



“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.”

– John 3:16

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

John 3:16, perhaps one of the most quoted passages in the New Testament, hangs on bed sheets in football stadiums; it is almost ubiquitous. It is also true. If God so loves the world, we should too. Lutherans show up – as Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and as The Lutheran World Federation (LWF).

We are church for the sake of the world.

In our congregations we address hunger and poverty through food pantries and community gardens, in health care clinics and job training programs. We foster unity among the children of God in relationship with our ecumenical and inter-religious partners. Together, with our companions in Central America, we are working with unaccompanied minors and the conditions in their countries of origin that force these children to flee. Through LWF, we support Syrian refugees in Jordan who are living in Za’atari camp, provide education and child protection assistance to Sudanese refugees, and offer specialty care at the Augusta Victoria Hospital for Palestinians.

We have surpassed our fundraising commitment to eradicate malaria and bring about lasting change. *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA* will emphasize ELCA World Hunger this year to support our comprehensive approach to solve challenges that perpetuate hunger and poverty. All of this good and hard, sometimes dangerous, work is the work we are able to do because we are church abiding in Christ – God’s beloved people gathered around word and sacrament.

We are church for the sake of the world.

In preparation for the 500th anniversary observance of the Reformation, I encourage you to visit [ELCA500.org](http://ELCA500.org) for more information and resources. One of the featured events for the 500th anniversary is the Grace Gathering in conjunction with the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly. Come experience a churchwide assembly, be centered in God’s word, participate in experiential learning, hear Nobel Peace Prize winner Leymah Gbowee, attend workshops to equip you in observing the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary in your local ministry setting and much more! You can register today at [ELCA.org/GraceGathering](http://ELCA.org/GraceGathering).

On Sept. 11, our country will be remembering the lives lost and the lives forever changed by the tragic events 15 years ago. The events affected all of us, and it will be an important moment for us to be together as a church and with all people of faith. Part of our “God’s work. Our hands.” Sunday on Sept. 11 is a chance for us to show up as Lutherans, freed and renewed in Christ, to serve and love our neighbor.

We are church for the sake of the world.

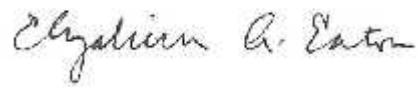
As we gather in our assemblies, let us be a faithful witness to God's work in our local communities, across the country and around the world. I am hopeful that our time together in assembly will be an opportunity for us to get to know each other and come together as a church. This is a good time for us to talk about the priorities and future directions of the ELCA.

I will be leading a process endorsed by the ELCA Church Council and the Conference of Bishops to discern in faith the future of the ELCA. Through an initiative titled Called Forward Together in Christ, we'll be assessing where we are as God's people and working to understand what God has in store for us. I am inviting you to take part in a conversation about the future of this church. For more information or to get involved, visit [ELCA.org/future](http://ELCA.org/future).

Thank you for your continued prayers and encouragement. As I am out and about in my travels, I am reminded that no one of us does God's work alone, and I am grateful for the opportunity to be a partner with you in that service. Thank you for your leadership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

God's blessings to you as you gather as the living body of Christ. May you be guided by the Spirit as you do God's will for God's people.

With gratitude,



Elizabeth A. Eaton  
Presiding Bishop  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

## **Bishop's Report**

### 2016 Synod Assembly

Grace and peace in Jesus Christ!

I'm excited that our synod will be gathered together in the Synod Assembly again on June 2 - 4, 2016 at the Crowne Plaza LAX. Two principles governed our choice of this site: to find a host location in the heart of the city capable of meeting our needs at a reasonable price, and to be in a location that the largest number of our people could easily reach, with many being able to commute to the Assembly. The venue is a little more expensive than some, but when I remember how committed our church has been to the living wage struggle among hotel workers in Los Angeles, it reminds me that justice often comes with a cost.

I had hoped to experiment this year with holding the Assembly in one of our congregations, but we have few church campuses large enough to accommodate a meeting of this size and none that have enough parking. But it is an ongoing concern of mine that we organize this necessary and important annual event in an economical, convenient, and meaningful way, and I want to explore some new models in the future, including a possible joint Assembly with the Pacifica Synod in the future.

The year since our 2015 Assembly in Westlake Village has been a busy one. I have been in dozens of congregations, traveled to many regional and national ELCA meetings, met with congregational councils and pastors for a myriad of reasons, met with each of the nine Conferences of our synod twice, and even done some teaching around the synod. I also guided and directed our staff in the exercise of their many duties. I have been busier than I have ever been in my life, and that is saying something!

I have shared with you in my daily "The Bishop's Day" Facebook posts what I have done each day for the last two years. In almost every congregation I visit, someone comes up to me and says, "I never knew until now what the bishop actually does—we just saw him every couple years, and in between was a mystery." Well, it's no mystery that my duties completely fill my time. I love what I do, but I know that I need to be careful not to overwhelm myself in the year ahead as we enter into the Reformation anniversary. I have tried to be faithful in taking my day off, and vacation now and then—but I know I will continue to need to work on self-care.

I'm organizing this year's report according to my constitutional duties as bishop. The duties of the bishop make up the longest single section of the constitution, and sometimes I wonder how a single individual could ever expect to do them all. The Synod Constitution

lays them out in nine categories with many subcategories, but for the purposes of this report, I am going to simplify them into five areas:

*To teach, preach, and lead the synod and congregations in worship*

*To ordain, commission, and install leaders*

*To lead in mission, and connect the synod to the ELCA*

*To promote the unity of our Church and its work with other churches*

*To lead the synod's work and governance*

### **To teach, preach, and lead the synod and congregations in worship**

I am in a different congregation to preside at Holy Communion and preach almost every week of the year. This is my greatest joy and greatest challenge, as there are simply not enough Sundays to get everywhere as quickly as I'd like. There are only a handful of congregations left that I have not visited for worship, and I will easily be able to visit them in 2016. I have gained an important perspective on how our communities worship, and the great care that many of them give to worship that is beautiful and skillfully led.

Then, as I begin a second round of Sunday congregation visits in the year ahead, I plan to concentrate on congregations in transition—which in a sense are “my congregations” in a special way while they are without a permanent pastor—and especially those congregations that are small and struggling. They need special care and attention, I believe, and I feel the need to be close to them and reassure them of God's love and the church's care. But I have some plans to work with our largest congregations as well!

The Reformation anniversary year of 2017 invites me to do a lot of teaching. I plan a five-part lecture series on Luther and the Reformation that will be held on Saturdays at 2-month intervals between November 2016 and July 2017, with a kick-off event in September 2016. These will be held in some of our large congregations throughout the synod, beginning in Torrance and ending up in San Luis Obispo, and will be videotaped for later use in congregational settings. I will also be offering a lecture on the Reformation in Sweden and Finland at the Nordic Spirit symposium at CLU, and will be a co-presenter of three Farstrup-Mortensen Lectures in Solvang, both in February of 2017. I will also be giving talks outside the synod at a few events in other parts of the ELCA.

Earlier this year, the congregation at First Lutheran Church in Glendale, the host church to the synod offices, decided to enter a new (and possibly final) phase of their communal life. Putting themselves under synodical administration and transferring title to their property to the synod, the congregation and its school are working with us to discern their future mission. In the meanwhile, the whole synod is now a stakeholder in the property. As I said

in last year's report, I continue to urge the president of California Lutheran University for plans to build out a seminary presence on the soil of our synod. Even one or two regular seminary-level courses, offered here in SoCal, would be a great help to those discerning a call to public ministry. It would also help those who have completed ELM find new challenges, and might be an opportunity for our rostered leaders to gain some continuing education. I think the First, Glendale campus might be a very good place for such a program to begin, and it would fulfill the original dream that we have a permanent Lutheran Center for education, leadership training, and congregational renewal.

This summer, in August 2016, I will take a contingent of synod folk to Germany as a part of one of a tour to the Luther sites in Germany. I plan to accompany another group in June of 2017 as well. Any member of the synod is welcome to join me on these pilgrimages, which I lead because I think they have great value to the participants. They are great value for the cost. Please contact me if you are interested in taking part in one—or visit the travel table in the exhibits area of the Assembly. After the Reformation anniversary is over, I would like to organize a synod trip to the Holy Land as well as visits to our companion synods.

### **To ordain, commission, and install leaders**

The ceremonial role I play in these important moments of transition, as our clergy and lay rostered leaders enter their calls and receive the church's formal recognition, is a light and pleasant task for me. I rejoice with every new person who enters our church's service this way; I celebrate with each congregation as it receives a new pastor or lay rostered leader. For the most part, I am able to attend every installation, and when I am not, the conference dean usually conducts the ritual.

This year, I ordained Jonathan Hemphill, pastor of Another Level Ministries, who came to us through the Theological Education for Emerging Ministries program in South LA, and Dr. Veli-Matti Kärkäinen, who came to us as a clergyman from another tradition and serves as associate pastor of the Finnish Lutheran Church in Santa Monica. I also participated in the ordination of Jennifer Shaw, one of our Southwest California Synod candidates, who was called to serve in a congregation of the Pacifica Synod. I also consecrated Martha Santrizos as a diaconal minister to a joint call to social service shared by Christ Lutheran in Goleta and Trinity Lutheran in Santa Barbara.

### **To lead in mission, and connect the synod to the ELCA**

The primary place where the Gospel is proclaimed is in our synod's congregations, but it is also an important aspect of the synod's mission that it make public witness to our faith and our commitment to our neighbor. My work as bishop is tied up in this in two ways: being

the public face of our Lutheran faith commitments and teaching them, and by joining with other Christians in promoting justice, religious freedom, and social reform in ways consonant with our theological convictions.

I regularly take part in public conversation on issues of justice, including the care of creation. More than one of the resolutions that will come before this Assembly have been generated by those in our synod who have organized themselves to advocate for care for the earth. I applaud those efforts and invite you to think seriously about the issues they raise for us as Californians.

My recent visit to the Holy Land, where I preached at the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem, and my work with the ELCA bishops' "ready bench" on Middle East Peace, have made me especially sensitive to the situation of the Palestinian Christians, caught as they are between seemingly irreconcilable factions in the Israeli-Palestinian struggle. Keeping in mind the humanity of all people, the priority of non-violence, and the right of all to dignity and peace, many in our synod are engaged in advocating for justice in Israel and the Occupied Territories. One of our Assembly resolution deals with these issues as well.

Our El Salvadoran Lutheran sisters and brothers have made me more aware of the suffering that is brought about by arbitrary deportations of minors and the separation of families. Our synod Justice Team's Guardian Angels program has received much acclaim as a volunteer-driven, low-overhead, grassroots organization that makes a difference in the treatment of these minors in the US legal system. I recently participated with other clergy from full communion partner churches in a Holy Week march through downtown Los Angeles to protest the wave of recent deportation of children and mothers.

In all these ways and others, I try to keep our synod connected to the initiatives of the ELCA. In the year ahead, you will see a new one, titled "Called Forward Together Into Christ," which is an attempt to connect with the church's base membership to discern future priorities together. Please take part in any "Called Forward" conversations to which you are invited. We need your input!

### **To promote the unity of our Church and its work with other churches**

I spend an average of six working weeks a year—and usually out of our territory—on programs and meetings of the ELCA and its Region 2. This is not optional; we are part of a larger church, and it falls to me to be the primary point of contact between the two. I spend three weeks a year with the Presiding Bishop and the 64 other synodical bishops in meetings for the good of our whole church. Add to that regional mobility and candidacy gatherings and advocacy meetings in Sacramento and Washington, DC, and meetings

around specific ministries and topics, and I am gone a good deal. But this, too, is part of my call. And I am proud of the work my assistants to the bishop do, even in my absence.

Our synod conversation with the Pacifica Synod about our future work together is also ongoing. The Pacifica side's co-chair, the Rev. Andrew Taylor of San Diego, was just elected to succeed Bishop Murray Finck as the Pacifica Synod's third bishop, and I expect that his leadership will draw us further together as we think of ways to enhance our mission by deeper cooperation.

But the place where we may see most interesting developments in the year ahead is in our work with The Episcopal Church. We have been invited to engage closely with the LA Episcopal diocese in thinking about ways to work together as churches. There is strong feeling on both sides that since we are similar and face enough of the same changes, we should collaborate more closely. I have had a series of fruitful conversations with my Episcopal counterpart, Bishop J. Jon Bruno, and we hope soon to identify areas of cooperation to benefit both churches. The next step will be a meeting of our senior staffs.

### **To lead the synod's work and governance**

Our church's mission is that we are governed both by Jesus' great commandment that we love God and our neighbors, and Jesus' great commission to make disciples of all nations, baptizing and teaching in the name of the Triune God. This is the Southwest California Synod's mission: that it be an expression of the church rooted firmly in the Gospel promise of new life in Christ, fed and nourished by the sacraments for service, care, and justice for all our neighbors.

This year we opened two new ministries: Reformation Lutheran Church in Pasadena, a multicultural community using the facilities of the former Messiah Lutheran; and Adore, a ministry to the Latino LGBT community in the San Fernando Valley. You will hear more about each of those in the course of the Assembly, and in Pastor Marj Funk-Phil's report as Director of Evangelical Mission. No congregations closed this year, but First Lutheran, Glendale, has transferred its property to the synod and is discerning its future.

We continue to make progress toward our mission goals. They have been well received in the synod, and our staff is enthusiastic about them. But they were not intended to be fulfilled within a year or two, but remain longer-term goals, toward which we make incremental progress each year. Nonetheless, they have proven to be useful and inspiring.

This is also a year in which we are attempting to make some changes to our spending and income patterns. We have a lean staff, a small budget for all we do, and very faithful

mission support giving from congregations—giving that in real terms has risen somewhat in the years since my election. But—as is right—we pledge 50% of all we receive from congregations to go directly to the ELCA for its ministries. Though much of this comes back to us in the form of staff subsidies and grants to congregations, it means that we run our synod with a smaller budget than we would like. Of the 50% we retain, 12% is earmarked for grants to congregations and ministries. That means we run the synod on only about a third of what we receive from congregations, and that has meant that we have subsidized our income for years with undesignated savings from the liquidation of properties. We have used these funds well and wisely, but we need to plan for the longer term.

My hope is, with a reactivated and engaged Budget and Finance Committee and an active new Treasurer, to develop new ways of organizing synod finances and to find new sources of income. My ultimate goal is to find a sustainable long-term strategy to fund the necessary functions of the bishop's office through endowment income, leaving more of the congregational mission support for programs and projects that will appeal to our congregations and givers, and building up a capital reserve that can fund our ongoing costs.

We have in this synod what is probably the most diverse Lutheran population in the whole ELCA—according to the ELCA's statistics, a quarter of our congregations have populations that are more than 50% people of color or first language other than English. One in four! That's an extraordinarily high percentage for American Lutherans. Now that doesn't mean we've come as far as we can, but it certainly tells us that we have potential to reach new people in the future. It is my strong hope that we can build stronger ties to the African Descent, Latino, and Asian communities in the year ahead.

I am grateful for the welcome you have given me in your congregations as a brother and father in Christ, and when I go to you I bring with me the prayers and good wishes of all your brothers and sisters in the faith throughout the church. By the end of 2016, I expect I will have attended worship or met with the leadership of every one of our congregations.

I give thanks for this wonderful church and every blessing it brings—to Los Angeles, Southwest California, and the world—for all the ways that you, our lead volunteers, and all our leaders and members do God's work with their own hands here in the Southwest California Synod. I also give thanks for your many prayers for me.

Thanks be to God for you!

The Rev. Dr. R. Guy Erwin  
Bishop



**The Southwest California Synod  
Report of The Synod Council by the Vice President  
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This year's Synod Assembly carries with it the message of unity in mission expressed by our Presiding Bishop, Elizabeth Eaton as she reminds us that we are ***"Church Together... for the sake of the world."*** It's a reminder of the Great Commandment to "love God and love our neighbor as ourselves." This year we are gathering together under the theme that ***"We are Church Together ~ Welcoming the Stranger."*** It's a reminder that in this virtual world laden by multiple levels of instant communication and information sharing, that our neighbor may not be near, our neighbor may well be someone for whom we have yet to know, someone who we may be unfamiliar, un-accustom, or even unsure of our sense of welcome. Our welcome must be unequivocal and unmatched, and for this we have dedicated our time together not only to remind us of the importance of this charge to community, but also, to demonstrate through our actions just how welcoming we really are, most particularly to the stranger. Thus, we welcome you to the 2016 Synod Assembly so that together we may welcome others in our midst more fully.

Your Synod Council has diligently pursued our multi-year synod mission goals, having delineated a number of objectives designed to fulfill these goals as each year progresses. A summary of those actions is attached.

***Our Mission Goals and Objectives:***

The principal goals of ***Clarifying our Message***, ***Building Community*** and ***Promoting Education for All***, guided our work for the year, resulting in several significant advancements. We have shared highlights of these results in the collegiums, conference gatherings and other settings in which the people of God assemble, requesting their input and impressions.

Each year we are blessed by the increasing involvement and expressed faithfulness of those who attend both the fall and Spring Conferences. We continue to hear about collaborative ministries among congregations, purposefully integrated programs and joint outreach services to others. It is impressive to hear about these initiatives and their respective impact and influence, yet another example of faithfulness for the sake of the world.

Perhaps you've heard of the gracious gift extended to the synod by First Lutheran, Glendale as they unanimously presented their campus for the building-up of community through the establishment of new programs of learning and instruction. While the details are still unfolding, this enhanced ability to offer educational programming for clergy and lay leaders has been intensified and advanced significantly. We give thanks for their investment and their willingness to support this aspect of our goal setting. Their actions are symbolic of those ***Legacy Gifts*** received by the synod that are helping to sustain newly formed congregations and congregations under redevelopment for which there are 19 representing 15% of our

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worshipping communities. The synod council envisions its stewardship responsibilities expanding as legacy gifts over time are entrusted to its care and facilitation. No doubt these are new and revitalized communities of faith that may not exist without such financial support and prayerful intercession.

The First Lutheran, Glendale site will become a Lutheran Center of learning. Program year 2016-17 will afford us the opportunity to solidify the recommended space use plan for the campus, to fully develop the extent of education-based instruction and to garner the support of other partners in the administration of the campus and its programs. We have been blessed to realize the first phase of this principal objective through the resourcefulness of this faithful community for which we are most appreciative.

You may also have heard that our service ministry as sponsored by your collective mission support continues to reflect our interdependence and interrelationship. We have been blessed by your graciousness in that your planned gift commitments and contributions were not only met by year's end; but, surpassed, bringing us ultimately ever closer to realizing our principal goal of building community both throughout the synod as well as Churchwide levels.

***Visioning Beyond***

Your Council has conceded that mission support must invariably be complemented with other tangibly significant sources of income if we are to accomplish all that we believe God has set before us to do. Most recently, the synod has enacted a number of administrative services directed to congregations to help alleviate the struggles of campus and property management. These services range from basic bookkeeping to full accounting services including bill pay, asset management and consultative IT services. The world is changing and our procedures and systems must keep pace. The synod is thankful that it is able to offer these supplemental services for which 21 congregations are currently taking advantage.

This year's budget review and approval process has been augmented to include the presence of impending legacy gifts, the creation of the Lutheran Center for Leadership and Ministry (as it is becoming known) and the extended breadth and use of our financial reserves. A 5-year Financial Strategic Plan was approved and adopted by your Synod Council that serves both as a guide as well as a set parameters for future financial decision-making. This 5-year criterion will be reviewed regularly to ensure that it is in concert with market conditions and ministry objectives. It is also our intent to parallel the ELCA Gift Campaign that has so successfully raised awareness and resources towards eradicating the presence of malaria (for the sake of the world) and other vitally compelling concerns. You will hear more about this effort following the formulation of the synod's campaign this

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year and its future funding initiatives. We are anticipating yet another example of our generosity to flourish in the coming year.

Our future plans must be tempered and informed by our present realities and as such the following actions represent the work of the Synod Council on your behalf over the last twelve months.

***The Realities We Face:***

***Synod Council Meeting – May 2015***

- Directed Executive Committee and Budget/Finance Committee to realign synod budget based on newly approved mission goals
- Reviewed 2015 Synod Assembly preparation, status, and expense trends
- Approved constitutional updates: Olivet – Hawthorne

***Synod Council Meeting – June 2015 (teleconference)***

- Approved sale of Christ The King, subject to finalized negotiations as a Legacy Gift
- Approved continued use of Christ The King by The Academy of Arts and Sciences with a 2-year lease.

***Synod Council Meeting – September 2015***

- Reviewed status of all synod mission goals
- Approved activation of 2016 Synod Assembly Nominating Committee
- Approved revised criteria and grant request cycle presented by Endowment and Allocations Committees

***Synod Council Meeting – October 2015 (teleconference)***

- Established 5 synod workgroups: Constitution Review, Policy and Procedures, Congregation Dashboard, Area Strategies, and Communication

***Synod Council Meeting – December 2015***

- Approved Evangelism and Outreach Ministry Team (EOMT) recommendations for the funding of 10 congregational grants in 2016
- Approved request to submit EOMT grant: “ReThink, ReTool, ReNew” to ELCA for consideration in the amount of \$50,000.
- Approved 2 Synodically Authorized Worshiping Communities – Thai House Fellowship, Hollywood and St. Francis, Chatsworth.
- Received 2015 Audit Report on Synod Financials.
- Received and approved 5- Year Financial Strategic Plan.
- Approved closure of Congregations Under Development (CUD) – Holy Ground, Long Beach, and Holy Shepherd, Chatsworth. Established Southwest California/Pacifica Collaboration Taskforce
- Authorized Executive Committee to finalize Deed of Trust transfer from First Lutheran Glendale to the Synod subject to Legacy Gift criteria.
- Authorized the Executive Committee to secure a formal space/use plan for the campus of First Lutheran, Glendale.
- Approved recommendation from Budget/Finance Committee to secure a replacement loan for the parsonage associated with Iglesia Luterana Fe Y Esperanza.

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***Synod Council Meeting – February 2016***

- Approved the Budget & Finance Committee’s multi-year strategy for achieving Budget Neutrality
- Received and reviewed preliminary 2016 Synod Assembly Planning Budget
- Approved Synod Assembly Nominating Committee composition
- Approved Synod Assembly Reference and Counsel Committee composition
- Approved Executive Committee to finalize the sale of and legacy gift from the congregation of Christ The King
- Approved Rostered Leader changes (calls, transfers, retirements)

***Synod Council Meeting – May 2016***

- Approved the appointment of Mr. Mike Metzger as Synod Treasurer fulfilling the remaining 2 years of Ms. Debra Papageorge’s term
- Received and approved Budget/Finance recommended 2017 Budget
- Received and Acknowledged 2016 Synod Assembly Plans & Orchestration
- Approved 2<sup>nd</sup> submission of clergy housing allowances
- Approved Rostered Leaders changes thru March, 2016

***Welcoming the Stranger*** denotes recognizing their needs and even their wants. The food baskets that are being amassed around the room of the assembly will go to our various food pantries and social service ministries with our prayers that those who will ultimately be recipients will know that we care. We do this in recognition that God has blessed us to be a blessing to others. Take the time to witness the generosity around us in the form of these gifts of sustenance. Many thanks to each of congregations for your gracious and generous response.

Your involvement in the business of the Assembly is also a gift for when you entertain motions, memorials, resolutions, as well as deliberate on candidates for service, you offer your talent and time to this important work. We offer the 2017 Budget or Ministry Statement to you for consideration and approval, noting that we continue striving to achieve a balanced statement in spite of uncertainties, fluctuating resources and increasing requirements. As before, we are using program year 2014 as our benchmark, curbing expenses and lessening encumbrances throughout the year. We are all charged to be good stewards in all that we do and say.

Passing the 2017 Synod Budget is among those acts of faith and dedication for which a moment of introspection is warranted. While the budget is not fully balanced, we believe that our appreciation of God’s graciousness will guide us in making the necessary adjustments throughout the year to achieve an improved outcome. Achieving an enhanced ability to “do God’s work” can only come through an assurance that each congregation and each congregant mirrors God’s generosity. As intimated, Bishop Elizabeth Eaton reminds us that ***“We are Church Together”***

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for which our benevolent response is an indicator. We seek your prayers as we review, deliberate, and determine how our service to God translates into our 2017 Ministry Budget. We welcome you to join the church nationally as we are ***“Called Forward Together In Christ!”***



# Southwest California Synod, ELCA Goals and Objectives – Preliminary Results Reporting, 2015

2015 Short-term Plans		Results
<p><b>5-Year Mission Goals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Articulate and proclaim the message of who we are &amp; shape the faith of our communities</li> </ul>	<p><b>Ministry Focus</b></p> <p>Messaging and shaping faith: <b>Faith Formation and Education</b></p>	<p><b>Faith Formation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make the Synod an “Education Synod” with cradle-to-grave instruction</li> <li>Redefine the Synod as a “Faith Formation and Development Synod”</li> <li>Find ways to promote lay education, inclusive of ELM and other Christian education programs</li> <li>Establish ELM as an online medium</li> <li>Celebrate conferences with measurable member involvement</li> </ul> <p><b>Stewardship Education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinate similar congregation grant requests for maximum awards</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Obtained First, Glendale’s congregation agreement to transfer the property title deed to SWCS for the purpose of creating a Lutheran Education Center (aka <i>Lutheran Center for Leadership and Ministry</i>). Completed Phase I for the “Education Synod”</li> <li>Synod approved Taskforce in 2014 to create <i>Lutheran Center for Leadership and Ministry</i> with this principle in mind.</li> <li>Concluded 2014-15 ELM instruction with successful candidates acknowledged during the May Synod Assembly</li> <li>Attendance for Fall Conferences:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. Twin Valley – 43</li> <li>II. Foothills – 27</li> <li>III. San Gabriel – 24</li> <li>IV. LA Metro – 30</li> <li>V. Channel Island – 17</li> <li>VI. Tehachapi – TBA</li> <li>VII. Central Coast - 39</li> </ol> </li> <li>Combined the Allocations and Endowment Committees review process providing greater detail and analyses impacting congregation grant requests</li> </ul>



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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find ways to Fundraise for the Synod</li> <li>• Find ways to display the Synod budget functionally</li> <li>• Encourage congregations to meet minimal standards for mission support</li> <li>• Further develop and continue the Generous Life work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finance Committee developed a 5-year Strategy Plan involving the use of endowed funds, real estate, philanthropy, mission support and allocations management which is in its 2<sup>nd</sup> draft. The Plan calls for an integrated fundraising approach with the ELCA, coupled with the creation of a SWCS Fundraising Taskforce. Potential Taskforce candidates have been identified.</li> <li>• A new budget portrayal was used during the May Synod Assembly and during the Fall Conferences with the Generous Life Initiative. Greater understanding is believed to have occurred using this model of transparency.</li> <li>• As of October 2015, SWCS mission support results were: (1) 61% of the SWCS congregations met or exceeded planned mission support, (2) 20% offered letters of intent but have not met their planned goals, (3) 19% did not offer a letter of intent nor did they support joint synod/conference ministries thru this medium.</li> <li>• Periodic mission support updates were sent to congregations and conference deans. Special meetings have been held with 2 of 9 conference Deans.</li> <li>• The 2015 Spring and Fall Conferences have been dedicated to the Generous Life Initiative having presented all 123 congregations with DVD and bible study materials supporting the initiative.</li> </ul>
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## Southwest California Synod, ELCA Goals and Objectives – Preliminary Results Reporting, 2015

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Develop 4 Area Ministry Strategies</b></li> </ul>	<p>Deepening and Creating <i>New Collaboration</i> through Conferences, Clusters and Synod</p>	<p><b>Collaboration: Clusters and Conferences</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop plans for area clusters of congregations based on (a) passions in mission, (b) proximity in location, (c) churches with “viability” and “vitality”</li> <li>Work with Conference Deans and Chairs in the development of these plans</li> <li>Provide “seed funds” for collaborative efforts</li> <li>Promote and display “God’s Work, Our Hands Sunday ministry opportunities” during May Synod Assembly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identified Areas Ministry Strategies             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. Reconciled in Christ congregations</li> <li>II. New City Parish – Inner City</li> <li>III. Greater Long Beach – Youth</li> <li>IV. San Fernando Valley</li> <li>V. San Gabriel Valley</li> <li>VI. African Descent congregations</li> <li>VII. Latino/Hispanic congregations</li> </ol> </li> <li>Collegiums and other forms of communications help to further these plans.</li> <li>Allocations Committee revised its policies and procedures, giving greater emphasis for area ministry strategies in funding as well having changed the grant cycle (Oct – Feb) allowing for more time to establish these types of arrangements.</li> <li>15 videos were developed and 15 others were secured for the Assembly, many identifying and sharing congregants involved in “God’s Work, Our Hands Sunday”. Additional coverage was obtained via Synnews.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Create opportunities for rostered leaders to thrive</b> in their vocation</li> </ul>	<p>Nurturing and Establishing <i>Healthy congregations &amp; Healthy Rostered Leadership</i></p>	<p><b>Healthy Rostered Leadership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey rostered leaders about overall health. Using wellness wheel or other devices.</li> <li>Create an overall health assessment of rostered leaders within the synod.</li> <li>Create opportunities for pastors to have “self-care” beyond the collegium and colloquy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Day of Tranquility - Bishop launched the 1<sup>st</sup> “Quiet Day” (11/19/15), using the neighboring Catholic Chapel to St. Paul’s, Santa Monica. Twenty-one clergy were present for discussions on Advent and wellness.</li> </ul>





## Southwest California Synod, ELCA Goals and Objectives – Preliminary Results Reporting, 2015

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Foster congregations to become healthy communities</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help congregations with self-assessment, using the principles of “Viability, Vitality, Sustainability, and Rootedness”</li> <li>• Assist congregations that have met/or exceed their useful life determine what is best</li> <li>• Create a digital presence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Synod Council agreed to create a ‘Dashboard’ Team that would identify criteria to be used in measuring congregational health. Synod Workgroups have been charged with year-end deliverables by Dec. 2016</li> <li>• Synod has worked/is working with 5 congregations that reached finality and are experiencing major transition. Issues related to property management have been incorporated in the Finance Strategic Plan along the procedures for liquidity and long-term investing.</li> <li>• Synod Assembly was augmented with digital booklets, communications and report updates. Delegates were instructed on the use e-synod and its application.</li> </ul>
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**Pastor Reg Schultz-Akerson**  
**Assistant to the Bishop for Rostered Leadership**

As we gather in assembly this year under the theme, *Welcoming the Stranger*, I have been wondering how I do this in my ministry. Do I even do so? Then numerous first-time conversations in the past year with individuals who are feeling a call to public ministry in the ELCA came to mind. I thought about rostered leaders whom I do not know, but with whom I have become acquainted because they are open to call and interested in serving in the Southwest. Almost every week, I meet with a Church Council or a Call Committee for the first time. Welcoming these “strangers” as Christ has welcomed me is indeed at the heart of my daily ministry, as it is yours, wherever you have been sent for the sake of God’s purposes.

**MISSION TO SERVE**

The primary responsibilities in my portfolio are: 1) To provide oversight for the candidacy process of our synod; 2) To support the mission of the Cooperative Candidacy Committee of the Southwest California and Pacifica Synods, which is to raise up, prepare, certify and place public leaders in the ELCA; 3) To guide, coach and assist congregations who are in transition and in search of a pastor, Diaconal Minister, or an Associate in Ministry; 4) To identify, support and assist rostered leaders who are open to call and in their discernment of potential calls; 4) To assess conflicts which arise in our congregations, when the lay leaders or pastor request synodical assistance, and then work with these leaders in developing a process to resolve the conflict; 5) To accompany our newly called rostered leaders during their three-year participation in the Region 2 First Call Theological Education program; 6) To oversee the processing of and reporting to the ELCA of the changes which take place in the lives and ministries of our synod’s rostered leaders.

**FAITH EMBODIED IN OUR WORK--HIGHLIGHTS**

***Candidacy:***

- Seven (7) individuals were approved for entrance as candidates for ordained ministry.
- One (1) person was endorsed to continue as a candidate for ordained ministry.
- Six (6) Candidates were approved for ordination. Two of them are still awaiting call.
- Six (6) of the candidates who entered candidacy this past year will receive their preparation for ministry through the TEEM (Theological Education for Emerging Ministries) program. One is Asian, two are African-Descent, and three are Latino.
- Our synod candidacy committee welcomed Pastor Reggie Handsome as its newest member, and we said goodbye to Pastor Terry Tuvey Allen, who accepted a call to serve as Assistant to the Bishop in the Pacifica Synod.
- Administrative Assistant Robin Lujan and I participated in a new Candidacy Manual Training at the ELCA Center on February 11-13.
- The primary changes in the new Candidacy Manual include: 1) an intentional period of discernment guided synodically for each individual prior to application for candidacy; 2) four areas of competencies for mission-oriented leaders that will guide the formation of all ELCA candidates, as well as the entrance, endorsement, and approval decisions.

***Congregations and Rostered Leaders in Transition:***

- We celebrated the ordination of *Veli-Matti Karkkainen* (11/1/15) and *Jonathan Hemphill* (11/8/15). We also rejoiced in the consecration of *Martha Santrizos* (12/6/15) as a Diaconal Minister.
- Six (6) calls were extended by congregations: Mt. Carmel, San Luis Obispo, to Pr. Dan and Pr. Valerie Carlson as co-pastors on 5/10/15; Trinity, Long Beach, to Pr. Scott Fritz on 5/17/15; St. Luke's, Woodlawn Hills to Pr. Janet Hansted on 8/9/15; St. Matthew's, North Hollywood, to Pr. Stephanie Jaeger on 2/7/16; and Grace, Covina, to Candidate Spencer Steele on 4/24/16.
- The synod council issued seven (7) calls for pastors and one (1) call for a diaconal minister. See the report of Roster Changes for details.
- At the writing of this report, twenty-nine (29) congregations in the synod are in transition. Two (2) congregations are preparing to extend calls. Six (6) congregations are ready to receive the names of candidates and begin interviewing. Eleven (11) congregations are in a process of discerning various options in respect to the shape and direction of their next chapter of ministry, which may or may not include calling a pastor. Synod staff members are guiding these congregations through this discernment.
- In the course of this year, I have identified and Bishop Erwin has appointed seventeen (17) interim ministers. Four (4) of these pastors were specifically selected to serve as what we are calling Bridge Interim Pastors. Along with providing the basic pastoral needs, they work closely with the synod staff to help the congregation in discerning its next chapter of ministry.
- Pr. Marj Funk-Pihl and I participated in the interviews of 18 rostered leaders at the Region 2 Mobility Event, held in Sacramento, June 29- 30, 2015. Bishop Erwin and I represented our synod at a second Mobility Event in Santa Ana, December 8-9, 2015, at which we met 14 rostered leaders. This is a cooperative endeavor between the five synods in the region to become acquainted with leaders from across the ELCA who are interested in ministry in the Southwest.
- During the summer, I drafted a revised congregational transition process for our synod. Using the strengths of our current process, as well as best practices from other synods and intentional interim training, it has four phases: Concluding a Chapter in God's Mission, Envisioning and Discerning God's Mission, Preparing for God's Mission, and Pursuing and Implementing God's Mission. I am continuing to vet it with various groups and implementing parts of it in response to the specific needs of our congregations.

***Congregational Conflict:***

- 31 lay and rostered leaders, mostly from our synod, participated in the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center's "Mediation Skills Training Institute for Church Leaders," held at the synod office, July 6-10, 2015. This provides a group of people which our staff can tap if the need for mediation arises in one of our congregations.
- Another proactive step taken in order to help prevent conflict was the hosting of two Boundary Workshops for Rostered Leader, held on April 20 & 21. Barbara Keller, the Consultant to the ELCA for the prevention of Sexual Misconduct, was the presenter. About 75 of our rostered leaders attended.

***First Call Theological Education (FCTE):***

- Currently we have eight (8) rostered leaders engaged in FCTE, along with about 60 others throughout Region 2.
- Jointly hosted by the Pacifica and SWCA Synods, the fall event was held November 10-12, 2015 at Serra Retreat Center in Malibu. The theme was “We are Lutheran (does it matter?)” with Bishop Erwin serving as the presenter.
- The spring event was held in Sacramento, April 12-14, 2016, and the theme was “The Public Church.” Participants went to the state capitol to meet with various government leaders.

### **STORIES OF FAITH**

Aware that the ELCA and our synod need rostered leaders who are prepared to serve ethnic specific ministries, our staff made a concerted effort to identify potential leaders from these communities who might be open to public ministry in our church. These individuals were then invited to two classes on Lutheranism taught by Bishop Erwin, followed by an orientation to candidacy. The fruit of this effort is that six of these individuals were approved for entrance into candidacy and are now preparing to serve as ordained ministers in a TEEM program. Thanks be to God!

### **FORWARD TO SERVE GOD’S PEOPLE IN 2016**

Some key goals for me in the year ahead are: 1) Identify and train at least five “relators” who will accompany our candidates until they are approved; 2) In partnership with the Pacifica Synod, develop and implement a pre-entrance discernment process for prospective candidates; 3) Fully implement the revised congregational transition process, including the publication of new transition materials for congregations and rostered leaders; and 4) Utilizing those who have been trained, organize geographically-based, synod mediation teams and their team leaders, who will bring their team together periodically to practice their skills.

### **ABUNDANT OPPORTUNITY**

- The last two years has shown me that our synod is blessed with a constant flow of individuals who are wondering about entering the candidacy process and discerning a call to public ministry. If you are a trained spiritual director and open to assisting these individuals in their discernment, I invite a conversation with you.
- With 29 congregations currently in transition and the gift of interim pastors emerging by the grace of God at just the right time, I am always ready to talk to the pastors in our synod about intentional interim training and how it can strengthen your current ministry, and perhaps fill a need in our synod someday.
- Please feel free to contact me at [rakerson@socialsynod.org](mailto:rakerson@socialsynod.org) or 818-287-8572.

## **Rev. Marjorie Funk-Pihl**

### **Assistant to the Bishop for Congregational Mission/Director for Evangelical Mission**

Thank you for the continued opportunity to serve you as Director for Evangelical Mission. I love this job/call!

#### **MISSION to serve:**

My overall purpose in the synod office is to support the vitality and sustainability of our congregations. I work with congregations in all stages of life – from exploring the possibility of starting a congregation to discerning God’s will in what might be the last days. Sort of like pastoral ministry – only instead of individuals, I work with congregations.

#### **FAITH EMBODIED in Our Work:**

God is up to something. Our job is to figure out how we can join in!

#### **HIGHLIGHTS:**

One of the highlights of my call is to work with our pastors who are developing new congregations. If you want to know what God is up to in our synod, get to know this great group! Each of these communities is evaluated annually, as are the developer pastors. In addition, I meet with each pastor almost monthly and worship with them a couple of times per year.

#### **Meet our New Start Congregations!**

You can read an article and see photos from each of these ministries in your copy of our **Southwest California Synod: Stories of Faith in Action** which is part of the packet you will receive upon arrival at assembly. During the assembly you will have the opportunity to meet each of these pastors face to face. Look for our **“Speed Dating”** sessions and find these developer pastors where you see their names on the top of poles standing about 7 feet from the ground.

**Adore!** is a BRAND new community led by Joseph Castaneda Carrera with a specific outreach to Latino LGBT folks in North Hollywood. They are hosted by St. Matthews in North Hollywood.

**Another Level** is in its 6<sup>th</sup> year of existence but its FIRST year as an official congregation under development with a called and ordained pastor: Jonathan Hemphill. Students from several colleges and their families enjoy worship together. They are currently hosted by Ascension Lutheran in Los Angeles.

**Bloom** has just finished its first year as a congregation under development in the Santa Clarita Valley. Ryan Chaddick is the pastor of this homegrown group! They are renting space from St Stephen’s Episcopal Church.

**Glory** is in its 7<sup>th</sup> year and moving toward fully organizing as a congregation in the next year. This community is made up of local Chinese-Americans and Taiwanese-Americans from the Torrance area, and USC students from mainland China. Pastor Newman Chiu leads this vibrant and excited group!

**Iglesia Luterana Santa Cruz:** Is in its thirteen year and headed toward organizing as a recognized congregation of the ELCA. This is a community of Oaxacan folks who live in Santa Maria and work in the fields. They speak Mixteco and some Spanish, though the children (and there are A LOT of them) speak English fluently. This year saw the beginning of a major transition with the retirement of their founding pastor Patricia Muran. Interim Pastor Ron Gieko is leading them while we look for a new developer.

**Mission St. Francis** is a BRAND new community that has risen from the ashes of the now closed Holy Shepherd in Chatsworth. This is a synod exploration project to see if a new congregation can thrive in Chatsworth. Our pastoral team is comprised of veteran pastor Sam Platts and able assistant Ramiel Shamwell.

**Reformation/Reformacion** is another of our new congregations under development. Reformation was born from the legacy of Messiah Lutheran in Pasadena and is an intentionally a mulit-cultural and bilingual community. Pastor Jennifer Amos Burgos and evangelist/TEEM candidate Maria Elena Montalvo lead this community.

**St Matthew's Filipino Ministry, Glendale.** Pastor Marcos Panahon is in his second year as pastor of this community which is an extension of St Matthew's, Glendale. You should hear this group sing in Tagalog!

**Thai Fellowship of Hollywood** is another of our exploration projects. Pastor/developer Pongtep "Golf" Chutimapongrat comes to us from the Pacifica synod where he pastors a Thai congregation in Whittier. Several folks started commuting from Hollywood/Burbank area to Whittier, so we thought ...why not have an extension campus in Hollywood and see what grows? They are in their first 6 months!!

Another highlight of mine is working with pastors in redevelopment ministry. Currently we have two congregations in that program of the ELCA. These congregations are also evaluated annually and I meet with these pastors most months and worship with these communities a couple of times per year.

**First Lutheran, Inglewood,** suffered a bit in the transition between pastors, but now, with the leadership of Redeveloper Pastor George Villa and a great council, they coming back to life. There are two services every Sunday (English and Spanish) and a lively band leading most Sundays.

**St Matthew's North Hollywood** has called Redeveloper Pastor Stephanie Jaeger to lead them through the ELCA's Transformational Ministry process. They are dedicated to reaching out to their neighborhood in artistic and creative ways. This should be a great thing for the talented folks who call North Hollywood home.

## **FORWARD to Serve God's People in 2016:**

You may have heard about a project called: ReThink, ReTool, ReNew. Well, we rethought it, retooled it and the renewed version is called:

Learning from each other's strengths

# Living the Resurrection!

Listening...Experimenting...Sharing  
Together.

You and your congregation have already been invited to become part of this exciting process!! When you arrive (or if you are already here ... As you arrived) you will receive an official invitation and the directions for how to begin the process. Watch for our presentation during assembly!

What **Living the Resurrection IS:**

What it is **NOT:**

Structured learning process.....	Pre-packaged program
Biblically grounded.....	Secular
Supported by Lutheran Theology.....	From somewhere else
Peer to peer.....	Expert driven
Workshops.....	Lectures
Experiments .....	Notebooks
Flexible.....	Prescribed
By us, for us.....	Cookie-cutter
18 month process .....	1 time and gone.

## Frequently Asked Questions:

***Why would my congregation want to join this process?***

Because we can learn from each other! After all, who knows what it's like to be Lutheran in Central and Southern California better than we do!

***What is the focus of the **Living the Resurrection** process?***

When Jesus was asked “Which is the greatest commandment?” he responded: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:39, Mark 12:31, Luke 10:27). On the night before his crucifixion, Jesus gave a new commandment: “love one another.” (John 13:34). These three commandments, to love God, love one another and love neighbor, form the foundational purposes of

the church. **Living the Resurrection!** will focus on celebrating and nurturing these three relationships.

### ***What is a “Learning Community?”***

We will create communities where learning from each other happens easily and freely.

### ***How will Learning communities be formed?***

Every congregation in the synod is invited to take the “Congregational Vitality and Sustainability Survey” in the month of June. Beginning in July we will schedule workshops where each congregation will discover their strengths and growth areas in terms of the three foundational relationships.

Each *Learning Community* will include congregations of complementary strength and growth areas so that, through sharing, we can learn one another.

Each invited congregation will create a Resurrection Team of 5-6 people (including the pastor). We will form *Learning Communities* by joining the Resurrection Teams of 6-8 congregations.

We need each *Learning Community* to be as diverse as possible so that we can hear from folks who are not like us.

Each Resurrection Team will be assigned a coach to help them stick to the goals and experiments that they set for themselves.

Each *Learning Community* will have a facilitator as well as guest speakers for topics the community wants to explore.

### ***What kind of time commitment will this take?***

*Learning Communities*, made up of the Resurrection Teams of different congregations, will work together for 18 months. Workshops will be offered every other month for that time period. Each Resurrection team will develop projects and experiments to work on between workshops.

### ***What are the expectations for participating congregations?***



Each *Learning Community* will create a covenant agreement to guide the expectations as they work together for 18 months. The covenant will be voted on and accepted at a specially called meeting of the congregation. Covenants will include the following expectations:

Each Resurrection Team will attend all workshops of the *Learning Community*.

Each congregation will pay \$1,000. over the course of the 18 months. This will cover the cost of workshop facilitators and coaches for **Living the Resurrection**.

Each Resurrection Team will host one workshop or work with another congregation to help host.

Each Resurrection Team will work with their coach.

### ***What can we give up to be able to do this?***

**Living the Resurrection** will generate energy in your congregation, but it will also require energy. Congregations who accept the invitation to participate will need to decide which of their current activities they will suspend for the next 18 months. There will be suggestions at the opening workshop of sections of the ELCA Constitution for Congregations that can be suspended for this process.

### ***How can my congregation sign up?***

Every congregation of our synod is invited to take the *Congregational Vitality and Sustainability Survey* in the month of June. At synod assembly each congregation will receive an invitation with the web address you'll need to find the *Congregational Vitality and Sustainability Survey*. Each congregation has a unique web address so we can keep the survey results separate. You can print out paper copies of the survey or let people take it on their cell phones or iPads. Pass the survey out at the end of worship, play music while people fill it out, then collect them and mail them in! That's all you need to do! You might want to offer it for a couple of Sundays in a row. This is for your worshipping community— not people who are associated with your congregation, but don't come to worship.

## **Can my congregation take the survey, and then decide not to participate in *Living the Resurrection*?**

Yes. Taking the survey does not commit your congregation to the process.

## **I have questions. Who can I talk to?**

During our synod assembly, there will be a table in the vendor room staffed by the team who have been working on *Living the Resurrection*. Feel free to bring your questions to the table. After assembly, please email Pastor Marj Funk-Pihl at [mfunkpihl@socalsynod.org](mailto:mfunkpihl@socalsynod.org) with any questions or concerns.

**Andreas Hirsch**  
**Director of Administration and Finance**

As the Director of Administration and Finance, my role is to help work the soil and create a fertile environment for churches and leaders to thrive to their full potential. The back office of the synod is here to support the many aspects of synod administration - from finance and property management to providing bookkeeping services for mission new starts and congregations under synodical administration.

**MISSION to serve:**

We are now managing the finances for more than ten organizations and congregations. Sherri Miller provides bookkeeping services for new starts and congregations under synodical administration. Out of the eight properties the synod manages, three were added in 2015. The Southwest California Synod took title to Messiah, Pasadena; Holy Shepherd, Chatsworth; and First, Glendale, and now owns seven properties within our territory. As our aging congregations decline, we find ourselves increasingly needed to fill the void of administration. It will become increasingly the norm in our synod to assist congregations not only with financial resources, but also with administrative support.

We also direct the candidacy and call process of pastors as an administrative assistance. Robin Lujan works closely with Pastor Reg Schultz-Akerson to help congregations to find new pastors and to guide candidates through the process of Rostered Ministry.

Samantha Henderson, who was previously helping with the Synews, is now heading synod communications, as well as providing additional office support when needed.

**FAITH EMBODIED in Our Work:**

We are all one body with many members. Our congregations live in community with each other and with the bishop's office. In order to weather the storms of our times, we have to pool our resources and become stronger together. We are living in God's garden: we till the ground, leaving room for God to do the growing.

**HIGHLIGHTS:**

The most significant development is the transfer of deed for the First Lutheran Glendale property. After more than 18 months of deliberation, the congregation decided to gift the property to the synod. This will allow the small worshipping community to focus on their own needs without the burden of property management. Michelle Goetsch, principal at First Lutheran School in Glendale, is excited about the potential and opportunity to be part of a larger church. Our plan is build a Lutheran Center for learning and community here in Glendale. The acquisition of the First, Glendale property means that all congregations in the synod will have a central place to gather for fellowship, learning, and worship. This is a plan of much potential and opportunity.

Messiah Pasadena disbanded in 2015 and decided to gift their property and resources to the synod. This gave the Office of the Bishop the resources to assist Pastor Jennifer Amos Burgos at Reformation Lutheran in Pasadena to start a new Spanish/English ministry from what was previously Messiah, Pasadena's congregation and community. Messiah's gracious gift is enabling Reformation's ministries to grow, demonstrating how we can reinvent the church in our changing communities.

In many places we are able to grow new worshipping communities, and in other places we have made the choice to make room for God's work in a different way. In fall of 2014, the congregation of Christ the King in Van Nuys decided to disband and gift the property to the synod. A day school was able to use the space and grow a charter school, which served the neighborhood so successfully that in July of 2017 the property will be sold and permanently redeveloped. The proceeds of the sale will benefit social ministries in the San Fernando Valley and ministries of the synod. This too is an example of how the assets of one community will give life to the new.

The congregation of Holy Shepherd in Chatsworth also decided to disband, and the Office of the Bishop permitted Pastor Sam Platts and Ramiel Shamwel to use the facility for Mission San Francis, a unique worshipping community with a mostly youth driven worship.

The goal of our synod is to be innovative and ready to use its assets to strengthen member congregations.

### **FORWARD to Serve God's People in 2016:**

My goal for the coming year is to build an even stronger support system for ailing congregations. In order to succeed, we need to pool our resources. Larger congregations should partner with smaller ones. The Office of the Bishop should become a resource center for information, and an incubator for new ideas. Building a Lutheran Center will strengthen our synod-wide identity, enabling us to help congregations in our territory to build their own local identities in turn. The Lutheran Center will additionally offer Christian and administrative education to strengthen church leaders, who will then be able to work more efficiently within their congregations.

Where many people see decline and discouragement, I see opportunity. We need to let go of our past and at the same time cherish our heritage in order to build a strong church able to weather the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Respectfully submitted,

*Andreas Hirsch*

Director of Administration and Finance

Maria Paiva  
Latino Ministry Coordinator

*But I do not count my life of any value to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the good news of God's grace. Acts 20:24 (NRSV)*

Let me begin this report by giving thanks to God for the great opportunity we have as a Synod to proclaim the good news of God's grace specifically to the Latino population of our Synod. We have 16 ministries that welcome the stranger by providing worship in Spanish: Grace, Bell; Faith, Canoga Park; Pueblo de Dios, Compton; Saint John, Gardena; First, Inglewood; Trinity, Hawthorne; Trinity, Long Beach; Angelica, Los Angeles; St. Mark's, Los Angeles; San Pablo, North Hollywood; Our Redeemer, Oxnard; Reformation, Pasadena; Adore, San Fernando Valley; Santa Cruz, Santa Maria; Fe y Esperanza, South Gate; Christ, West Covina. Most of our ministries are committed to welcoming the strangers by providing worship opportunities, hot meals, food bags, immigration assistance, after school programs, youth programs, support groups, parish nurses, music and art classes, camping, and other ministries. Some of our Pastors and lay leaders are also active in the Guardian Angels program.

Our newest ministry is ADORE in the San Fernando Valley, a ministry exploration led by TEEM Pastor Joseph Castaneda Carrera, which seeks to reach out to the Latino LGBTQ community. We are very excited about this ministry which was launched in March and already has several community connections and contacts. San Pablo in North Hollywood will officially close as a new start next month to start a new ministry under new leadership in the same Tujunga Blvd. location.

Our Escuela de Lideres para la Mision (ELM in Spanish) began in January 2016 and there 10 students presently enrolled in the program. Also, there are three Latino TEEM candidates in our Synod: Joseph Castaneda Carrera serving ADORE in San Fernando Valley; Maria Montalvo serving at Reformation, Pasadena; and Maria Paiva, who will serve at St. John, Gardena. There are 4 additional members in our congregations who are discerning candidacy possibilities. We also give thanks to God for the ministry of Pastor Patricia Muran who retired in February, 2016 after serving Santa Cruz, Santa Maria for over 14 years. Pastor Ron Geikow is serving as interim pastor at Santa Cruz at the present time.

To serve God's people in 2016, we will continue to focus in lay leadership training, recruiting Latino candidates for rostered ministries, strengthening our existing ministries, emerging generations and multiracial youth and children in our congregations, explore the possibility of starting two new ministries and women's ministry. There will be a Latina Women's Retreat June 10-12, 2016.

Thank you for your partnership in making Christ known in the territory of our Synod. Please continue to pray and support our outreach to the Latino population in our Synod.

**The Reverend Reginald Hansome  
Coordinator for African Descent Ministry**

**It has been a pleasure to serve, since late 2015, as Coordinator for African Descent Strategy. Thank you for your support and prayers for the African Descent Ministry in the Southwest California Synod.**

The ELCA African Descent Strategic Plan, “Many Voices, Tell the Story, Create the Vision: Build Our Future,” guides our work. The strategic plan calls us to live out God's call in and through visionary pastoral leadership, worship, witness, discipleship, stewardship, family ministries, social justice, and unity and diversity. These areas of ministry work together in an integrated, holistic approach to responding to God’s call for us to build up the body of Jesus Christ, the church, in the world and in every community. We stand together to glorify God as partners in the gospel, doing God’s work in the world together.

**HIGHLIGHTS:**

- + Participation in Community HIV/STD Forum
- + Support of Ground Zero Cooperative Youth Ministries
- + Coordination of Good Friday and Easter SonRise Services
- + Support/Advocacy for African Descent Clergy of Southwest CA Synod
- + Mission Exploration Team Process of African Descent Congregation
- + Support of African Descent Lutheran Association Gala
- + Support/Advocacy of African Descent Candidates in T.E.E.M
- + Support /Advocacy of African Descent Rostered Leaders in Transition
- +Support/Advocacy of African Descent Leaders in Synodical Candidacy
- + Planning /Participation in Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Service

**FORWARD to Serve God’s People in 2016:**

- + Continuing to assist African Descent Congregations in Transition
- + Support/Advocacy of African Descent Candidates in T.E.E.M
- + Hosting a Forum regarding the of Islam and Christianity
- + Hosting a Community workshop on Safety During Police Stops/Interactions
- +Supporting/Advocating for African Descent Clergy of Southwest CA Synod

**May God continue to guide and bless us in our shared ministry.**

Serving Christ,  
The Reverend Reginald Hansome

**The Rev. Hitoshi Adachi**  
**Asian Ministry Coordinator for Southwest California and Pacifica Synods**

Since early 2013, I have been assigned as Asian Ministry Coordinator for both the Southwest California and Pacifica Synods. In this 2016 Assembly notebook, I hope that the following statements enable each participant to be a little more familiar with Asian Ministry in Southern California.

The Asian Lutheran Ministries (please see the list below) are serving Asian immigrants. The people served are both English and native language speakers and are also first or second (or more) generation Americans. Asia has over 3 billion people and 40 percent of the world's population lives in Asia. In the last few decades we've seen tremendous growth in the economies of China and South Eastern Asian countries. We are witnessing increased Asian immigration in Southern California. If we think about the 5 major religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, all of them were started in Asia. So, all Asian-born people were raised in a pluralistic religious environment.

Some 2015 Highlights:

- 1) During 2015, Rev. Pongtep (Golf) Chutimapongrat, who is one of the Mission Developers in Pacifica Synod, researched Thai people's situation/needs in the Hollywood area and Pastor Golf started a new ministry in Hollywood.
- 2) Recent Startup, St. Matthew's Tagalog/English ministry in Glendale is becoming more multi-cultural and native Koreans and even people of Latino-descent are coming to the church.
- 3) Glory's Mandarin ministry at FLCS in Torrance is also doing well for older generation Chinese reaching out to younger Chinese people at nearby Universities.
- 4) In the middle of November, 2015, under the guidance of Bishop Guy Erwin, Bishop's office had the first racism discussion panel with Asian Leaders in the Synod. A total of 8 Asian leaders, including Pastor Yutaka Kishino, who was the then-current president of the Association of Asian Pacific Islanders, attended the panel. There were fruitful outcomes, but since the topic is ongoing and difficult to discuss; a second discussion panel is expected sometime during 2016.

Moving Forward to Serve God's People in 2016:

- 1) Continue and enhance current ministries already placed by the Holy Spirit. Especially for those recently started and funded by ELCA and the Synod.
- 2) Recently in April, there was the Association of Asian Pacific Islanders conference titled "Reformation and Renewal". Many of the ELCA's Asian leaders gathered at St. Paul Thai Lutheran Church in Chicago. Three Asian female theologians were key note speakers at the conference.
- 3) In 2017, there will be the Asian Lutheran International Conference in Medan, Indonesia, from February 2nd to 7th. The conference attendees are not only Asians but also people from USA. Last year, from our Synods, both Bishops of Southern California and one DEM (Director of Evangelical Mission), and also 3 members of Lutheran Church of the Resurrection in Huntington Beach, all of Anglo-descent (or mixed) attended the conference and had a wonderful time learning about Christianity in Asia. I hope and pray that even more people will attend the conference next year. If any of you want to know more about the conference, please let me know at [hitoshiadachi@pacificasynod.org](mailto:hitoshiadachi@pacificasynod.org).
- 4) As stated above, we would like to continue the ongoing racism discussion.

Thank you very much for your understanding and support for the Asian Ministries.

In Christ's Service,  
Hitoshi Adachi

### Pacifica Synod Asian/Pacific Islanders Ministry

MINISTRY	PASTOR/LAY LEADER	CITY	LANGUAGE
Glory	Betty Chen	Chula Vista	Mandarin
Filipino	Jogy Deogracias	San Diego	Tagalog/English
Taiwanese	Shiau-ting Liu	San Diego	Taiwanese/Mandarin
HKBP California	Esra Pangaribuan	Norco	Batak/ Indonesian
Grace Taiwanese	Grace Chiu	Anaheim	Mandarin/Taiwanese
Church of Dream Builders	Hyunho Hong	Anaheim	Korean
Thai Shepherd of the Hills	Pongtep (Golf) Chutimapongrat	Whittier	Thai
Immanuel Indonesian Fellowship	Robert Waworuntu	Los Alamitos	Indonesian
Japanese Ministry (as a part of Resurrection)	Hitoshi Adachi	Huntington Beach	Japanese

### Southwest California Synod Asian/Pacific Islanders Ministry

MINISTRY	PASTOR/LEADER	CITY	LANGUAGE
LC of the Cross	Charlie Wang/Thomas Chen	Arcadia	Mandarin/English
Agape	Karen Chen	El Monte	Mandarin
Christ	Philip Demers/John Yu	Monterey Park	Mandarin/English
Faith	David Lin	Monterey Park	Mandarin
Bethlehem	Frank Wang /Grace Lai	Temple City	English/Mandarin
Glory	Newman Chiu	Torrance	Mandarin
St. Matthew	Marcos Panahon	Glendale	Tagalog/English