

Introduction to Synod Ministry Priorities
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Greetings, in the name of Jesus. I am Bill Gafkjen. I serve as Bishop for the Indiana-Kentucky Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. We are some 180 congregations, campus ministries, camps, and other ministry centers, as well as some 40 to 45,000 people who are a part of all of those ministries.

For about the last 20 years, we have identified for ourselves in synod ministry, an important mission and a vision. The mission is to empower, encourage, and equip the people of God to make Christ known. The vision, what it looks like when the mission is accomplished, if you will, is every person a missionary; every pastor, deacon, and leader a mission director or mission developer; and every congregation, and other faith community across the Synod a mission center.

Not long after I was called to the role of Bishop in 2010, we began a process of deep listening across the Synod, under the banner, "New Synod for a New Day." Among many other things, that process helped us to develop priorities for synod ministry that would help us to make decisions about how we staff synod ministry, where we put our energy and our resources, and even how we budget, in order to be faithful and good stewards of the ministry that God, and the people of God, have entrusted to us.

We identified four key priorities.

One priority is to cultivate congregations and other faith communities as centers for mission. That is, as faith communities to turn outward toward the local community to love and serve the neighbor in whatever ways are needed.

A second priority that we identified is to form and send faith-filled disciples. That is, a priority for synod ministry is to work with congregations, campus ministries, and other faith communities to help them to form people in faith and to send them out as disciples and bearers of good news in their daily lives.

A third priority for our synod ministry is to deepen and expand collaboration and communication. This is about much more than email and websites. It's really about deepening and expanding collaborative relationships with one another, within the ministries of the Synod, but also with ecumenical and interfaith partners, anybody who will work with us for the sake of the common good, and the living, embodiment and sharing of the good news that we have in Jesus.

A fourth priority is to identify, form, and support missionary leaders. That is, a high priority for synod ministry is to see that pastors, deacons and lay leaders – and others across the Synod – have what they need in order to lead and minister among God's people, faithfully and well.

In these weeks leading up to the Synod Assembly, you will hear from Synod staff persons who have particular responsibility for each of these priorities. They'll help you to see how these priorities are coming to life in our ministry together across the Synod. I am grateful for their partnership. I'm grateful for your partnership and your support, as together, we seek to be faithful in empowering, encouraging, and equipping one another to make Christ known, engaging these priorities, and moving together as God's missionary people across the territory. Thank you for your partnership and support. Thank you for your faithful stewardship of the gospel in your place. Peace be with you.