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**Mission Support from an ELCA Perspective**  
**North Carolina Synod Stewardship Conversations – 2010**

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**What is mission support?**

Mission support is that portion of an individual's financial offering that a congregation shares with the synod and churchwide organization to fund the mission and ministries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

All that we do as the ELCA is made possible through the financial gifts shared through mission support.

Together we do God's work with our hands in ways that no individual, congregation or synod can do alone.

**How is mission support shared through the three expressions of this church?**

Mission support is the percentage of each member's regular financial offering that moves on to the synod and the churchwide organization to fund the work of the broader church.

**How does the ministry of the North Carolina Synod benefit from mission support?**

***In the state of North Carolina***

The North Carolina Synod and the ELCA churchwide organization continue to work together as we explore innovative opportunities for congregational development in our state.

Thanks to the churchwide organization, we now have a Director for Evangelical Mission dedicated to the work of the North Carolina Synod. Pastor Ernie Hinojosa, who is based at the synod office, is called to support all our congregations in their efforts to be evangelical centers for mission.

Seven congregations in our synod are currently under development with funding from the churchwide budget:

- Iglesia Cristo El Rey, Charlotte
- Living Waters, Charlotte
- Joy of Discovery, Raleigh
- Living Waters, Cherokee
- Graceway, Indian Trail
- La Vela, Greensboro
- Abiding Savior, Durham

### *In our Global Mission partnerships*

Mission support is the primary source of funding for our Global Mission commitments with our companion synods in the Lutheran Church in Costa Rica and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Papua, New Guinea.

Thanks to the generous financial support of our members and congregations, along with that of other members across this church, we provide mission support staff for youth ministry and support the development of local leaders in the Lutheran Church in Costa Rica.

In Papua New Guinea, mission support has funded our various evangelism projects, women's leadership initiatives, and many other joint projects of the Lutheran Overseas Partner's Ministry, as well as mission support staff at the seminary and central offices.

### **What ministries of the whole ELCA are funded by mission support?**

Mission support is the lifeblood of the ELCA, making it possible for the churchwide organization to respond to ministry opportunities here in the U.S. and around the world.

Through God's grace and the power of the Holy Spirit, the ELCA is fully engaged in the mission of proclaiming Christ and caring for the world that God so deeply loves.

### **Together we support:**

- Approximately **204** congregations under development
- **50** new starts to begin in 2010
- **159** existing congregations intentionally focused on renewal
- **260** missionaries in **50** countries
- Mission projects in over **90** countries
- **8** seminaries
- **27** colleges and universities
- **Over 180** campus ministries, with cooperating congregations in campus ministries at an additional **400** campuses nationwide
- **145** outdoor ministries
- **257** Lutheran elementary schools, K-8, and **14** high schools
- **1,530** early childhood education centers
- **Health and pension benefits** for retired clergy, mission support staff and lay church workers
- Long-term **community development**
- **Partnerships** with Lutheran World Federation, World Council of Churches, and National Council of the Churches of Christ
- **The Book of Faith Initiative**, which was launched here in the North Carolina Synod

### **What is the impact of reduced mission support on the ELCA?**

As members of the ELCA, we are part of a vast and interdependent body of Christians who reach out at home and across the world with the good news of Jesus Christ.

This church depends on the prayers and financial generosity of all members, both here in North Carolina and around the country, to ensure that our work together can continue to be done in God's name.

Now, more than ever, the challenge is before us to move forward in mission.

Our interdependence as a church body means that whenever a member, congregation or synod withholds or redirects mission support, there are immediate and unintended consequences in every other part of the ELCA.

Even in this time of diminished resources, the churchwide organization has increased both the percentage and amount of financial support for congregational development. It remains firmly committed to holding and, if possible, increasing that support for synods and congregations, including here in North Carolina.

At the same time, the churchwide organization has been forced to cut its budget by \$13 million due to reductions in mission support from synods and congregations.

This financial reality puts severe pressure on the churchwide organization's capacity to adequately fund other ministries and partnerships and to keep its commitment to long-term support of congregational development.

To date, because of the churchwide commitment to the vital ministries of our global companion churches, most companion church grants and personnel have been shielded from these cuts.

However, our international Lutheran partners have learned that, while the ELCA will strive to protect support for these and other key partnerships, ongoing support is contingent upon maintaining or increasing current funding.

What's more, the ELCA is currently unable to respond to the many requests for new mission personnel or to initiate new programs or relationships around the world.

Nationally, reduced mission support threatens the viability of programs on behalf of new congregations, seminarians and students of all ages.

We are a church that is abundantly blessed to be God's hands in a world that so desperately needs to know and experience God's love. The participation of every member in this mission we share—through prayer and financial generosity—makes a difference.