conference. the weekly electronic newsletter, although it could also improve
- Training leaders and strengthening ministry outreach. Pastoral care/call assistance.
- To be supportive of their ministers
- To be honest, I'm not sure what the purpose of the synod is. I'm new to the Lutheran church and haven't caught up on the politics.
- This synod does few things well. The Bishop is in a self-serving position, only looking toward retirement. The synod office is in shambles and has been for several years.
- This Synod does an excellent job in making sure the clergy it likes get calls and then protects them against unhappy congregations.
- There are several good examples. One of the best is the way more and more congregations have become involved with their communities and serving the social needs of their neighbors.
- Theological conference with NTNL & Gulf Coast.

- Their openness to try to avenues in worship
- The website is user friendly.
- The website has very good assistance for treasurers.
- The Vista
- The two items are the Missional River and the Healthy Congregation Training. These two programs are a beginning of working with congregations to think about being a public church. Whether they are successful and how they are being evaluated is not something I know. Working with congregations to bring about the transformation to outreach in the community is critical, but labor intensive. The calling of pastors to do Hispanic mission development by the dual call of 50% current congregation and 50% in Hispanic ministry. The problem is that this is only a 3-year commitment. Three years is not long enough. So, funding beyond that from church wide for mission development needs to be explored.
- The Synod provides tools and information for congregations with specific program goals. We can call on Synod staff for help with Administrative and Planning issues.
- The Synod is visible in many of the small, more geographically isolated congregations. The Bishop and other Synod Staff are available to preach and/or lead a Sunday School class. Keeping connected to a smaller, rural congregation helps them better see their relationship to other Lutherans.
- The Synod is thoughtfully responsive in times of turbulence
- The synod is pragmatic when approaching congregations about the possibilities of calling pastors and encouraging congregations to consider ways to cooperate with other congregations. The synod is always exploring new ways to be more effective in supporting congregations and pastors. The synod is very effective in the annual tri-synodical theological conference.
- The synod is doing a good job of making sure that the conversations that address social justice issues are being addressed and encouraged.
- The Synod informs congregations and supports efforts, self-study--call process, etc., The quarterly Newsletter is helpful--keeps us 'in touch.'
- the synod does many things well - the SAMS program in my favorite helped many congregations
- The Synod appears to have good communication and support for the Pastor
- The support we get from Bishop Ray is wonderful! I cannot imagine our future without his leadership, but I firmly believe he is leaving the Synod with a great reputation and our next Bishop will be able to follow well. I also know that we have wonderful pastors in our Synod, so I do not look to the future with fear, only with thankfulness for what we have experienced so far.
- The fact that the Synod allows for ministry experimentation is something that we significantly value. Out of it comes contextual learning, new ways of being the church and more informed ministry engagements in our serving communities. With this healthy sense of experimentation also comes the real effort to encourage and lead congregations in mission cooperation.
- The dynamic energy, enthusiasm, and knowledge Sue Briner and Judith Spindt bring to the synod is a plus. You cannot help but be excited about the Spirit when around them!
- The communications with congregations and interactions are GREAT!
- The call process has been greatly improved
- The Bishop's leadership provides inspiration and guidance. It is unfortunate that he is retiring next year.
- The Bishop and staff are always available to listen to any needs and to help in the best way they can. The synod has many committees and dedicated people that serve.
- The Bishop and his staff have a passion for their job. They love serving the Lord and it shows. A very positive attitude and they all work hard together as a team. Our church went thru the call

process 4 years ago and Pr Briner was an excellent leader throughout that process. It seems the Bishop's office and staff have become more involved in the life of the synod churches. Missional river is an excellent tool for churches to take part in. The shared ministry team that has just been formed is an excellent option for churches to participate in, instead of closing their doors.

- Thanks for this synod's willingness to look at different ways for visioning word and sacrament ministry. I think this synod has a good grounding in making the New Testament witness the central goal for finding new ways to offer this witness. Shared ministry options among conference congregations, emphasis on ecumenical partnerships as ways toward sustainability, and thinking outside the box to help the Gospel witness be the focus of purpose. I am heartened to see this esp. in the new Dripping Springs, TX mission site.
- Synodical events.
- Synodical Assembly (although it becomes very expensive for those attending if housing is needed). Responsive to requests when needed.
- Synod is great at intentionally seeking out voices and listening to as many people as possible.
- Synod gives the conferences the means of being responsible for ministry in their area
- Synod assembly
- supports local churches
- Supporting our camp ministries
- Support pastors and congregations
- Support of LWR.
- Support of ELCA initiatives thru World Hunger.
- Support Mission Work
- Steady support
- stay away
- Spreading the word of GOD!
- Spanish Ministry
- Since I have been away from that aspect I am not sure.
- Sharing information
- set an example to follow Jesus
- Serve the San Antonio/Austin corridor.
- Sending out regular e-mail newsletters.
- semi-annual conference visits. Willingness to support innovative ministries
- Reminding us that we are part of something bigger than our individual congregations.
- proving ministries support
- Providing resources and seminars for congregations at risk
- Provides the structure for congregations to call pastors, camps to serve the needs of children of all ages, relaying information of issues and emergency needs for regional response, and a forum to address congregational and societal concerns.
- Provides opportunities for congregation and individuals to grow in their faith.
- Provides mechanism for pastoral calls.
- Provides guidance and support for new pastors.
- Provide Pastoral Care
- Promoting for youth and kid Bible camps.
- Probably the camps and campus ministry.
- Planning family retreats, camps, etc.

- pastoral placement / congregational discernment. Healthy Congregations has been a valuable thing for congregations in transition to go through.
- Pastoral care.
- Pastoral care to pastors.
- Pastor Sue Briner has been very proactive in working with us in the Call Process.
- Pastor involvement locally
- Outward focus
- Our Synod is good at looking at the changing face of ministry and providing congregations tools to cope with the changes.
- Our synod has a positive administration.
- Our strong faith in Martin Luther's catechism
- Nothing.
- nothing
- Not sure.
- Not sure?
- Not sure
- No opinion.
- N//A
- Missional River, new congregation starts
- Missional river
- mission vision
- Maintains visibility with congregations.
- Maintaining the camp ministries, Luther Hill, Chrysalis, etc.
- Look like they are real busy, being important
- Localized seminars / training, such as Healthy Congregations and Missional River.
- leadership in culture change and adaptive ways of meeting 21st century challenges
- Keeps connections available to other and all congregations and other resources. Acts as a hub for connections.
- Keeping in contact with the individual congregations
- Keeping all the Churches in contact with one another.
- It tries to be optimistic
- It is encouraging because it always has staff visit and attend all conferences, churches, and membership.
- Is attempting to reach out to congregations in crisis and to have transitional pastors to help.
- Involving the youth
- Interaction of Synod staff with the congregation and Conference.
- Information Flow ... We know what the Synod is doing and we are afforded ample opportunities to attend training/conferences.
- I've been a voting member at synod assembly three times in the past decade and just feel like it's an incredible event every time (even the years we voted on stressful things!)

- I'm just learning about what the Synod does, but I think the most important thing is to help congregations in transition - calling new pastors, etc.
- I think they support camping ministries well; they should continue to do such things.
- I think the Synod encourages collaboration
- I think the Synod tries to model the behaviors and activities we need to see and do in our congregations.
- I think the synod does youth ministry events and support for youth ministers well and should continue.
- I think the Synod Assemblies are done well and should continue.
- I think the spiritual leadership that the synod provides is very good.
- I think that the synod has many wonderful programs within The Ministry Teams. I just think that somehow congregations need to be made more aware of them and to be encouraged to become more involved.
- I really don't know; I have not been made aware of or sought to find out what the Synod does. It would be nice to know what the Synod as well as Churchwide are doing; perhaps a quarterly update by the Pastor.
- I love the conventions and always wish more people could attend. The worship services are inspirational when there is so many attending.
- I honestly do not know what the synod does.
- I don't know if we do it well yet, but we are on the way to helping congregations to look at ways to work together for the sake of ministry
- I don't know
- I don't know
- I do not know enough about what is done well to comment.
- I do not know
- I do not know
- I cannot think of a thing.
- I believe the synod is a healthy bridge to the diverse settings from city to small town to rural to the valley.
- I appreciate this synod's focus on mission and a clear effort to equip congregations with resources to be proactive in thinking about connecting with our communities in a changing culture.
- I appreciate the Bishop and Synod staff's intentionality in getting out to conferences, deaneries, and congregations. During the early 1980s, I served a congregation in another part of the country, who's last documented visit from a Bishop was 1936. Fifty years was far too long a hiatus and communicated a sense of "you're not important" to a group of folks, within a judicatory which was far smaller than our current synod. So, I'd commend the synod for coming out to where real people serve.
- I am not familiar enough with everything the synod does.
- Helps pastors develop their skills Helping the worldwide church. Working for social justice
- Healthy Congregations.
- Healthy Congregations
- Having pastoral candidates available for call/interim ministry.
- Good question. I can't think of anything. Maybe this survey.
- good communications and always ready to assist
- global outreach

- Global Mission Awareness
- From my experience, the synod really does a good job in helping congregations in the interim/transition process.
- Fostering connections between congregations and all other expressions of the church's ministry.
- For most of the congregation, the synod is where we send money every year.
- focus on the missional river theme.
- Fellowship promotion
- Facilitating cooperative ministry opportunities for small and at-risk congregations.
- Facilitate the call process to provide pastoral candidates to congregations.
- Equipping Leaders. They are a clearing house for various Workshops for pastors as well as lay people. They train for the SAWC program. This is important to those churches that would be closing in an area that needs to hear God's Word yet, cannot afford a pastor. Equipping and nurturing churches that cannot afford a pastor to look to becoming part of a 2 or 3-point parish and the sharing of a pastor. This is difficult work as most congregations do not want to lose their identity.
- encouraging congregations to reach out to their neighborhoods and encouraging congregations to think outside the box. also, the communication through e-news has been very effective and useful.
- encouraging congregations to focus on mission and to work collaboratively with one another
- Encouraging and providing leadership training experiences for congregational leaders.
- Encouraging and guiding candidates for ministry through the candidacy process.
- Encourage community outreach
- El Sínodo trata de entender las diversas y diferentes maneras que usamos como recurso para desarrollo y crecimiento de nuestras congregaciones. Intenta con mucho interés en escucharnos y proveer medios de ayuda.
- Don't really know
- Don't know
- Don't know
- don't know
- Dissemination of information
- Discipleship in and through its programs, support, involvement, action, teaching, local mission and mission to the world.
- Creating partnerships between congregations.
- Coordinates program and logistical support for youth ministry.
- Connects to congregations
- conflict resolution
- Communication: I like the SWT emails and Vista
- Communication with members
- Communication has greatly improved with the Synod e-news. Thank you!
- Communication - email newsletter and Facebook
- communication
- communication
- Communicating the needs of global ministry
- Communicates, shares information and keeps us updated.
- Communicates well: keeps congregations informed consistently of synod and ELCA events.
- Communicate with its members

- collect and maintain our history
- Church camp Global ministry such as soap and school kits
- Caring for its congregations.
- Calling for the ministry
- Calling congregations to reach out to neighbors - Missional river, Transitional ministry forums, etc.
- call processing methodical complete
- Call process. Especially Healthy Congregations.
- call process, supporting congregations in transition
- brings people together in annual assembly
- bringing the Word to life through action
- Bringing resources to congregations. Connects congregations and clergy.
- Bringing congregations together (whether at Synod Assembly or other events) to encourage and equip us for ministry.
- Bishop Tiemann has established strong relationships with our Church and I am sure that is true throughout the Synod providing an open-door communication style and strong support of the individuality of each congregation.
- Being able to personally communicate with the Bishop
- be a support system during conflict/turmoil, respond when called.
- assemblies
- Answers our calls and contacts quickly
- Annual Synod Assemblies
- always there when we need them
- Albeit a small one, the investment in youth workers with a synod coordinator for youth and family ministry.
- Advertise in the newsletter The Vista the ministry of the synod.
- ? I don't know what the SWT Synod does. That should speak volumes. I am a life-long, active ELCA member and a 13-year member of the SWT Synod.
- ?
- ?
- ?
- ?
- ?
- Doing ministry creatively, out of the box. I love our focus on the Spanish-speaking ministries and the support they are receiving.

12. What is one thing the synod does not do well and should stop?

- Youth ministry
- visual aids
- Trying to make the candidacy committee both a spiritual support network for candidates and an evaluative body. These two functions should be separate.
- trying to force Synod's political viewpoints on my church
- Trying to do everything - be all things to all people.
- Truthfully cannot think of anything that needs to stop.
- Through our call process during the past few years we have had much contact with the synod. Some of the responses have been inappropriate and very curt. I feel these could have been handled better.
- this is not an intentional thing that happens but it is something that continues. when information is intended to be shared from synod to minister/lay leader to congregation there is always a breakdown with much or none of the information making its way to the people in the pews.
- They should review the process of taking pastors off the roster just because they don't have a full-time call.
- They don't come around
- There used to be Hispanic staff at the synod office. All were removed and replaced with Anglo staff which was very telling for the Hispanic members of the synod. Whatever the intentions, it came across as RACISM and I'm not sure they were aware of it, noticed it, and I doubt that anyone pointed it out to the bishop or his staff. When the bishop himself replaces a Hispanic DEM in favor of an Anglo who speaks Spanish and when the DEM's staff is Hispanic and loses her job at the synod office and when the only other Hispanic staff person in the synod office is removed for "budget" purposes while leaving others in place, what would you call it? Look at it from my perspective as a Latino and I will tell you what we call it ...
- The synod takes way too long to come up with our social justice statements.
- The Synod should stop referring to social justice and other leftist concepts and be more politically neutral. This is not necessary to conduct mission in the community.
- The Synod should stop playing the Roman Church, it should clear its image or identity.
- The Synod is trying to be in better communication with Facebook, e-news, etc., but it comes nowhere close to the great job the Gulf Coast Synod does. I would certainly like to see much better communication.
- The synod is less effective in using the time spent during the synod assembly and should use the time to bring in Lutheran theology professors, among others, as keynote speakers
- The senior high youth gathering
- The call process could be improved drastically! I sometimes view the Synod like the government. It sometimes gets in the way more than it helps when it becomes a bureaucracy.
- The 50-50 calls to create Anglo-Latino shared congregations.
- Supporting ministry to one specific group while ignoring that our churches should be open to all.
- Structure of Synod is not functioning as well as it could. Needs changing.
- Stop trying to "do Hispanic ministry" because it looks like they are trying to "do ministry for the natives." Additionally, it takes much longer than three years to develop a Spanish speaking ministry.
- Stop presuming there is time to spend but never one to act. That includes real awareness of the area complexity

- not sure
- Not shouting to the mountaintops that we are a Reconciling in Christ synod and have been for many years now
- Not following call process as written. Take time to correct and "amend" short comings of rules and bylaws. Then follow them
- Not aware of anything
- not aware of any, but should review periodically to determine which activities are working and which are not.
- Not aware of any short-comings.
- Not applicable
- Nor sure
- None.
- none
- No sabemos
- No opinion.
- No opinion.
- No comment
- No Answer
- Need to support small congregation more
- NA
- N/A
- N/A
- n/a
- n/a
- N//A
- Making achieving "diversity" a priority.
- Listening to congregations by being in relationship with the congregation. Sometimes they have an agenda and that is more important than listening what the people need or want.
- It's not something that should be stopped but rather enhancing current efforts - helping congregations reach out across cultural lines to attract a broader diversity of people.
- It does not listen to congregants when they come for assistance in dealing with problems within their congregation. They are brushed aside and told they basically should find another church where "they could be happy."
- It does everything well.
- interfere
- I'm not sure the Missional River Initiative was worth the effort
- I think there are problem areas but don't think those things should be stopped but evaluated as to why not as effective as they could be.
- I think the synod should think outside the box on ways to financially sustain the congregation (daycares, charter schools, grants, etc.) And disseminate the information to struggling congregations
- I think the congregations in our synod and its leaders as well as synod staff do not communicate well. I don't believe we should stop communication obviously, but we should strive to all be in relationship with each other more effectively. Sadly, this is a daunting process and I'm not sure what to suggest helping right now though.
- I think the call process in this synod is terrible.

- I really don't know; I have not been made aware of or sought to find out what the Synod does.
- I probably don't know enough to comment
- I personally think that the Synod's public face is too heavily dominated by one socio-politico opinion set. That set likely goes over very well within the Austin bubble. However, as is often commented outside of Austin, "There's Austin, and then there's Texas". Personally, I would prefer a broader base for conversation on difficult issues, with a higher level of respect those who might find good reasons to disagree. I believe that there is profound wisdom in the realization that good Christians of good conscience will frequently, if not always, find themselves disagreeing about hot button issues of the day, particularly when they are related to areas about which the Church has little or no special expertise.
- I know of no such thing.
- I just watched the video on the Missional River on the SWT Synod website. It looks like a wonderful program, but until I was asked to be on the Synod Council, I had never heard of it. I also had not heard of LEAD, Dwelling in the Word, or of God Stories. I think there needs to be more encouragement to our pastors to engage their congregations in becoming involved in these programs.
- I haven't a clue.
- I have no negative experiences
- I have no idea.
- I have no answer.
- I got nothing.
- I don't know.
- I don't know what to suggest in response to this question
- I don't know what this synod does.
- I don't know of anything
- I don't know
- I don't know
- I don't have a suggestion
- I do not think that the synod should schedule events on Sunday!!! Takes away our pastor and small congregations are unable to obtain a replacement. Then also the "canned sermon" we are sent is always acceptable to many in congregation. Keep it simple.
- I do not think simply because some things are not done "well" they should be discontinued. Perhaps they need to be redirected or restructured. Less grant type programs and more monetary mission funding provided to support shared ministries
- I do not know enough about activities not done well to comment.
- I do not know
- I do not know
- I do not have an answer for this question.
- I can't think of anything to put here.
- I can't think of anything they should stop doing.
- I am not sure who controls the rules on past members. We have more nonactive members listed on the anniversary and birthday wishes for the week than active members.
- I am not familiar enough with everything the synod does.
- I am not aware of anything.
- I am not aware of all the details of what transpired between Prince of Peace in Austin and the synod, however, I do know that things could and should have been handled in a more Christ-like

manner. I voice this concern as the neighbor of a long-time, extremely active member. Her sense of abandonment and neglect by the synod may not be 100% realistic, but that does not take one bit of the pain and bitterness away. I wish the synod would take the time to not only look at us as congregations, but also as individuals who during times of loss need comfort and reassurance to everyone who is experiencing this type of situation.

- How it assesses pastors. Lack of visibility in synod churches.
- Honestly, stop pouring all our resources into tiny and dying congregations. If we put all our resources there, that's all we will end up with. Instead, let's look at what the larger churches are doing well, and learn from them. Let's look at what is working, and do that. We can find ways to merge or make 2 or 3 point parishes of the tiny congregations if we need to.
- Hmm... I don't think we do anything poorly.
- Helping keep rural congregations vital to our mission.
- help congregations develop new programs, renew congregations, support leaders
- Haven't been here long enough to make a judgment on this.
- forcing congregations to conform to ELCA policies or leave the ELCA. This is not a simple thing to go but the Christian community must be open to all believers in God. Different denominations and opinions may be the same but for God's holy word to be heard, I believe we must be may not be the same but for God's holy word to be heard, believe we must be may not tolerant of one another. By living in love and care through Jesus Christ, God can change the world and enter hardened hearts and his will be done.
- First, no complaint about the synod assembly, but why not do this every other year and in the off year emphasize conference events to cement local cooperation. As it now stands, the conference assembly is a rather bland gathering that serves only as a pre-assembly meeting.
- First Call Assignment
- Everything.
- emphasize proportion giving - minimize special stop fund drives it does not fit if the cong. promotes tithing and proportional giving
- Educate people as to what they do.
- Duplicating any resources that are better offered by the seminaries, colleges, publishing house of the church.
- don't adjust rules to comply with society changes, teach and follow the bible
- Don't know of anything
- Don't know
- Don't know
- don't know
- does not weigh in on (something) redneck, bigotry, and intolerance in TX
- Does not communicate with congregations in ways that validate the congregation, convincing the congregation that the Synod is hearing the voice of the congregation.
- deliberates as synod council with an impractical structure that only guarantees frustration
- Creation of a 2nd ELCA congregation within spitting distance of an existing ELCA congregation with no explanation as to why or aiding in developing a working relationship between the 2 congregations. This, at a time, when churches are struggling to keep their doors open.
- Could not think of an item that the synod does not do well and should stop. Felt there are areas that the synod needs to improve in.
- Connect the local congregation to church-wide. This often falls on the pastor's shoulders. The synod should find new ways to connect with the congregation other than primarily through the clergy. Each congregation would benefit by having a team of 2 or 3 "ambassadors." Camp

Chrysalis has tried this to some effect...having a point person in the congregation to promote outdoor ministries.

- Communicating the difference between policy/procedure/guidelines and living/moving in systems of flux.
- Cater to those pastor and congregations that refuse to change and are not looking at the reality of the world in a healthy way. Cater to those congregation who are more interested in being aquariums rather than fishing.
- Can't think of anything the synod does not do well.
- Cannot think of anything.
- Cannot think of anything now.
- Can't think of anything.
- Can't think of anything
- call process was difficult with limited choice for a pastor...current pastor is great
- Call process did not work well for the last two pastors we called
- Being more visible in our congregation
- Be more financially supportive of mission congregations
- Assemblies that lack significant necessity
- Asking for money when not developing relationships
- Always trying to fit all congregations in a "one size fits all" concepts.
- Affirming lay and rostered leaders in continued relationships. There are more examples than one should have of interim ministers moved on short notice to other contexts or individual trained lay professionals who suddenly are without purpose because an ordained person moved into the area and was now available to assume the layperson's role.
- advocating for justice and peace issues...becomes politically divisive, in my opinion.
- A lot of things have already been stopped. Synod is currently lean and focused
- A little too much liberty for congregations to fail or succeed with limited (unrequested) input from Synod
- ????
- ???
- ?
- ?
- ?
- ?
- ?
- ?
- ?
- ?
- ?
- ?
- N/A
- Its not God plan for a few to tell Gods children how to live, but to be a part of their life,

13. What is one thing the synod does not presently offer you think it should start?

- Witness leadership at the level of the bishop/synod. The Synod should be catching flack for speaking up on behalf of the vulnerable in our area.

- wider choice of preachers to call
- Well we never see them
- we need to work on call process
- we need support groups for different phases of problem areas such as disease bullying and grief
- We are doing it with our starting up work with other denominations in the area.
- Visiting to bring us updates and all the activities it is involved with.
- Training laity on how to be church council member.
- Training for leaders of the church
- training for Council members and legal issues
- The synod, through the bishop, could be a better public witness and voice on behalf of persons who are oppressed, marginalized, and suffering.
- the synod should initiate an on-going program of professional development for pastors that would include periodic visits to congregations to evaluate preaching and organizational leadership. establish a system of parish visitors to evaluate clergy and direct them for future spiritual and professional growth. establish guidelines for excellence in proclamation of the gospel and spiritual discipline of lay leaders. No organization ever rises above its leaders, which is why raising spiritual and ecclesiastical standards must begin with the clergy. When pastors consistently fall below expected standards, they can be directed to improvement or counseled for other worthwhile vocations
- The answer will come in the middle of the night after I have finished this survey.
- Synod staff reflecting the diversity of culture of its setting.
- Support to clergy who suffer from PTSD / dealing with the trauma of very stressful situations in their parish / accidents, death, suicides of members
- Support in the goals of the congregation, instead of the political agenda of the synod.
- Supervision and professional development of pastors. Transformation of ministry needs the leadership and passion of the clergy. From preaching to development of innovative ministry within a congregation needs to be developed where it is not present. That will require some system of knowing where support is needed for clergy. Professional accountability of clergy is needed.
- Spirituality focus
- Outreach to the individuals within struggling communities of faith.
- Skype or WebEx meetings for those traveling from long distances.
- Showing more appreciation for Congregation who are doing well.
- See above.
- See above
- Review of how a church is doing - follow growth patterns or lack thereof. Follow up on how the Pastor is doing - Is he/she effective.
- return phone calls, get the information on the website up to date, aid with the small congregations that are struggling.
- Resourcing for churches - particularly around ministry with different generations.
- Resources for small churches to pull their resources to be able to call full time pastors to serve multiple congregations such as the one in Pittsburgh PA called PLUM where 5 ministers currently serve multiple congregations. I think they are up to 13 now.
- Regular town hall meetings to discuss how the church lives out faith in culture. Continually interpreting what is happening is so important.
- Regular events for people to discern calls to ministry - keeping in mind both potential first- and second-career clergy.

- Real ecumenical connections
- Reaching out to the 1 million homebound Medicare patients in this country.
- Provide topical specialists for Social Justice informational events as speakers.
- prepare youth to participate more in synod assemblies
- Possibly this is done, but it seems conceivable that the Synod does not know when a church is starting to fail and yet does not acknowledge declining membership in the congregation and at least ask "why".
- Please see question 12.
- Please help to equip us to be salt and light in a very dark, divisive world.
- Perhaps - if possible - some sources as well as personnel in helping youth groups
- Pay equity
- Pastoral care opportunities for pastors
- outlining specific goals for the synod
- other protestant rural churches are struggling - there are small towns where luth-meth-presbt parishes could function we need to start helping each other at some point
- opportunities for volunteers in the U.S. and abroad
- Offering sessions on different aspects of church life, they did the workshops once but have heard of any lately.
- Nothing. I think we need to take a year or two to better assess and communicate what we DO offer and figure out which of those things are most effective and relevant to today's church organization.
- Nothing.
- Not sure. The pastor said the bishop and/ or representative no longer attends functions in the case of confirmation for our church
- Not sure. What is it that draws people to these other non-denoms?
- Not sure. I think the Synod should offer forward thinking programs and idea to involve and minister to youth and young families.
- Not sure.
- Not sure.
- Not sure now.
- Not sure
- not of aware of any, but as per question 12. above, should review periodically to determine needs.
- Not enough attention is given to the variety of resources the Synod must help congregations nurture ministries. If I hadn't sat down with someone on the Synod staff, and mentioned something I was thinking about doing, only to be handed teaching materials the Synod had had prepared for the congregations, I wouldn't have known they existed.
- Not aware of any.
- Not aware if there is a synod staff member or referral for clergy needing counseling. AND offer a subsidized weekend "retreat" for clergy and spouse for a getaway.
- Not applicable

- None
- No opinion
- No Answer
- N/A
- N/A
- N/A
- n/a
- Movilizar pastores/as ordenados/as bilingues hacia el Sinodo SWT
- More visits to local congregations - guest preaching and leading Bible study
- More visits from the Bishop (which the Bishop is a very busy person)
- More support to pastors of mission churches
- More support for smaller congregations
- More support for congregations in transitions
- More resources for special worship events
- Moreover, seeing of the current congregation and why people do not come back
- More opportunities for training in outreach and community building.
- more intergenerational events
- More interest in bringing the best pastoral candidates to congregations - listen to the specific needs of a congregation and not push candidates that are not suitable.
- More encouragement and support/training for lay leaders.
- More emerging ministry sites, i.e., less dependence on outdated congregational model
- more educational opportunities for lay people in areas of evangelism and mission
- More assistance with problems of outreach, growth. What works for a congregation and what doesn't. More assistance with spiritual growth and community. Concentrate on building up what we already have.
- More adult education opportunities along the lines of the Equipping the Saints event held in the Bluebonnet Conference.
- Maybe hosting event with the church bodies, we are in full fellowship with.
- Marketing the ALCA church to the community, i.e. who we are, what we do, what we stand for.
- Mandatory continuing education for pastors. Coaching and support for pastors especially in the administrative aspects of the role: functioning as the senior member of the church staff, overseeing the work of others and managing employee performance, time management, organizational skills, listening skills, prioritizing work. It seems to me that a pastor's education prepares them to be spiritual leaders of the congregation, but provides no preparation for how to be an effective manager of people and process. Most congregations do not have the financial resources to send their pastor to leadership development programs or to hire a personal executive/leadership coach. This is an area that the Synod could make a significant contribution, both by providing this type of development and by REQUIRING it. Many pastors are not willing to invest themselves in this type of continuing education.
- Locally conceptualized ways to partner with other congregations.
- Liturgical materials that focus on Latino traditions
- Leadership training for congregation leaders, including: How to lead/manage a meeting. How to write, propose and manage a spending plan/budget. How to develop and maintain a healthy relationship with pastor and other staff. How to develop and maintain a healthy relationship with Synod bishop & staff.
- lay preacher seminars, lay visitation seminars

- It should start taking a more serious interest in the faith formation of its laity across all congregations and equip them, through their local congregations, to engage the world around them. By this I mean evangelism, feeding schemes, homeless missions, etc. and not just the political nonsense the clergy of this Synod like to post on Facebook.
- In terms of developing future leaders, I think it would help if the synod worked more closely with TLU to encourage more Lutherans to take advantage of what TLU offers
- Ideas for fund raisers to help those churches in financial difficulties.
- Idea: a forum like the healthy congregations only with the focus on youth outreach in the church and community to help older congregations meet the needs of its younger members teaching them how to provide local programs, activities, increasing their involvement in their faith, strengthening their faith, and Christian education.
- I've been involved at the Conference level while lay leader Dale has been involved at the Synod level.
- I'm lost on this one; sorry
- I think the synod is an unnecessary waste on the church. We need change. Congregations could flourish if the Synod would get out of the way.
- I think that not many of our congregation's members really know what the Synod does or how it relates to our congregation. Before I was asked to join the synod council, I did not really know anything about the synod. I'm not exactly sure how to remedy this situation though. Perhaps a representative could visit with congregations during a church service occasionally, to explain the missions, etc. There just needs to be a way to get congregations to better understand what the synod does so they can get excited and involved in some of the missions.
- I think that financials need to take a focus
- I think it would be great if the Synod would offer on-line devotional. Perhaps by starting during the Advent or Lenten Season...offering a scripture reading, a short meditation and a short prayer. It wouldn't have to be longer than a paragraph. But make a more visible effort to be in the lives of its churches and communities.
- I see the importance of having a mutual arrangement between synod and clergy in providing teaching events primarily initiated by clergy for the building up of theological and biblical scholarship. There are many well-trained clergy in our synod who can offer academically and critically based course-work which could assist the seminaries in providing support for those seeking to improve their preaching and teaching skills. How about synod and clergy arranged course-work leading toward STM degrees? This would mean a concentrated effort and connection with Luther Seminary. (I am biased toward Luther in that I am acquainted with some faculty who teach there, e.g. Gary Simpson). Since I am a grad of Christ Seminary/Seminex I have connections with academically trained theologians like Dr. Matthew Becker, Valpo. and Mark Mattes, Grand View College.
- I realize that the Bishop is served by a relatively small staff while he is required to provide oversight of ministry over a broad geographical area. I don't mean it to be a ding in any way, but I'd really like to see the Bishop and the staff out on the parish turf served by our Pastors and Congregations. This is a very diverse synod, with a whole of host of setting related issues, not all of which are one size fits all, with broad differences ranging between historic German Texas enclaves to barrio settings in west San Antonio to the rarified air of Austin to the up-close and personal face of the Third World in the Valley. Walking with the Pastors and leadership where they walk, would go a very long way in affirming and supporting ministry in all the places which are so uniquely challenging.

- I personally would like to see events for children and youth alongside and integrated with adult gatherings. For example, Synod Assembly would be an excellent time to have a program for children. That would make it possible for parents/caregivers of young children to feel more comfortable serving as voting members. More than just childcare, it would be an opportunity for kids and young families to be integrated into the ministry of the wider church and a statement by the synod that people of all ages are valuable members of our worshiping communities. It would speak to those children that they are important and that their role in the church is important. It would say to those parents that their vocation as parents/caregivers is one that is affirmed by this church. It would say to our congregations that people don't have to be retirement age to be actively involved.
- I know that many current leaders in our congregation lack the skills and knowledge to be effective. Those who have the skills are frustrated by those who have none. We need to have a constitution that supports term limits for all positions so we can change without having to fight. We need strong support. People come to their church for a safe place away from the conflict, dishonesty, and political atmosphere. If a person does not have a strong faith to begin with, they have no reason to stay. Most people I visit with do not have the strength to deal with any more conflict in their lives. They do not have the tools to help themselves, much less take on leadership responsibilities. So, I suppose I am saying though I know there are a few leadership opportunities, we need more and they need to be more in depth.
- I have no idea about that either. I have little to no knowledge of the synod.
- I have no answer.
- I have always thought that a synod wide family ministry presence would be foundation forming. Family ministry is an introduction for so many people to Lutheranism, but there is not a synod presence that assists with training, brainstorming, even idea sharing. There is powerful ministry happening in this area, and the synod could enhance that through continuing education, shared experience and training
- I don't think many members really understands the role of the Synod as it relates to day to day life in the congregation or what the Synod does in the linkage with churchwide. I know this topic has been covered at Synod assembly and at Synod Council but it doesn't seem to circle back to the rest of the church community. In our Congregation, there is no report back from Synod assemble so the average parishioner doesn't have a good sense of what the Church's priorities are.
- I don't know.
- I don't know.
- I don't know
- I do not know
- I do not know
- I believe the synod could start some type of diversity/inclusion/racism discussion in a broader context.
- I believe that the growing congregations preach more of what God can and does for individuals now instead of a history lesson
- I am not sure what our synod does
- I am not familiar enough with everything the synod does.
- I am highly satisfied with the Synod involvement in my life and the life of the church. Cannot think of anything.
- Help to put us into conversation with other synod congregations and perhaps even other non-Lutheran Christian churches.

- help for congregations going through changes.
- help
- have a sanctuary art exhibit. I went to one years ago in Duluth Minnesota and it was unforgettable.
- guidelines for churches to provide equal compensation, healthcare and retirement for all church staff, not just pastors.
- Good leadership
- Given my short time in this Synod, I am only learning of its different ministries and commitments. This being the case, I am convinced the Synod could and should be an encouraging voice for our seminaries to train pastors and other leadership in the very skills that today's fast changing social dynamics require such as skills in community organizing, evangelizing and besides Greek and Hebrew, require another current day language. For our mission in Texas, Spanish makes great sense.
- get serious about clergy compensation guidelines
- Forums for discussion of issues which congregational members face in daily life. Social statements come across as "answers from on high", which members must react to. The church needs to listen more and provide guidance when asked, not propose the "right answers" to social issues.
- Follow up and implement synod resolutions. For instance, a few years ago there was a resolution on "bullying" and I never heard anything more after the resolution was passed.
- find a way so that congregation don't split
- Financial aid to future ministers! meet with senior high school graduates regarding becoming a lutheran minister and enrolling in a lutheran college
- fellowship events that foster interaction, growth and development between similar and unlike worshipping communities within the Synod
- Extensive assistance in youth ministries.
- emphasize pastoral formation both in Scripture and Lutheran theological development. This would aid in our ecumenical effort in that we would know who we are both theologically and historically to put forward a distinctive voice in the Christian community.
- Education ministry
- Don't know
- Don't know
- Don't know
- don't know
- Doing some more outdoor things
- direct financial aide
- Difficult to say. Our congregation just really does not know/is not informed about anything done at the synod level
- Developing more shared pastoral (either Word and Sacrament or Word and Service) calls with our full communion partners.
- More kids' events and programs, registrations to help kids not be bored. I just came to synod assembly and I kind of needed more kid events. I did like that they included kids in the Sunday service.
- Cultural orientations for pastors new in rural settings.
- Could we provide more outreach to immigrants?
- Continuing theological education events for pastors
- Contemporary worship resources (e.g., music, liturgies)

- congregational training programs
- Congregation wide worship emphasis like The Story, Bishop Schnase's Practices, Rob Bell Norma etc.
- Conflict resolution team.
- Cannot think of anything
- Can't think of something, at this moment
- Can't think of anything.
- Can't think of anything now.
- Can't think of anything
- can't think of any unmet needs
- Bring back the old "Equipping the Saints" events in all Conferences.
- Bishop's Convo that is more than one day.
- Being truly MULTI cultural, not just Hispanic and Anglo
- being more attentive to the needs of the congregations.
- Be more flexible in program and policies for congregation in outlying and distant varieties that do not fit into the mold of current categorized situations in smaller conferences and circumstances.
- Be more enthusiastic with and about the surprisingly different ministries of millennials and young people.
- be more aggressive on social issues like being supportive of immigrants and their rights, be vocal in support of environmental issues, act on social issues at synod assemblies and authorize the bishop to convey the action of the synod, in person, to state leadership beginning with the governor.
- Backing up the pastors. Sometimes it seems like the first interest of the synod is not getting sued, rather than caring for pastors and other leaders who have been hurt. The pastors need to know that someone has their back. Also, evangelism training that really works and doesn't sound like a program or a project, so all members can find ways to share their faith.
- Assistance with development of relationships with other communities of faith in matters of Governmental interaction and political action.
- Assist in training, revitalize encourage Pastors.
- Anti-racism training
- An up to date website with YouTube stories, podcasts, easy links to ELCA global events. For the longest time, it has come across as a low budget item that reflects on the spirit of the synod as one of struggle and one barely keeping up with technological changes. We will never attract young folk without this kind of technology present from the top. We need better ways to communicate the stories of the synod, beyond print media to tech media to reflect the changing times. How else will we attract Millennials? It's geared for the past not the future.
- An effective plan to outreach to millennials.
- an ecumenical healthcare plan. Why doesn't the ELCA consider joining forces with our full-communion partners to form a healthcare network to reduce costs and bring back / increase the wellness incentives that are helpful and meaningful to this one participant. Some of the stuff I see in the Episcopal system is amazing for clergy renewal and care to not have burnout. Just a thought.
- Although the synod is supporting Hispanic ministries, more financial support and good leadership is needed. Many of the Hispanics are in poverty and therefore cannot and will not be able to support a congregation or minister. Need a program that is more holistic and creative in its support. Need training to develop of relationships with existing congregations so that they

can accompany the Hispanic community, as well, as the LGBT community. We have just completed the Faith, Sexism, Justice: Conversation to a Social Statement. The synod did not lead us to doing this or other justice issues, we have found resources without synod input.

- Aid congregations in mission development.
- Again, I can't think of anything. I know we are not perfect, but I just don't see the gaps
- Affordable housing for Synod Convention
- A renewed way of reaching out to senior high
- a mother's support ministry, like MOPS
- ??
- ?
- ?
- ?
- ?
- ?
- ?
- ?
- ?

15. If you were to set one goal for the synod for the immediate future, what would it be?

- work with Cong-one by one to increase tithing - would solve many financial problems
- use its pastoral resources in teaching collegially at the conference level. Some of us are well versed in NT Greek and Bible translation, Lutheran theology and ethics.
- Unsure
- Unification in our congregation and a new pastor.
- Training to Evangelize
- To visit congregations, find out what is needed and to gather the resources and personnel to help those ministries flourish. The trend reports show it all. even in our largest congregations the number of people worshipping is dwindling. A congregation with over 1300 members has 236 attending on a Sunday. Our small congregation of about 50 worships 37 on a Sunday. we all have the same problem.
- To the Church, what can we do for you?
- To strengthen and revitalize the existing Congregations within the Synod.
- To start three new churches by 2018
- To recover and build upon the enormous losses that the synod experienced when we lost 38 congregations and the people who left the ELCA over the issues that have fractured the synod and somewhat paralyzed its ability to grow and do the Mission and Ministry of the Church.
- To raise awareness that Jesus would want all humans treated fairly and with love and kindness. The current political atmosphere created by the administration is very anti-Christian in its policies and thinking.
- To provide the way for potential bishop candidates to be available prior to the synod assembly. It would help to have several weeks to pray about and to reflect upon what each pastor would bring to the office of Bishop.
- To provide resources to develop youth and strengthen families in the Christian faith.
- to promote sound leadership for bible study and interpretation, for all to become more knowledgeable and able to worship and work to serve God according to his will.
- To phase out. Quickly.

- to partner a strong conference with one of the struggling conferences to strengthen both
- To oversee the reasons people stop coming and do something about it. I was told once when we were considering changing churches that she should not be reason me and my family leave. We have been members all my life.
- to make congregations feel important in their efforts in giving and doing of deeds
- To look for and elect a new Bishop who is as kind and supportive as Bishop Ray.
- To keep and retain members and support ways to stop declining membership
- to increase participation in programs and opportunities that benefit all people.
- To help congregations better see, understand, and EXPERIENCE how they are connected.
- To have a vision for unification but challenge progressive ministry within congregations.
- To examine its effectiveness in providing sustainability and economic support to its member congregations.
- To encourage smaller churches without pastors to team up.
- To encourage and develop leaders in the church.
- To elect a Bishop who is a Pastors Pastor is good as Bishop Ray is right now and to continue with a strong staff.
- To develop a style of communication and interaction with pastors and congregations that is perceived by all as mutual and caring, rooted in a sense of love and respect, not aloofness and condescension.
- to develop a better understanding the deep, ingrained differences between rural, small town and large town churches. the differences are structural and go deeper than personalities and even territoriality. It is possible that if there was a better understanding, the respect necessary as the basis of working together could be developed
- to continue the good work that it does now.
- to continue and grow to administer to the (something) in the synod
- To become known and better involved in each congregation. Perhaps it is just our congregation, but we don't know about all the exciting programs there are to become involved with. We know about a few such as the Poverty Task Force and Peace not Wall, but that is mainly because members of our congregation are leaders in them.
- To be more transparent and communicative with congregations and members of congregations. I think this could be easily done considering today's technology.
- To be known
- This might sound odd and it is influenced by attending synod assembly this past weekend. The last time I attended (6-7 years ago?) much of the focus was on diversity. I think this is a good and crucial focus. It was interesting though because as I looked around the auditorium this past weekend, I saw mostly middle aged to older white people--the types of people I grew up with, went to college with, worship with. And yet, the passion and cry for more diversity still seems the top priority. Have we made progress? Do we stress so much about that that we sometimes neglect what it is we're providing for the people who are already here? All of this to say--my goal would be that we find an identity. I sincerely hope that is a population that is diverse, that looks like the communities in which we live, that is Christ centered and outwardly focused and, at the end of the day, is a church that is ok (not complacent but also not depressed) with who it is.
- There is a BIG difference between support and guidance rather than being self-serving and having an air of "we say you should do THIS!!! because we are the know all, be all and you should realize this and submit.

- The long-range planning team should examine every facet of its role, whether it is helping with the progress of the ELCA mission, or is simply maintaining the status quo.
- that we as a congregation continue to work together despite the coming changes. Change in any sense of the word is difficult for people to deal with. I pray that Christ will continue to lead and show us His mission
- That it continues to promote and establish places of worship for those who desire to gather to hear the Word and participate in Sacraments and desire fellowship with the brothers and sisters of the Lord.
- That communications from the Synod make it to the members of churches and that all members become aware of the wider activities at the conference, synod and national level...that there be knowledge, excitement and confidence about getting involved in communities and beyond...
- Teach excitement in what God does
- Take a break to just listen for a year. Not fix things...just listen. And get each other talking to each other, but in productive ways. Guided discussions that refrain from complaining and force more thoughtful reflection on why and how we feel the ways that we do...what we fear, what we feel...what we ultimately want to see for the church...not how we think that should happen. In other words, how would meaningful worship impact people's lives? Not, what is meaningful worship. So that we can change worship to be meaningful and impactful without getting caught in our own ideas of what worship should look like and getting more caught in what end results we want to see.
- Synod is doing well. Visit Churches. Help keep Churches alive.
- Support smaller congregations. These are the threads of our church that tie us all together with such rich history.
- Support congregations of this synod first
- Strengthening communication to the individual member level. This would improve understanding of the role and function of the Synod and Churchwide with respect to goals and objectives. Proactive, long range planning
- Stop depending upon man-made ideas for change and REALLY dwell in the Word of God before jumping on yet another "great" program to help grow the church.
- Stay focused on mission
- Serve God by people
- Send lay or clergy that excel in various ministry opportunities into other congregations with ideas, training and ways to implement those ministries. Face to face, hands on, experiential, being shown, not told. The trainer says, "this has worked for me, how about you?"
- Remove communication gaps between synod office and local membership. Seems "members" often perceive the Synod's message as being, "I'm from the government, and I'm here to help!"
- Recruit and support Leaders.
- Recognition of innovative ministries
- Reaching out
- Re-vision itself as an organization which focuses more on personal contact with congregations and leaders in their ministry journeys; less as a conduit for collecting and transmitting actions to churchwide.
- Re-evaluate and make sure you're doing what God wants us to do. Not what man wants.
- Re unificar aquellas Congregaciones que están perdiendo miembros y re ubicar creando un solo grupo de dos o tres con poca asistencia. Disponiendo de los edificios que queden vacíos para otras actividades de la iglesia, o alquileres o tal vez venta.
- Providing support and guidance for small town and open country congregations

- Provide support and ideas to those churches losing members and having financial difficulties so they can continue to operate in their communities.
- Provide leadership to congregations that are struggling
- provide leadership on scripture interpretation and how we choose to worship accordingly.
- provide a media emphasis for promoting the ELCA in South Texas.
- Programs for youth and young families
- Professional development for clergy based on needs of the community and the congregation.
- Please help and guide us to develop a program that would help us to assess the talents and interests of our members (especially new members) and help them to get plugged into a service/internal organization and faithfully use and improve those talents.
- Plan better and diverse worship at synod assemblies. Worship must reflect the diverse nature of our communities and singing only familiar hymns as much as we like them is not good enough. There must be more creative liturgies reflecting our diverse world in our synod assemblies to attract new members who are now church delegates and who may be from another ethnic tradition other than German and Scandinavian.
- Personal outreach to the church
- Perhaps asset based planning for mission? Encouraging congregations to look at what resources they have and how they can use those resources to invite and serve others. Each church is unique and has a unique combination of gifts. Every church IS changing, but our choices are how to manage change for a positive future, or manage into death.
- Pay more attention to our geography and to the younger voices among us
- outreach and promoting the Lutheran values and doctrines
- Organizing and founding new congregations in growing parts of the Synod.
- Organize a task force composed of leaders (lay and rostered) of young adults (18-30) to provide and promote events in predominantly growing rural areas focusing on, but not limited to, family activities. Possibly engage in ecumenical outreach events such as chili or BBQ cook-offs, carnivals, sporting events like softball tournaments.
- OPEN YOUR EYES
- Not sure
- Not sure
- not sure
- No idea.
- new members
- n/a
- My goal would be for us to have a financial advisor who can creatively come up with sustaining Revenue and who would share that with other congregations
- More training opportunities for pastors and lay leaders.
- More opportunities for kids during synod assembly and more ways to participate like maybe kids' conversations while adults and children eat.
- More open communication.
- more for lay people
- Many congregations hear this, "Go in peace; serve the Lord" as worship concludes. Teach that serving the Lord is doing justice and loving mercy -- walking with people, out there, in the world, with people who are hurting, who are afraid, who are bewildered. Then celebrate individuals, groups and communities who are doing those ministries.
- Make youth and young adult ministry a priority as expressed in staffing and other resources.

- Make our rural congregations vital
- Make clear, faith-based stances in response to relevant political/cultural issues in our area. This task cannot be left to members of the government or mass media. The church must be a cultural leader that shapes who the broader community becomes because of its values rooted in Christ.
- Maintain/increase sustainability and growth.
- maintain emphasis on Welcome the Stranger and increase diversity
- Living out the gospel in a variety of contexts. This synod has an incredible diversity that isn't really talked about as much as I'd like.
- Listening
- Let people of local churches know what Synod is all about.
- leave out the opinions on immigration. we all know we are to help our fellow man. everybody gets that. this can be done with a LEGAL process. all should obey the law. we do not want our country to experience what Germany (the home of our Mother Church) is experiencing.
- leadership training, leadership training, leadership training. One can't teach what one does not know. Learn something first! Then come help! I don't mean to sound ugly. But the church is light years behind in the leadership area.
- Inspiring and helping our congregations who are not currently reaching the youth in their communities to find revenues that will bring the Living Word back into their lives, leading them back to the sacraments and support and education and fellowship of the Christian community.
- Increased social justice involvement
- Increased communication with recognition that all congregations and/or members are not internet capable
- Increase our joint focus on spiritual practices.
- increase our impact within the communities served by the synod
- increase membership throughout the synod.
- Increase membership
- Increase Lutheran identity (identify with the Lutheran Confessions, etc.)
- Increase congregation and community partnerships.
- Identify struggling congregations and what can be done to help. There have been 2 Lutheran churches within 15 miles of ours that have closed in the past 4 years and another will probably be closing soon. The ELCA is driving people out of the church with all the emphasis on sexual issues. We need to focus on meeting the needs of the poor and elderly.
- I would like to see the synod help with struggling congregations.
- I would like the Southwestern Texas Synod to continue to support RIC congregations and do more to welcome all LGBTQ members, clergy and interns into our synod.
- I would like for us to take a stand in helping immigrants in our area.
- I would focus on back to the basics of the Church, prioritizing the recruitment, training, support, and oversight of leaders; support and encouragement of congregations in their mission; and keeping a keen eye toward the mission of the Church, as the Lord's witnesses from here to the ends of the earth.
- I have no idea.
- I don't know enough about synod activities to provide feedback here.
- I don't know
- I do not know
- Helping congregations in transition with equipping leaders
- Help/Develop resources congregations reach out to their communities.

- Help youth
- Help with spiritual growth of members
- help with church finances
- Help us to see that we are all part of an interconnected ministry that is about God's grace and that this is a ministry that we all share. I also want us to figure out how to be louder about this phenomenal grace than our brothers and sister who are less grace focused and give Christianity a bad reputation.
- Help strengthen youth ministries in struggling congregations
- Help small, rural congregations see that they have a future.
- Help maintain existing congregations
- Help congregations who are struggling because of population shifts to remain viable
- help Congregations to become more oriented to "Mission Beyond Self"
- Help congregations that need significant revitalization to cease to fear death and instead see it as part of life and not something that separates us from the love of God in Christ (Romans).
- Have seminars on faith growing experiences, evangelism training, men in mission, youth growth programs, any thing
- Have a synod rep come and visit with someone from another denomination and really show how we can share in ministry without either church losing their identity, members, or whatever else people cite as reasons why we should not be working together,
- Have a sanctuary art exhibit. Something way different. Golfing tournament?
- Go to the local congregations.
- Give the congregations some guidance on how to basically survive
- Get people's hands dirty (e.g. doing work helping their neighbor)
- Get outside the box. These are changing times, and we need to be willing to change with them. I always thought the Synod was just for Pastors, help us change that perception!
- Get out there be seen by the congregations.
- foster inter-congregational communication and collaboration
- For the immediate future, I would like to see the synod organize conversations between our churches in relatively close proximities to talk about what is/is not working for them
- Focus on how we can attract more young families. We could start by not alienating and shaming anyone not sufficiently leftist.
- Focus on helping immigrant families.
- First let me say, Bishop Tiemann is my bishop and will always be my bishop (and I know the rules) but I think the immediate goal is to get a new set of eyes looking at the Synod.
- Find ways to help support the pastors so they feel valued and worthwhile, and like someone cares about them.
- Find ways to help elderly members of congregations understand that change is not always a bad thing; in fact, some change can benefit a faltering "at risk" congregation.
- Find better pastors
- Explore ways in which the synod can become more vocal about being a Reconciling in Christ (RIC) Synod
- Expert assistance to local synod congregations with problems in growth, outreach. Assistance in understanding how the social demographic scene has changed (technologically, racially) and what works in this new spectrum. Let us know what works and the churches will do it.
- Expand Hispanic ministry opportunities.
- excellent SAMs program

- Equipping faith congregations and communities in their own mission and vision.
- Equip and teach members in evangelism.
- Enhanced outreach within the local congregation for all members. Then expand into community and other Lutheran congregations.
- Energize!
- Encouraging congregations to see themselves in partnership with other congregations and the synod.
- Encourage your churches to use ELCA study materials. (We seem to use a lot of Southern Baptist stuff!) We need to arm our kids, and adult members, with the Lutheran view of the bible, our faith, and our mission.
- Encourage and inspire evangelism in the congregation. Encourage prayer groups and Bible discussion groups for all ages. Encourage fellowship that appeals and applies to the community. A congregation that works and prays together stays together.
- Encourage and experiment with cooperative ministries amongst smaller congregations
- Encourage a mission of work for social justice.
- Emphasis on across synod worship emphasis as described earlier
- Embrace the voices, insights and presence of people of color or whose primary language is other than English in the ongoing governance structure and mission leadership of the Synod.
- elect a new bishop who would have the members of congregation as a priority and not the pastor.
- elect a bishop with a vision for excellence in parish ministry
- Effective outreach to millennials.
- Don't try to be all things to all people
- Don't know
- Do something!
- Do not try to fit all congregations into predetermined categories.
- Diversity membership by age and ethnicity.
- Discipleship in all areas emphasized in relation to spiritual gifts and scripture.
- Devote more time and attention to the smaller congregations.
- Development of strong spiritual leadership
- Develop a coherent vision and communicate it in all ways possible.
- decide whether to support existing dying congregations
- Deal with our blinders as far as racism go.
- Create and lead an innovative plan for ongoing support, encouragement, challenge, and programs for leaders to become and stay healthy.
- Continued growth on their outreach to the Latino community other than just "Spanish". More of a cultural embrace. It can be done in English
- Continue to help churches partner and give them tools to do that.
- Continue to foster collaboration among synods, leaders and congregations for the sake of mission
- Continue to foster a sense of confidence in our congregations to step outside the doors and get our hands dirty in the Lord's vineyard.
- Continue to empower congregations to think missionally about the changing landscape of our congregations and communities.
- Continue outreach to congregations that are geographically distant from the Synod office.

- Continue in the current direction of support for cooperative ministry, congregations and pastors.
- Continue being an instrument of love, concern, and assistance for any church in the synod that may need help.
- connect with the individual churches! Visit and see what's going on in the little communities you represent!
- concentrate on youth and none churched
- Communication
- Come Visit us! in the far reaches of the Synod.
- Come and encourage more people to be regular
- Closer relationship with smaller churches.
- Close
- Catechesis.
- Building a greater relationship and communication between the synod including within the area churches. The city congregations are not concerned with or develop relationships with the neighborhoods or congregations that are struggling.
- Bring in more young people & a more diverse population
- Bring ELCA churches in partnership with one another and to encourage leadership development both pastor and lay.
- Better education on items pertaining to social justice.
- Being more visible to our congregation.
- Become more visible to the lay members of the Synod.
- Become a better resource for pastors
- Be sure congregations know how the synod is active on social ministry/justice issues.
- Be more sensitive to congregations and the problems they are facing. There are many and diverse problems.
- be more proactive in bring new ministries into our synods
- be more interactive with individual congregations that need your help
- Be more engaged in the individual congregations in the Synod particularly given that more and more congregations are closing their doors.
- Be in constant communication with all the churches. Teach them encouragement, teach them and let them know you care.
- Be consistent in what they support. Changes every assembly. Water is needed every day.
- Be bold! Get rid of old models that don't work and show congregations how to live out new paradigms of ministry. Become a little more reflective and not as occupied with activity.
- Be a Gospel and Prophetic toward the future. It needs to proclaim the power of the Gospel to any evil structure such as, Utilitarianism Republicanism, Institutional Racism which is very prevalent in the State of Texas.
- Assure liquidity for the church
- Assist small and at-risk congregations form cooperative ministry communities.
- Addressing racism.
- academically enhanced opportunities for clergy growth in New Testament biblical interpretation and Lutheran theology.
- a more visible goal for the future /
- A more open-minded approach to congregational worship. Emphasis on postmodern ministry
- A healthy transition to a new Bishop and possibly new synod staff.

- ?
- ?
- Not only encourage diversity among the congregations but also offer guidance to the congregation on how to work with the challenges that diversity presents.
- Try very hard to increase the membership of the ELCA with young families and youth to increase interest in attending worship services and activities of the ELCA congregations. It is very sad; however, Church attendance and activities do not seem to be a priority in the lives of the younger generation. Help the rural congregations.

16. Finish this sentence: I hope that five years from now the Southwestern Texas Synod is

- younger
- younger
- Working to bring congregations more spirit filled and the new bishop will work toward this goal as Bishop Tiemann has
- will meet its goals better.
- well known in Texas as a voice for the poor and oppressed.
- well known by church members.
- vital and growing
- vital and a leading faith organization in our region.
- visibly helping our Church
- vibrantly providing solutions for the growth and vitality of the ELCA in our Synod.
- vibrant.
- vibrant and relevant to all the congregations in South Texas
- vibrant and active in the lives of the churches.
- vibrant
- Viable
- very active and well known in all the church's' in the Synod.
- under new leadership.
- truly intentional about becoming diverse and multicultural. I hope it address the racism in the church structure and promotes anti-racism training in each congregation. This church must do this or it is it will not survive in this century.
- Transformed
- thriving.
- thriving.
- thriving.
- thriving.
- Thriving!
- thriving with people and money to expand ministries.
- Thriving

- thriving
- thriving
- the church.
- talking less about being missional and more deeply engaged in the Lord's Mission.
- taking care of Rostered Leaders
- taking a stand to support those who are being oppressed, whoever the group may be.
- symbol of the church-at-large having a profound and positive impact on the individual congregations and individuals within its boundaries.
- sustainable enough to be guide and witness for other synods in the ELCA.
- Supporting congregations more
- strongly engaged in ministry & mission
- stronger spiritually, sounder financially, larger numerically
- stronger in its unity and the synod all others in the ELCA tries to model
- stronger and more relevant
- stronger and growing
- stronger and financially able to provide ministry
- strong and healthy.
- strong and financially stable.
- still very involve in helping all their churches.
- still thriving.
- still supporting local ELCA churches
- still seeking the Spirit's guidance
- Still providing leadership for congregations without being a dictator
- still in existence.
- still in existence and still ELCA
- still here
- still concerned with health of all churches.
- still around and progressing.
- still alive.
- still alive.
- still alive
- still active.
- still active.
- Stronger at promoting all Lutheran churches and other denominations to unite and stand together in teaching God's word and working to do God's ministry
- Spreading the Good News to all people, feeding the hungry
- speaking more Spanish
- select a new bishop
- seen as a strong positive impact to the community, state, nation and world
- Running effectively
- rocking along happily.
- representative of the region that it serves.
- relevant
- reframing what evangelism means in the 21st century American context.
- recovered and healthy from the almost devastating effects of 2009.

- recognized as a strong religious force helping to spread Christianity and helping congregational members deepen their own personal faith journeys.
- rebuilding the conferences
- ready to take up its Evangelism Mantra.
- ready to engage our communities.
- reaching out to those who are hungry for the word, who are hurting and those who are poor.
- providing strong spiritual leadership to congregations
- providing leadership for cooperative ministry.
- promoting spiritual well-being for all.
- pouring out the Spirit on all congregations.
- our great encourager/facilitator to help us carry out our mission.
- Open minded and vibrant to all churches and pastors
- one of the few synods with every vacancy filled
- not the PAC it appears to be now.
- not as liberal as now
- nonexistent
- much more visible & energized.
- more vocal about it being an RIC Synod
- more visible
- stronger with more people doing God's work
- more sensitive to the local congregation
- more resilient and adaptive
- more reflective of the ethnic makeup of our communities.
- more productive and flexible
- more open to having conversations about social justice without feeling threatened
- more multicultural!
- more multicultural and LGBT friendly.
- more kid friendly!
- more inclusive of all ethnicities at all levels.
- more inclusive and has a greater focus on social justice and supporting congregations to advocacy in the community.
- more ethnically diverse and bilingual.
- more engaging
- more efficient
- more diverse, younger, and courageous.
- more diverse and excited
- more diverse
- more conservative, ha ha.
- more conservative
- more concerned about pastor (and pastor's families) well being
- More aware of what truly goes on in a church.
- More approachable.
- more actively engaged in the immediate area and not an entity that exists at a distance.
- Lutheran
- looking back and congratulating the insight of the current synod and looking to the future for new ways to support and encourage the Church.

- listening to ALL members!
- less political
- leading the way in adaptive change, missional engagement, and generous giving
- larger by at least 20% more members and a leader in the areas of social justice and hunger outreach.
- known for its compassion and advocacy for the dignity and human rights of all people, especially the ones our Lord called the least of these.
- keeping fossil fuel development out of the area.
- is still supporting our efforts in maintaining future growth
- involved with encouraging ethnic diversity within each of its congregations.
- invigorated
- Interacting with all that is
- intact and getting along with each other
- innovative.
- innovative
- innovating new and creative ways to help congregations spread God's message of love and grace.
- increasing in numbers, strengthened in faith and actively participating in serving communities.
- in my congregation with a plan
- Humbly curious
- helping local congregations by a "hands on" approach.
- Helping congregations
- Healthy and thriving and progressive in word and action.
- healthy
- having more impact on social justice in Texas.
- having a reduction in the number of part time clergy positions due to the growth of congregations who are engaged in their communities; being the church in the public square.
- has many kinds of "congregations" that nurture each other
- has healthy, thriving congregations.
- grows in memberships
- growing with younger people of all cultural backgrounds.
- growing with new planted churches.
- Growing not shrinking
- growing in many ways.
- growing in congregations and membership.
- growing even further in faith and mission.
- growing and hasn't lost any more congregations.
- Growing
- going strong.
- giving us hope that the church is growing by doing important outreach into the community

- getting back to a growing mode.
- full of churches who are willing to share and work with others and not so arrogant and isolated and individualistic
- focused on following their own SOP's
- flexible and encouraging accepting the variations of local ministry who are also guided by the Spirit.
- Filled with vibrant congregations.
- familiar with what is going on in local congregations.
- Evolved with ministries that are failing or endangered in failing before they become a crisis
- even stronger than it is now
- equipping congregations to look beyond ourselves.
- engaged more fully in the lives of the individual congregations.
- energized
- encouraging mission outreach opportunities in local congregations
- doing good and growing
- doing more to help the poor and elderly and making churches accountable for doing the work of God.
- doing good.
- doing God's work.
- energized by daring to support immigrants and marginalized people.
- developing, training, and encouraging more and more lay people to reach out to others, encouraging all to be evangelists.
- culturally diverse and caring.
- continuing to support leaders and congregations in their respective missions.
- continuing to support congregations in their ministerial growth.
- Continuing to grow.
- continuing to grow and be a positive presence in the state. Motivating all Lutheran churches to God's ministry
- connected and energized.
- continuing to do God's work even when society doesn't seem to care about the people we love to serve.
- combined with other Texas Synods, one Bishop with satellite offices.
- bringing new members from the none churched
- Bigger, better
- beyond the losses suffered during the sexuality debates/great recession.
- better off financially
- better know and recognized
- better at reaching the people in the pew
- Being more visible to congregations
- aumentado sus misiones hispanas en San Antonio
- at a place that it can see its mission as viable and that the witness to the Gospel would be its primary focus.
- an inviting, welcoming collection of congregations.
- an easier to understand entity.
- allowing more Latinos to be pastors
- alive, and growing

- alive and well and seen by those outside the ELCA as a vibrant ministry
- alive and well
- alive and well
- alive and healthy
- alive and growing
- alive and active.
- alive
- adding new congregations and worshiping communities to our membership.
- actively, personally engaged in the individual congregations, helping build them up
- actively involved in each congregation and community
- active in Social Justice and Advocacy.
- active and relevant in its engagement with its congregations and ecumenical partners
- about being the body of Christ.
- able to take a firm stand on the sexuality issue
- a vital spiritual force in the state of Texas.
- a vital link between every congregation and Churchwide to the individual member level.
- a vibrant help to all congregations!
- a tremendous resource for all its participating congregations.
- a thriving force of faith in the region.
- a stronger resource for all congregations, less focused on pushing agendas of some over the needs of others.
- A positive force in Christ's ministry.
- a pioneer in thinking creatively about the ways in which God is providing for the future of the church and its witness in the world God loves.
- a new model for ministry
- a light on a hill for each of the churches within the synod - and an example for other synods to see God's work being completed to honor Him
- a leader in progressive models for ministry.
- A joy
- a healthy viable organization.
- a Gospel "vision" led organization.
- a glowing example of living the Gospel.
- a faithful reflection of the people we meet at the gas station or the grocery store in our communities.
- a distant memory.
- a bit less managerial and more congregational (user) friendly.
- (no clue how to finish this sentence).
- (meaning this layer of church organizational structure) is facilitating and leading.
- with us and has remained strong.
- marked by congregations growing in their missional vitality
- Making an impact in the communities. Be a welcoming entity to all.
- has doubled in the number of members.

Is there anything else you'd like to share?

- You did well, when you sent us Joe would as interim pastor

- Yes. I notice SAWCs are not included on this list, and I am part of one. That seems unfortunate, as we are part of the Synod and sometimes on the leading edge of change.
- Yes, this form does not reflect the true name of our congregation which again is very telling. IT is St. John/San Juan. Once again even this form shows bias unintentionally to be sure against the Spanish - speaking and vital members of the church in Austin. We advertise that we are one congregation that worships in two languages and promote that in our name. So why is this not reflected in the data you received to reflect this name change? Not your fault but it needs to be investigated to reflect our reality as a bi-lingual congregation. Thanks for your work in putting all of this together. I hope to read the results in the synod newsletter.
- Yes, the survey was difficult to fill out due to the small font and the close spacing. For many folks, my age it will probably prove even more difficult. The questions for the fill-in blocks were difficult to answer due to not having enough information on a personal level.
- Yes, Spirit in the Hills is no longer a Mission as listed in your list.
- Would like more information on promoting congregational interest in support of the mission of the church
- While it's important to celebrate diversity in worship, I would like to see the synod make a concerted effort to help get congregations "back to the basics," such as encouraging all congregations to take up spiritual disciplines like Individual Confession & Forgiveness; the office of daily prayer in some way; daily prayer practices such the Ecumenical Rosary, Wreath of Christ, etc. I think the ELCA sometimes focuses so much on social activism (which is important), we forget that another important reason we exist is to minister to spiritual things. This is what I have meant throughout this survey as reclaiming our classic Lutheran identity.
- We keep talking about discipleship and outreach but are reluctant to reach beyond our front door!
- We have been very fortunate to get in on the very beginning of the SAMs program. It is this reason that our church has been able to carry on celebrating our 100th anniversary this past year. We have had 4 different SAMs each one of them a blessing. We have had a very positive relationship with the synod.
- We have a wonderful Pastor and Assistant Pastor. I wish that we could have more emphasis on family gatherings and have a designated youth leader. When I attended this same church in the 70's/80's we had a youth leader that really kept the children involved and therefore kept families coming to church. In the late 90's and early 2000's we had a fantastic youth leader (now assistant pastor) = and she brought many families to the congregation but since we lost this role I feel that our congregation is not attracting that many young families.
- We are small congregations. Most members are related to someone. I know that maybe part of the problem to many chiefs and not enough Indians as they say!
- We are most grateful for the synod's care and concern for St Peter's. We pray that together we continue to strive to serve in God's will for all people. Thank you!
- We are looking at partnering with Holy Family Catholic Church to possibly share our buildings. We do not want to close and we hope that the Synod does not want us to close either.
- We all need to remember we are disciples of God and continue to Worship together as a Church family. As we get a calling from God we need to pray about it and follow our hearts. When you have that feeling it is a calling from God and we need to remember to listen. Blessings
- This congregation has developed a distrust of the Synod due to past actions. It is hoped that a more positive relationship can be developed with new leadership in both our congregation and the Synod.

- Think about combining small churches in so. Austin. Like prince of peace and Salem. Combining Hispanic worship too. It's too scattered in my opinion. I know it's a sensitive subject.
- The synod's mission and vision should in large part be guided by its geography. There are elements of our synod that are unique: long shared border with Mexico and the economic/cultural issues that arise because of this; our Gulf Coast, Southern Plains, Hill Country ecosystems and the protection and nurture they require; the fact that the state capitol is in our synod makes us responsible for political engagement in a unique way.
- the Synod should not align itself with the radical group called RAICES. anytime you align yourself with a group that reverts to name calling (RAICES said there were white supremacists in the Trump administration), it reflects on you.
- The Synod and ELCA do not pay any attention to the small churches, they make up the rules and ideas and pass them down
- The SWT Synod has numerous missions: it is understood how difficult it is to oversee the breadth of its congregational organization, but keep on analyzing congregations' needs and providing the best possible support to them. Thank you.
- The Lutheran faith is so outstanding but few and fewer worshipers want a mainline religion. How sad when we have so much to offer. I think we need better advertising and asking people to come back to the faith of their ancestors!
- The ELCA needs to attract young families to our congregations
- Thanks for inviting me and others to participate in this survey.
- Thankfulness
- Thank you for this survey and an opportunity to share my concerns.
- Thank you for this opportunity to respond to my observations
- Thank you for survey anonymity. I would not have responded directly to such a survey if it had been created by the surveyed synod or had raw data -- with identifying information -- passed to the synod staff for review and analysis.
- Thank you for offering this survey. It shows you care about what is thought out in the trenches.
- Thank you for giving us this opportunity to share our thoughts and concerns with the synod. We are blessed with the leaders and workers within this synod. We thank each of those who are a part of assisting our churches and programs to make our congregations and members more aware of those opportunities in which we can share God's love and do His work.
- Thank you for conducting this survey, but don't let it limit the gifts of the future Bishop. The Holy Spirit will do its part, regardless of the results of the survey.
- Synod jobs can be thankless at times. Keep working for the good of all of us
- Survey is too long and confusing survey questions. You should not be asking for our names it should be anonymous!
- support the pastors, but demand that they perform well. set high expectations of them and give them the training to perform well. evaluate them and dare to remove those who no longer perform well.
- Spirit in the Hills is not a mission, we are an ELCA congregation
- Since arriving as a retired pastor in this synod I am especially enheartened by the synod's genuine interest in furthering different ways and methods of bringing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the public. I thoroughly support synod and its staff not only in this but also in its passion for finding ways to sustain the valuable Lutheran emphasis that I think needs to endure in our geographic area. We don't necessarily need to keep the Lutheran emphasis in name but surely in the way we proclaim the Gospel and valuable tools that we have for keeping God's promise the unique message that it is as we deliver this to others.

- Question 21 illustrates the current priorities of ELCA and the Synod.
- Please, please be aware of the tragic lack of diversity in an area with ridiculously capable people of what once were "marginal" groups. Do not treat this area like a 2nd world mission.
- Our church still sees itself as a little country church even though we are now surrounded by a plethora of homes.
- Only that I wish our church offered adult Christian education. And, I do appreciate that our congregation does not have a special Children's Church rather offers a Sunday School setting (Faith Generations) encouraging children to attend with the family.
- Nothing more
- Not in print
- Not now.
- Not now.
- Not now
- Nope.
- Nope
- Nope
- nope
- none
- No.
- No.
- No.
- No, thanks for asking. As a rostered/retired clergy, I am very seldom asked (outside of the congregation I am a member of and serve as Visitation Pastor) to do anything. I have two sons in the ministry of the ELCA.
- No, thank you.
- No
- most friendly congregation and very good pastor
- Keep doing the good work that is being done, just somehow make it better known to individual congregations.
- It was determined that members were not going to complete this on their own. The Adult Sunday School Forum felt that it was important and that they would like to discuss and complete it as a group. Interestingly the members ranged in age from 30-70 and years in the congregation ranged from less than one year to 15 years with most being in the mid-range. A dozen members were involved and more would have been involved, but many did not come due to being under a severe thunderstorm and tornado warning in the rain.
- It has been a privilege to be involved in the congregations of the Rio Grande Valley. This is an exciting time as people are trying to find meaning for their life. Youth are searching for the

values of life and I pray the Church can lovingly minister to them. The old motto still holds true: The faith of the Father's in the language of the children. I pray we will be open to the directions of the Holy Spirit.

- In July of 1999, our congregation - St John Lutheran church invited Lutherans San Lucas to worship with us. Our name was changed in 2004 to St John / San Juan Lutheran. Please change in your records. Our motto is: "One Congregation - Two Languages".
- I've been frustrated in finding people with a more liberal view of faith and its role in social issues. How do I get in touch with like-minded people? I'm not going to put a query in the bulletin, after seeing and hearing the comments when our church voted against performing same sex marriages. I don't want confrontation, I just want to serve the Lord, and I prefer working with someone.
- I'm wondering why you want my name if I won't be identified in the survey
- I would be interested in participating more fully in a listening process as a leader for the synod if that comes about.
- I work for a non-profit association for school public relations professionals with about 1000 members. We know that we are all about networking, providing resources, training on a multitude of subjects and issues for our members and that they will turn to us when they need answers. We are a staff of 3. We have what we call a Document Vault of resources about everything. I spend each day being a resource for what they need, not trying to force them to do I want. And when I don't have an answer, I go find what I can to help. I am about problem solving and getting answers. I think the synod needs a new mission statement. This is the simple statement from my association. I think the synod needs something similar We are a professional organization whose members are dedicated to improving public education in Texas by: • Promoting effective public relations practices • Providing professional development for its members • Improving communication between Texans and their public schools. TSPRA Statement of Commitment "As a member of the Texas School Public Relations Association, I hold myself up to the educational community and to the public as a professional in the field of educational communications. I commit myself to the development, evaluation and renewal of skills and abilities, techniques and strategies, both in and by myself and others, which will enhance the understanding of and support for public schools. I recognize and respect the right of everyone to have access to all legally available information about the programs, policies and practices of the public schools. I recognize and respect the role of the media as both a partner in the information dissemination process and as an independent seeker of information, and to both roles I dedicate myself to providing true and timely responses. To this end, I have a steadfast belief in the public-school system as the institution best suited to provide a quality education for each boy and girl." Change it up to reflect the church and be a real resource to the congregations that need answers and help.
- I wish our pastor was more engaged with the Synod. For example, he doesn't send members to the Assemblies, etc.
- I was a part of first an ALC, then ELCA in Iowa, and I am extremely impressed with the SWT Synod. I don't even remember knowing the name of our Bishop in Iowa. I was on Church Council at two different churches in Iowa, so I was not just a nominal member there. I am more active here only because it is easy to be active and support the Synod.
- I want my church to grow. Now, our family is going through some bumps though I know we are richly blessed. I feel if I say anything I am complaining and don't want to complain; I only want to serve Jesus and be more like Him.
- I think you have enough from me. :)

- I think the Synod should encourage the larger congregations within each conference to "adopt" a struggling small congregation within that conference if geographical constraints aren't an issue. Also, thanks for providing this ministry which hopefully will edify the mission and ministry of God's church.
- I think that when you put these surveys together for lay members, you may want to ask whether the mean of the language you use is obvious to those not as connected to as closely to the synod.
- I think you got my message hope you will do something with it. Please feel free to contact me. Billy Ray Buckner 830-851-6134
- I serve two rural congregations, and both are different than the other. One is willing to do anything to further God's ministry in the world and the other is more conservative and hesitant.
- I love our Pastor Anne Kolmeir and have hopes she will be our pastor FOREVER!
- I love my Church. I love how we once served our Community and our Children in the Area. We no longer doing that with the cancellation of Easter Event. The Community loved our Turkey Dinners and knew to expect them in October - we no longer do that. We had a bell choir - we have the equipment but no volunteers. Our music needs revamping. We have the best Organist who plays for free but as Lutherans, we need familiar hymns during Worship Service. People are leaving our Church and new members are not coming in. We need help or our doors will close. We have a great Day Care but that Director is leaving in June and there has been no movement to hire another. Once she leaves, our Day Care will suffer. Requesting help. I filed a formal letter with the Council based on members asking me"what are you going to do without decreasing congregation. As a Council member, I am responsible for that and accept that responsibility. My formal letter requests assistance.
- I lead worship twice a month at Bethlehem and visit members in Austin & Round Rock hospitals --providing pastoral care
- I know that "doing church" is hard and not for the squeamish and for the sake of the Gospel I am willing to put up with many things. But I assure you of this: unless pastors are better protected from the whims of bad congregational leadership, I will not encourage people to move into rostered leadership. I will do the very opposite. Here's the litmus test: would you want your child to do this work?
- I hope the Parish Ministry Training Program can continue.
- I have enjoyed and been inspired by synod review of Luther's catechism
- I enjoy NOT being a leader, I follow well. play piano, garden, tend coffee bar. I wish our church would contact the colleges to encourage students and faculty to join us.
- I do not enjoy doing surveys!
- I do appreciate the Mission emphasis for offerings for the Synod assembly.
- I believe I have made my views clear already, but I did not provide my name primarily because of the shaming atmosphere that exists. I feel it's necessary to be perfectly frank here - Everyone in the congregation is not going to agree. I do not go to church to find agreement with my political views; I go for my spiritual needs and health. It is stressful and unwelcoming to go to church and hear a barrage of political opinion from people who feel entitled to act shocked and appalled that everyone doesn't agree with them. My wife has had to stop going to one Bible study group because some of the attendees simply couldn't stop complaining about Donald Trump. Regardless of how you feel about him, that is not the reason people go to Bible studies. Loaded terms like "social justice" have no place in church life. It carries an implication that if one does not conform to the views of those who pursue "social justice" - a leftist political

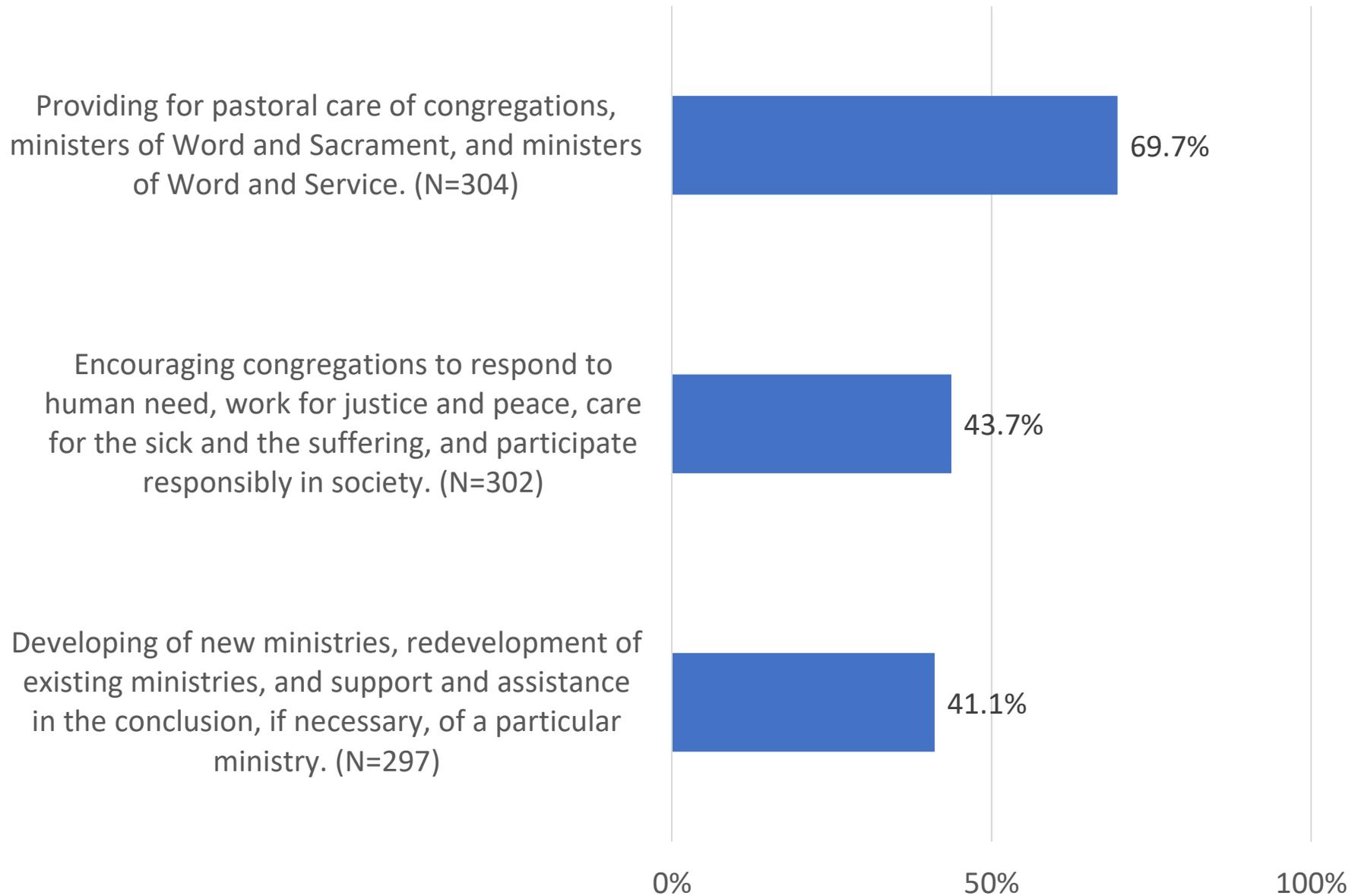
concept - that one therefore is not as worthy a member of the church. Excusing this by imagining people to be bigots is not acceptable.

- I am pleased with Bishop Eaton. She is a godly woman who sets the bar high for the rest of us. I thank God for her and the ELCA. I have always received excellent response from the SWTX Synod and the ELCA.
- I am looking forward to working with this vision for strategic mission within the SW Texas Synod. Thanks for the opportunity to voice ideas here.
- I am looking forward to attending my first synod assembly.
- I am concerned about the young people who are growing up. The parents have the responsibility for teaching their children about their faith and I do not know how that is getting done. I am concerned about what I hear because much of what I hear shows ignorance about what Jesus taught. It shows ignorance about Christian behavior. It shows ignorance about what it means to be a disciple of Christ. Yet they call themselves Christian. I am concerned because the clear majority of people are missing out on the joy of sharing life with a church family. And I am concerned for their children because children mimic the adults in their lives.
- I am blessed to be serving these two congregations (the other is Grace in Harlingen). They are in two different contexts and we can all learn from each other how diverse our communities are, yet what strong religious ties we have that hold us together and move us to serve. I look forward to visiting the surrounding communities to meet people, find out their gifts and their needs, and their hopes for their communities and children. I will draw on the wisdom of the older generation to help us in engaging the younger ones.
- I am a very proud member of St Peter's ELCA and have been since moving from Salem in part Senara, Texas
- I am a parent who is hoping for an engaging family environment and part of our church council. I am very interested in outreach that will engage our new and long term membership and am hopeful to be a part of it.
- I am 9 years old there was no exact age limit for me. I hope you like my ideas.
- how do we get the none churched and children get involved and compete with society time and priorities that keep them from developing a life of faith?
- Having a background in military operational and strategic planning, I've often taken a bit of a cynical view toward the way that the task gets undertaken in churchly settings. A couple things that I hope that the planning group will keep in mind: the Commander's Intent is paramount (see the Great Commission); support (think teaching, coaching, mentoring, equipping, and resourcing) is always supposed to move from higher to lower (rather than vice versa); and that one's view of the collective Mission is colored by where one is standing, with pastors and congregations at the tactical level, the Synod office at the operational level, and the ELCA at the strategic level, Or put another way, pastors and congregations do the real work; with Synods supporting them (as in teaching, coaching, mentoring, equipping, and resourcing); and with the ELCA overseeing the whole of the effort. When done right, it all nests together in accomplishing the Commander's Intent (see the Great Commission).
- Happy in retirement and serving Highland park as their pastor on Sunday and Mon, Tuesday AM and as need for pastoral support. Probably will continue for 2 more years(?) depending on health of myself and wife.
- God's work our hands
- Focus on the very basics, not intricate theology. Focus on love as a verb
- First, let me express my thanks to the synod staff for all their hard work. Then, let me throw out another suggestion. For over 35 years the Bluebonnet Conference has held an annual Equipping

the Saints event. The continued high level of participation and support for this event is a testimony to the hard work of Pr. Herb Beyer and those who assist him and a persistent desire to grow as Christians, demonstrated by the participants. I know in past years the synod has attempted to foster this program in other conferences. Perhaps as part of its efforts for leadership development, the synod could use this program as a template to help reach some of its goals for leadership and spiritual growth. It may not have been a coincidence that the Bluebonnet Conference was the first to exceed its fundraising goal at the recent synod assembly.

- Do appreciate the dedication, talent and caring of our Bishop and the Synod Staff in seeking ways of better serving our Lord and our Synod. Thanks for allowing me to participate in this survey.
- Collegiality and partnerships make or break the mission of the church place by place extending resources and the message of the Gospel. Conferences vary greatly and mission is blessed or thwarted because of it.
- Christ the King has come a long way since we called Pastor Mike Widner as our Pastor. We are growing in numbers, in our faith, and have become a lot more welcoming congregation. We all seem to get along a lot better, too. I also think that becoming a part of the Missional River will help us in the long run.
- Been attending a Unitarian Church to explore my spirituality.
- Be more proactive in finding out what congregations are doing.
- Although we have a small membership we are a very close church family. Everyone pulls together and we are blessed to have a wonderful SAM who serves as our minister and is a member of our congregation
- a waste of time
- I always supported and wanted our new Pastor. I was very disappointed in your Bishop not following the Synods guidelines.

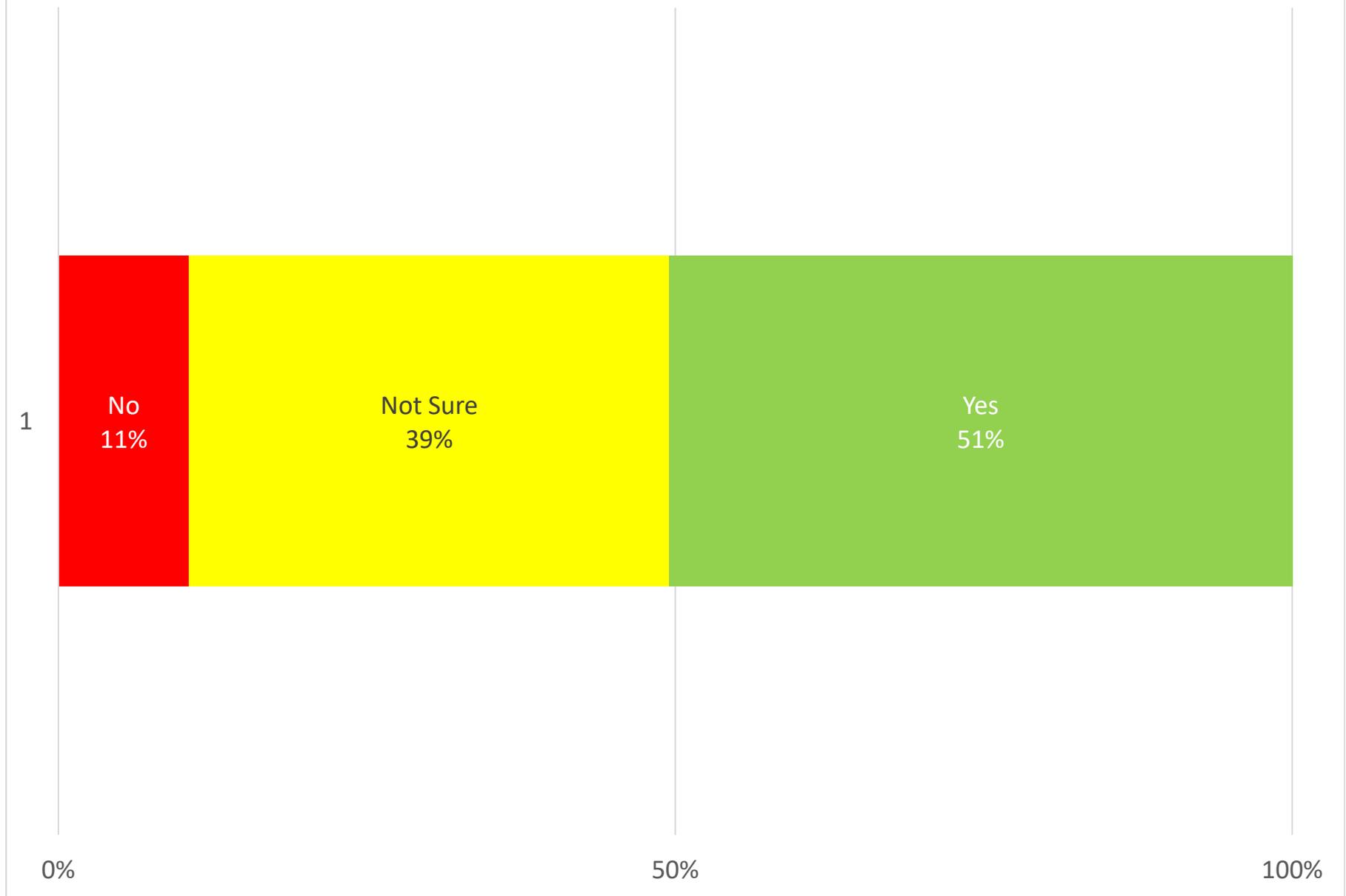
Top Three "Highly Important" Functions of the Synod



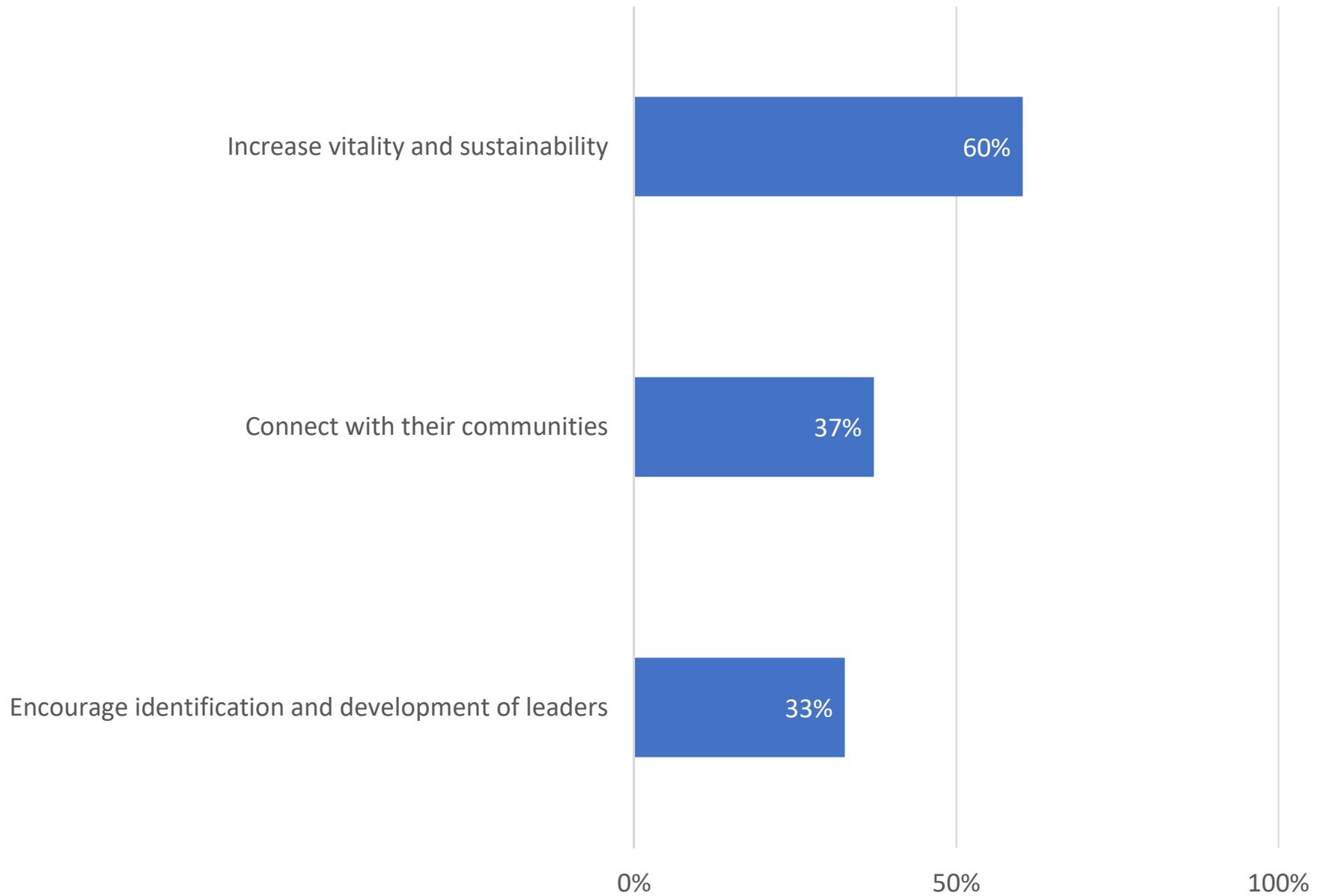
Knowledge of Synod's Ministries



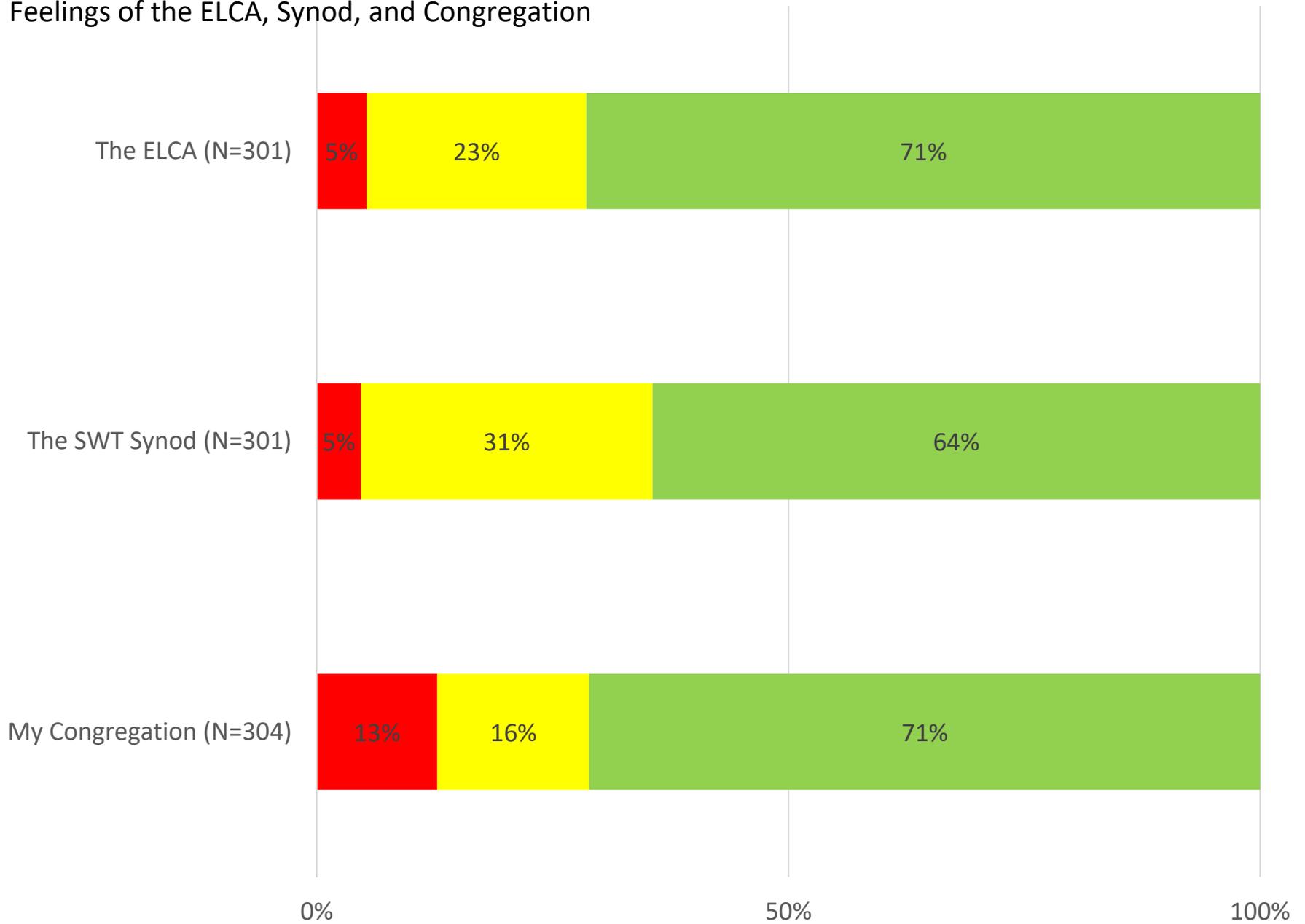
"Does the synod have a strong sense of mission?"



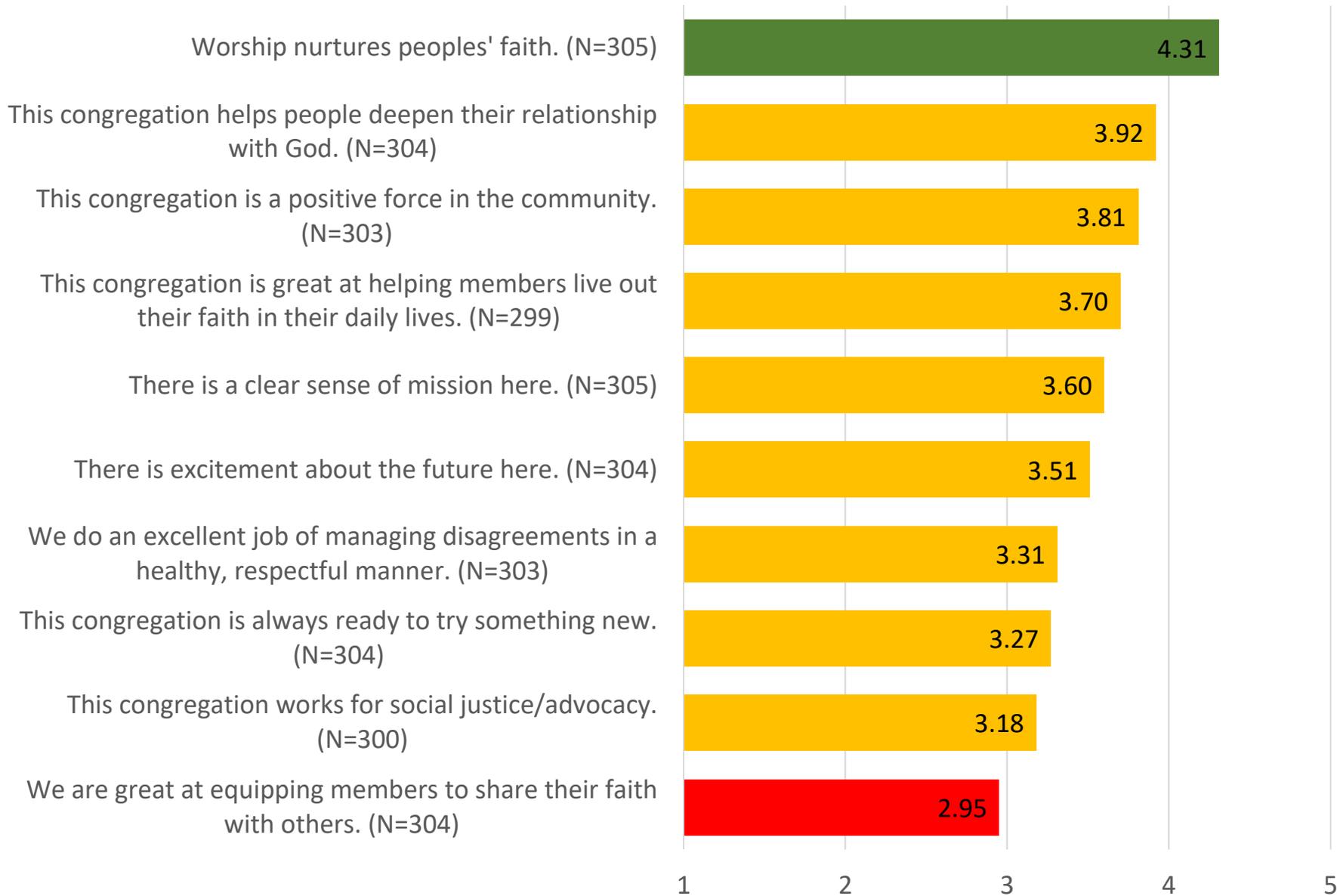
Top Three Ways Synod Should Focus on Helping Congregations and their Leaders



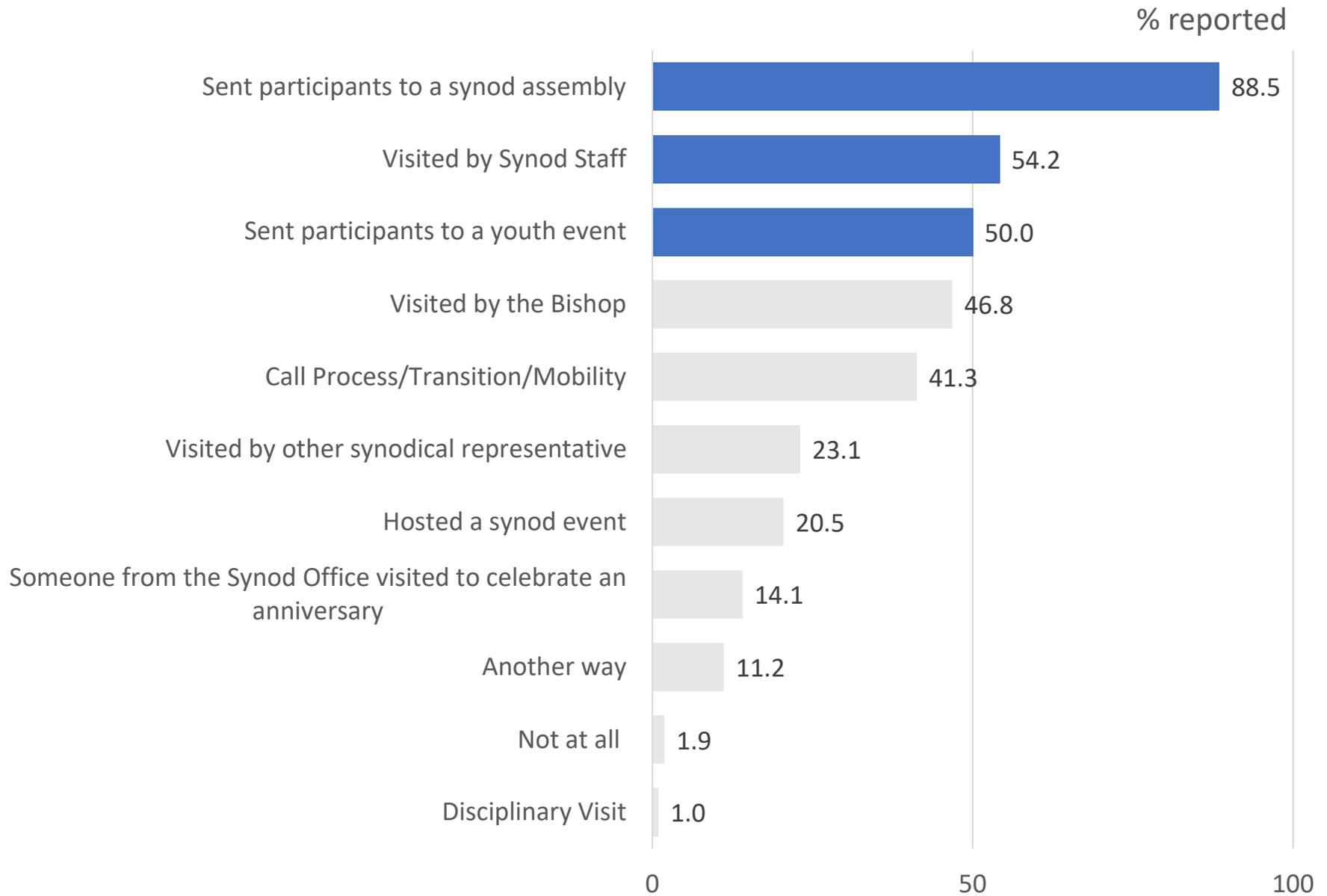
Feelings of the ELCA, Synod, and Congregation



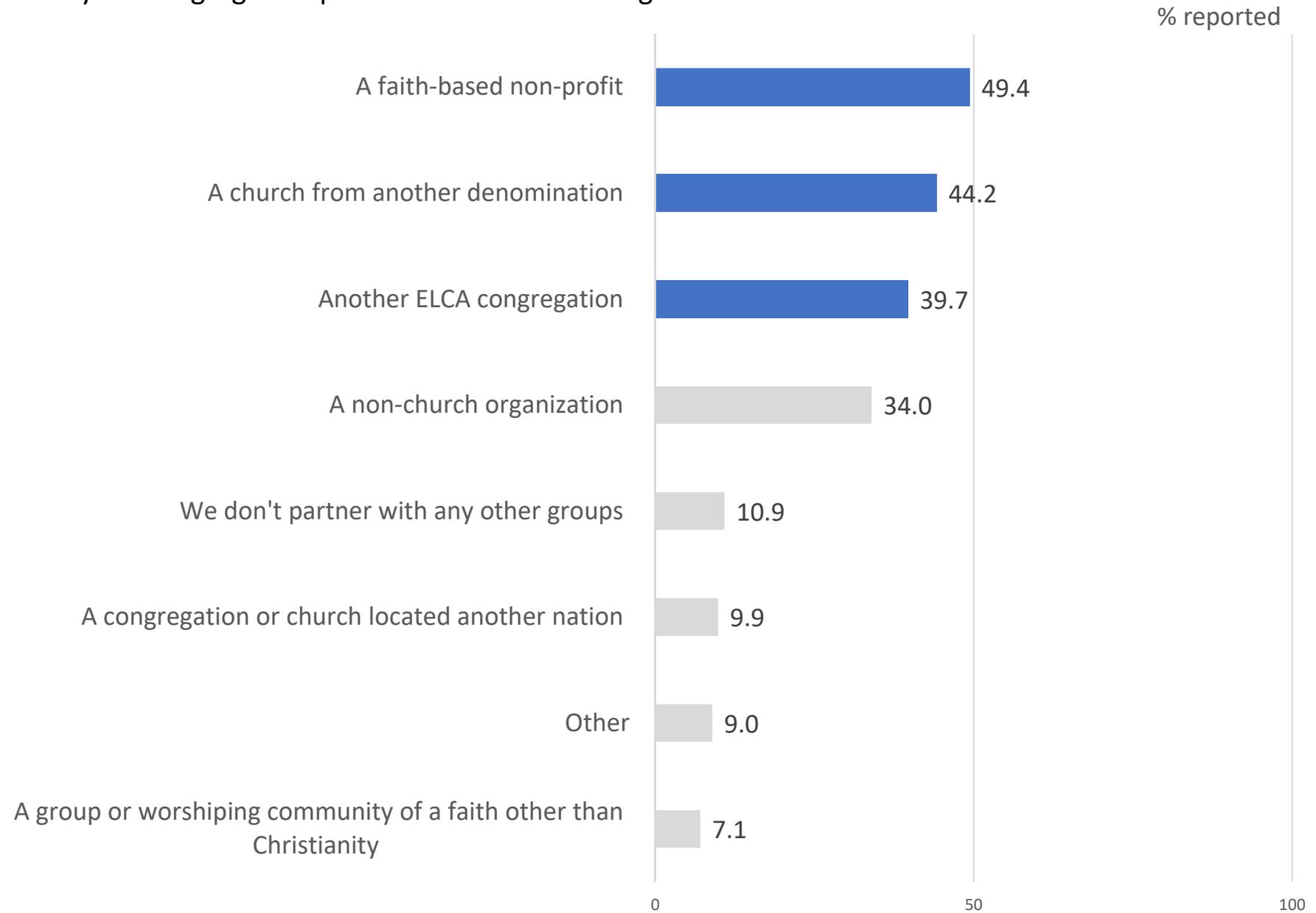
How well do terms describe congregations?



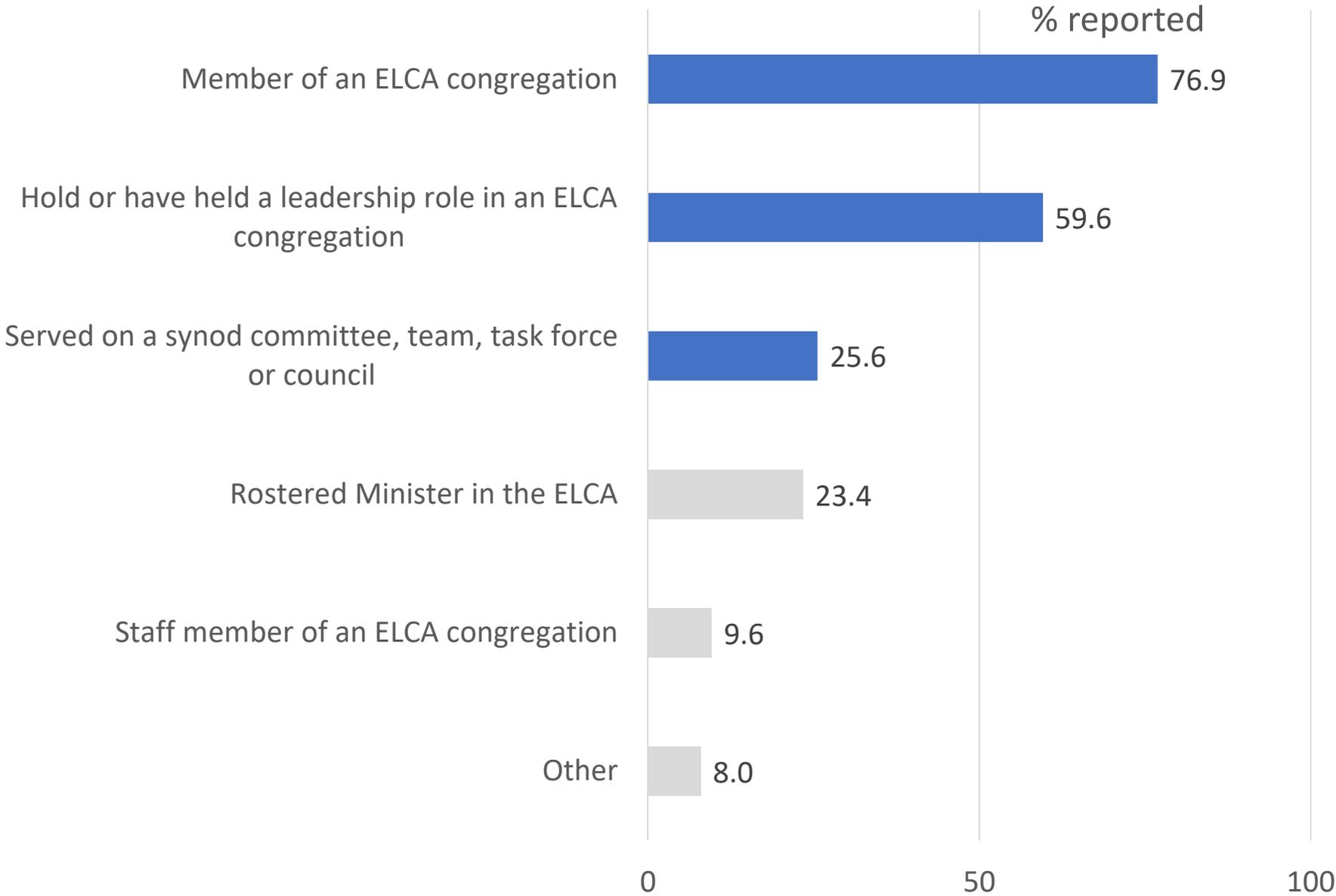
Congregational Interaction with the Synod in the past two years



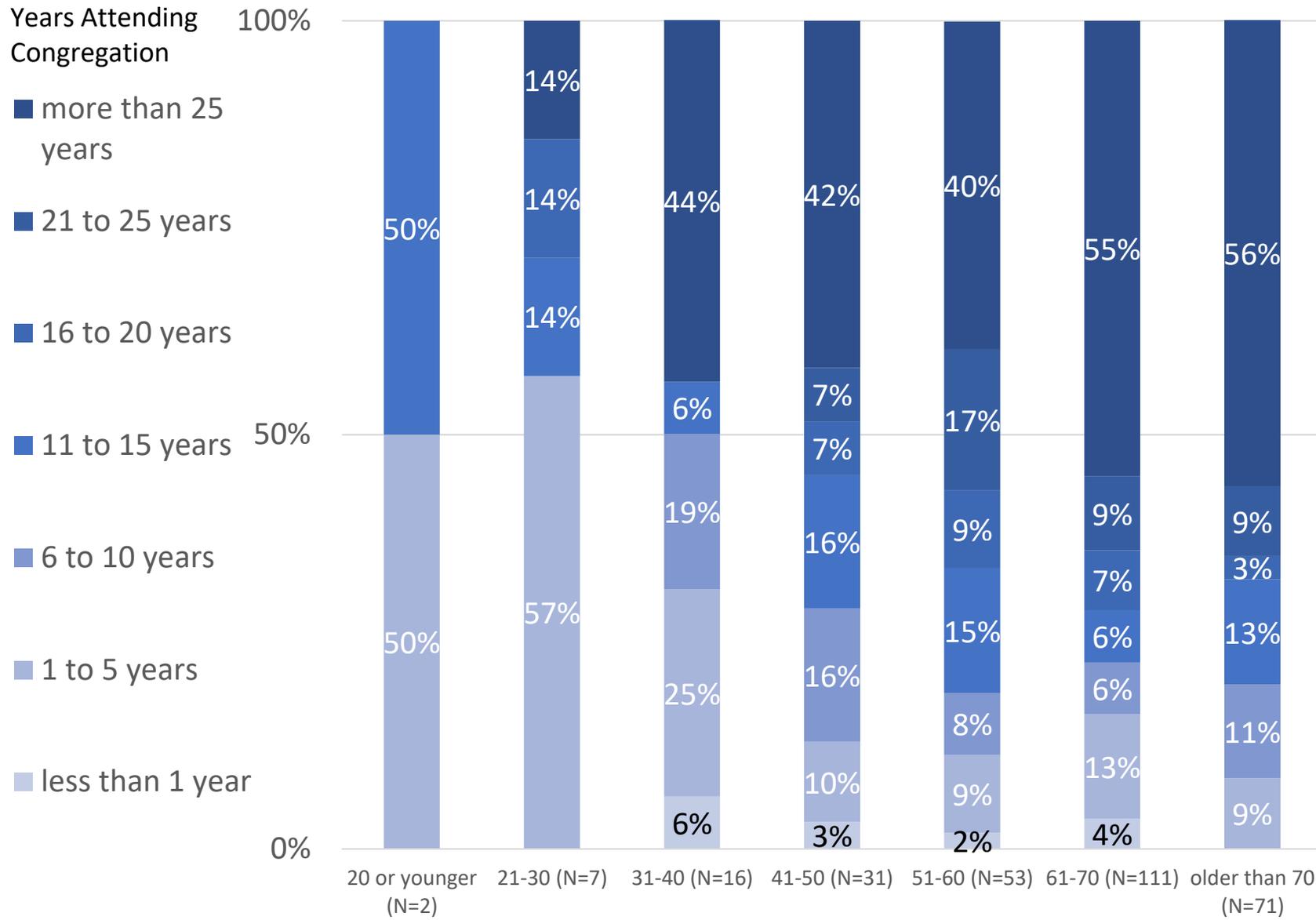
Does your congregation partner with the following?



Ways Respondents Described Themselves



Ages of Respondents and Years Attending Congregation



Congregational Context or Setting of Respondents

