



# Report of the Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission Unit

## Program Committee Members

Pr. Matthew Bode, Detroit, Mich. (2011)  
Pr. Pamela R. Fickenscher, Minneapolis, Minn. (2009)  
Pr. Sarah M. Lee-Faulkner, Grafton, W.Va. (2009)  
Pr. Melanie Martin-Dent, Missoula, Mont. (2007)  
Ms. Marilyn Miller, Milwaukee, Wis. (2009)  
Mr. Fuad B. Nijim, Santa Clara, Calif. (2011)  
Mr. Francis R. Ramos Scharron, *chair*, Guaynabo, Puerto Rico (2009)  
Mr. Luz E. Rubert-Lopez, Trumbull, Conn. (2007)  
Pr. Angela L. Shannon, *vice chair*, Fort Wayne, Ind. (2011)  
Mr. Rob M. Stuberg, Helena, Mont. (2009)  
Pr. Peter Y. Wang, Naperville, Ill. (2007)  
Mr. Lance W. Webster, *secretary*, Wayne, Neb. (2007)  
Ms. Leesa Wimmer, Quakertown, Pa. (2011)

### *Advisory Members*

Bp. Jon V. Anderson, Redwood Falls, Minn.  
Bp. William Chris Boerger, Seattle, Wash.  
Pr. Richard A. Magnus, Chicago, Ill.  
Ms. Ann Niedringhaus, Duluth, Minn.  
Mr. Heber Rast, Cameron, S.C.  
Pr. Kathie Bender Schwich, Chicago, Ill.

## Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission (EOCM) unit is to engage leaders in the formation of evangelizing congregations that make disciples for Jesus Christ who use their gifts for God's reign in the church and in the world. The governing description of this unit appears in continuing resolution 16.12.A05, printed in Section X of this volume.

## Report of Work for 2005-2007

### ***Formation of the Program Unit***

This unit began its work following the 2005 Churchwide Assembly on the reorganization of the churchwide office. Staff members of the former Division for Congregational Ministries and Division for Outreach began planning for the unit in May of 2005. The Multicultural Ministries unit staff were invited to participate in the early planning for the unit because of the significant work among the five communities of color and language other than English. The first tasks were to become acquainted and begin working on purpose and guiding principles for the unit. As that work evolved, staff members discerned that the work of the unit was to start new congregations and to renew existing congregations. The programs to accomplish those two tasks included evangelism, Christian education, stewardship, Lutheran Men in Mission, multicultural and multilingual resources, small town and rural ministry, Mission Partners, Mission Founders, and providing leadership for evangelical outreach. The relationships built with staff of the Multicultural Ministries unit helped to keep a focus on how the work of EOCM

would strengthen all aspects of ministry in the five communities of color and language other than English.

Twice each year the deployed staff of the unit, mission directors, and stewardship staff, meet at the Lutheran Center. Those meetings of nearly 120 persons provided significant opportunities for relationship building with these staff members. The meetings also included agenda time for input on the direction, purpose, values, and strategy of the newly established unit. The goal of these meetings was to discover how the programmatic work of the unit would be done in collaboration with other churchwide units to strengthen the work of starting new congregations and renewing congregations.

### ***Evangelism Strategy***

The unit carries responsibility for overseeing the Evangelism Strategy, "Sharing Faith in a New Century: A Vision for Evangelism in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America." During the biennium the evangelism staff team continued their work in support of the four objectives of the strategy: 1) call this church to prayer; 2) prepare and renew evangelical leaders; 3) teach discipleship; and 4) start and renew congregations. A training event on the second objective (leadership) was held in November 2005 entitled, "Led to Lead: Vocation of the Evangelical Leader." In November 2006 a training event was held on the third objective (discipleship) entitled, "Costly Discipleship: Living into the Cross." The team worked with the Research and Evaluation section throughout the biennium to define the qualities of healthy leadership and healthy congregational life, and to identify congregations exhibiting "best practices." The staff of the unit increasingly sees evangelizing as the approach needed for the future, moving from a strategy for evangelism to persons able to share their stories of faith as evangelizing Christians in their daily life. Discipleship, bringing together Christian education, evangelism, stewardship, and faith practices increasingly shapes the approach of the unit.

### ***Christian Education***

An exciting example of collaboration took place during the biennium as the Christian education team, in partnership with other churchwide units, para-church organizations, and other leaders in the field, met to identify the most appropriate roles for the churchwide organization in Christian education. The group agreed that: 1) the work of the advisory team on Christian education is highly valued and should continue through the collaboration and leadership of EOCM, the Vocation and Education unit, and Augsburg Fortress, Publishers; 2) the development of a unified comprehensive vision for Christian education for the ELCA is timely and appropriate; 3) the advocacy role of the churchwide organization on Christian education should be strengthened; 4) an important continuing

role of the churchwide organization is the facilitation and development of networks around Christian education; 5) continuing the churchwide partnership with the Lutheran Association of Christian Educators (LACE) is important; 6) the future role of the churchwide organization in Christian education primarily will locate resource development and distribution with Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, in partnership with EOCM and other churchwide units; 7) Christian education is an essential dimension of discipleship formation and transformation; and 8) collaboration in Christian education in settings like LACE, the Faith Formation and Lifelong Learning Resource Management Team, and ELCA Resource Centers is a best practice.

### **Stewardship**

Major progress was made during the biennium on the role of seminaries in teaching stewardship to future leaders. Curriculum is under development through the Stewardship of Life Institute (SOLI) to provide options for course work in the seminaries. The proposed outcomes of their work include: a financial mentoring program for seminarians and their families, development of templates for stewardship courses to be offered at each of the eight seminaries, and support of First Call clergy in stewardship-leader growth initiatives and continuing education courses. One of the tasks of the unit has been to help all staff to see themselves as persons able to encourage growth in faithful stewardship in all aspects of their work.

Several significant resources were developed during the biennium including “Stories to Tell and Gifts to Share,” an annual response method, which is a creative approach utilizing stories of God’s activity in the world to strengthen the sharing of God’s gifts with the world. An African Descent version was also produced for congregational use.

### **Starting New Congregations**

Collaboration on starting new congregations increased significantly during the biennium. The unit invited representatives of the Conference of Bishops from each of the nine regions of this church to join the review processes which determine which proposed new starts are ready to begin. The bishops’ presence added depth to the process and helped the Conference of Bishops understand the openness and creativity involved in the new start process. Just over 50 new ministry proposals were approved each year of the biennium, but because of a lack of available leaders, the actual starts were 33 in 2005 and 35 in 2006.

Significant work took place in the biennium on staffing, funding, and location of the ministry. Conversations with colleagues in other units and with the Conference of Bishops continue to move toward stronger partnerships and a greater ownership in starting new congregations. Materials were developed, including “Biblical Principles for Starting New Congregations: A Paper to Ground Lutheran Mission in the Twenty-first Century,” and “New Starts Process,” which examined leadership and the various approaches in starting new congregations. The “New Starts Process” paper pointed out that currently there are five major approaches in which new congregations are begun: synodically authorized worshiping communities to test a field; churches starting churches, by which

healthy congregations establish a second campus or a new independent congregation; ethnic-specific starts in one of the five communities of color and language other than English; multicultural starts that seek, from the beginning, to reflect the diversity of a context; and traditional new starts that tend to work in places where there is limited or no Lutheran or Christian presence. In all of the work, the unit seeks to build capacity with the partners, especially synods, to start healthy congregations that will, in turn, be able to start new congregations.

Leadership for new starts continues to be the greatest challenge. The leadership team of the unit continues to work on the best approaches for discovering potential mission developers. A well-attended conference for improving the behavioral interview process for mission developers was held January 9-11, 2007, in Chicago. As a result the interview process will now be conducted by established teams of experienced interviewers in each of the nine regions. Expected outcomes from this “re-tooling” are enhanced consistency in the interview results and between interviewers, enhanced efficiency and more effective use of our resources.

Some of the most exciting work in mission development is occurring in and among the African National worshiping communities. This work is being led by the Rev. Gemechis D. Buba, the EOCM African National Missions Consultant and Assistant to the Bishop, Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod. More than 90 worshiping communities in various stages of development have been established, ranging from existing congregations to synodically authorized worshiping communities, to groups of God’s people coming together in worship. The largest African descent congregation is the Oromo Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, with some 400-500 people in worship each Sunday. Other highlights of this vibrant work include the organization of a leadership advisory team that includes representatives from the major African National communities within the U.S. This team will multiply the efforts of Pr. Buba as the work grows.

Other advisory teams have been established in each of the five communities of color and language other than English to provide leadership in the work of new starts. These teams have been invaluable as we continue to learn the best ways to start and support new congregations in each of the communities. One of those teams, the HOPE team (Hispanic Outreach Program Executives) has done significant work along *La Frontera*, the border zone between the United States and Mexico. During 2006 a major review of ministry in this zone was concluded. The review team interviewed 120 persons involved in ministries along *La Frontera*. The recommendations call for the development of an organization located in three centers which would be registered in Mexico and established as a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization in the U.S. One of the keys of this approach has been the collaboration of the five program units in the work.

### **Renewal of Congregations**

“In the City for Good” officially concludes in 2007—the end of a 10 year emphasis on urban ministry in the ELCA. The last two years have involved preparing the soil for urban ministry to extend into the future as this specific emphasis draws to a close. The urban team, chaired by the Rev. Jerrett L. Hansen, formed two working groups, a consultation team, and a vision team.

The consultation team has continued to serve as a resource to synods in assessing urban areas and pointing to directions which would enhance effectiveness. The team has visited several cities including: Albany, New York; Indianapolis; Miami; and Phoenix, since the 2005 Churchwide Assembly. The vision team has laid the groundwork for future urban mission in the ELCA. This was done by gathering several effective urban practitioners in Fort Worth in February 2006 to look at the key areas of leadership development, urban church planting, renewal of urban congregations, and urban networking. Work groups are currently formed to pursue strategy and implementation in each of these areas.

The urban team is using 2007 as a time to gather outcomes from the ten-year initiative and to point forward as the ELCA continues to be “in the city for good,” even after the initiative has officially concluded.

### Resources

Resource development and production is planned in collaboration with Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, within the newly established resource management teams. Each of the five teams has churchwide unit staff participation and leadership to collaborate on the identification of resource needs, development, planning and promotion of resources. The following is a listing of the resources developed and produced by EOCM during the past biennium:

- *Senderos de oración* (Spanish version of *Grounded in Prayer*)
- *Vivimos por la gracia: Una reflexión de ministerios congregacionales* (We live by grace: A reflection of congregational ministries)
- Spanish Resource Catalog 2006-2007
- *Cheerful Giving: Asian Lutheran Stewardship* (produced in English, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Thai, and Vietnamese)
- Statement of Intent 2005, 2006, 2007
- Annual Report Cover 2005, 2006, 2007
- *Making Christ Known* 2005, 2006, 2007
- *Making Christ Known* – DVD/PPT 2005, 2006
- Stewardship Best Practices and Planning Calendar for Year-Round Stewardship Posters
- *Walk with Jesus* – Annual Response Method
- 2005-2006 Stewardship Resource Catalog
- *Awakening to God's Call to Earthkeeping* – downloadable resource
- Stewardship Principles – downloadable resource
- *Stories to Tell and Gifts to Share* – African Descent version
- *Stories to Tell and Gifts to Share* – produced in partnership with Augsburg Fortress, Publishers
- *Mission Development Manual* – on CD
- *Imitate My Heart*, 2006-2007 Christian Education Planner
- *Early Signs of God's Design*, a gifts assessment tool for children
- *Grow and Go*, 2007-2008 Christian Education Planner
- *Coming of Age: Exploring the Identity and Spirituality of Young Men*
- *Celebrating Rural Life* Worship Books
- Lutheran Men in Mission, quarterly newsletter
- Mission Partners Focus, newsletter

## Major Directions for 2007-2009

The unit currently is working to finish a strategic plan by early summer 2007. Goals set for the unit include: 1) fostering and enhancing a culture of discipleship within the ELCA; 2) equipping leaders who multiply themselves; and 3) building capacity to start new and renew congregations that are healthy and missional in diverse and multicultural settings. As the unit attends to this work it will continue to elaborate upon the specifics of its purpose, guiding principles, and goals. It will work to help others in this church to understand and embrace terms such as “evangelizing” (an evangelizing congregation is one in which the members embody God’s call for them in their daily lives and invite others to come and experience community in Jesus Christ), “discipleship” (being called to walk with Christ, equipped to live like Christ, and sent by Christ to love and serve others in the world), “healthy and missional” (“healthy” is the condition of a person or system that describes its capacity to act for good while “missional” is the attitude or mind-set of a person or system that describes its desire to act and carry out God’s will).

During the next biennium the unit will work to increase the numbers of new starts and renewing congregations, increase the variety of types of leaders in new and renewing work, continue to work with seminaries to teach the work, continue to work toward cultural proficiency of all the staff of the unit to be effective in working with the ethnic-specific communities, learn from the best urban ministries and seek to help them to multiply, continue to grow the numbers of members from small town and rural settings that are involved in affinity groups by conference calls addressing issues of shared interest, and work toward an ELCA culture of discipleship, rich with evangelizing members at work in the world for the sake of God’s mission.

Francis R. Ramos Scharron, *program committee chair*  
Richard A. Magnus, *executive director*



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## Appendix A

# Lutheran Men in Mission

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### Statement of Purpose

Lutheran Men in Mission (LMM) is the men's ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, building a dynamic ministry that addresses the needs of men of all ages. The men's organization was established because studies show that families and congregations are more likely to thrive when men are actively engaged in their faith.

### Bible Distribution

Helping men to understand the written and living Word of God is central to the mission of Lutheran Men in Mission (LMM). With the guidance of that Word, men draw closer to God. This not only benefits the individual man, but his family, congregation, and community. The *Master Builders Bible for Men*, with 20,000 questions for small-group study, assists men in becoming acquainted with Scripture while developing trusting friendships with one another. The leader's guide it contains lays out a step-by-step process on how to develop effective, sustainable men's ministries. LMM has sold or distributed over 40,000 copies of the *Master Builders Bible for Men*. Synodical leaders continue to distribute copies to leaders in congregations desiring to start effective ministry with men. LMM has expanded the Bible ministry with the distribution of 25,000 Spanish language New Testaments to congregations engaged in mission in Spanish-speaking communities.

### Young Men

The most un-churched group in America continues to be young men, ages 18-34. Lutheran Men in Mission took the first step in engaging these men by commissioning research by the Rev. Roland D. Martinson, dean of students at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota, in 2003. The results of that research, including the identification of 11 descriptors of young men's spiritual character as well as eight gaps in their spiritual development, are contained in the book *Coming of Age*, published in 2006. Through the work of the LMM Young Men's Ministry Council and the Coming of Age Task Force (a partnership of Lutheran Men in Mission, Luther Seminary and the Youth and Family Institute) the work continues with the research and the publication of *Coming of Age* events designed by young men for young men, and the development of events and resources to be produced and published in 2007.

### Events

Lutheran men's gatherings provide safe places for men to explore their faith and relationships with family and friends. These events include both weekend events with participants from throughout this church as well as one-day regional events.

Gatherings serve to build men's faith and provide a means for men to connect with new friends and old. Those who attend with family members (fathers, sons, grandfathers) have especially meaningful experiences. Attendance at LMM gatherings has more than doubled in the last 10 years. Leadership preparation is a central component of every LMM event. As a result, congregational men's ministries are started and built through those who attend. Since 2005, LMM has sponsored one churchwide event, four mini-gatherings, and 12 training events. LMM also participated in the "Costly Discipleship: Living into the Cross" event in November 2006.

### Toward Financial Stability

Lutheran Men in Mission continues in its efforts to become a self-sustaining, separately incorporated 501(c)3 not-for-profit ministry with a strong relationship to this church. The endowment fund currently stands at \$870,000 with a goal of \$1.5 million.