

## Understanding The Synod Strategic Plan

By Annie Lynsen

You've been reading about the synod strategic plan, "Called into God's Marvelous Light," for about a year now. It all began late last fall, when the bishop asked all congregations to distribute a yellow questionnaire to those in worship the second Sunday in Advent. The questionnaire, which was developed by the strategic plan task force, contained three questions:

1. What does my congregation do to make my faith meaningful and compelling?
2. What more can my congregation do to make this happen?
3. What can the ELCA congregations of Southeastern Minnesota do together to make this happen for me and our community?



A stack of completed questionnaires that were evaluated in February.  
*-Photo by Pastor Todd Hawkins*

The 5,000+ responses received by the synod office revealed many different opinions from the members of the Southeastern Minnesota Synod. On Feb. 9, 2004, a group of over 40 people from around the synod came to help evaluate and compile the responses. The results from that day are the basis for what is now the synod's strategic plan, which was unanimously approved by the 2004 Synod Assembly.

### The basics of the strategic plan

The strategic plan, "Called into God's Marvelous Light," will be carried out in the years 2005, 2006, and 2007, and it features **three overarching visions**:

- **To Be Joyful Witnesses**
- **To Be Christ-Centered Disciples**
- **To Be Strong Leaders**

Within each vision are several **goals** – particular things to focus on within each vision. Within the goals are specific **objectives** – action items for how to achieve the goals, set for a particular year. For example, within the vision "To Be Joyful Witnesses," one of the goals is to revitalize congregations.

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To accomplish this goal, the objectives include beginning the Natural Church Development process with six to nine congregations in 2005, then adding more congregations in 2006 and 2007.

You can find the complete list of goals and objectives on page 6.

Among the objectives are **three yearly emphases**:

- 2005: A Synod Joined in Prayer
- 2006: A Synod Joined in Bible Study
- 2007: A Synod Joined in Sharing the Faith

The first two yearly emphases fall under the "To Be Christ-Centered Disciples" vision. The third yearly emphasis falls under the vision, "To Be Joyful Witnesses." Underlying all three years is the necessity for strong leaders to embrace and encourage all our congregation members to get involved.

## What's happened so far

Synod staff, committees, teams, and task forces have been working hard in the last few months, gearing up for 2005. Here are some of the things that have happened so far:

- **To Be Joyful Witnesses:** Several congregations have signed on to participate in the Natural Church Development process. The list, to date, includes Central in Winona, Central Freeborn in Albert Lea, Cross of Christ in Houston, Evanger in Sargeant, Redeemer in Alden, and Trinity in Spring Grove. One more congregation is pending.
- **To Be Joyful Witnesses/To Be Strong Leaders:** Plans are in place to bring the Lutheran Youth Organization back to the synod next fall.
- **To Be Christ-Centered Disciples:** Bishop Usgaard and Larry Iverson have been making stewardship visits around the synod, and held stewardship kickoff dinners in September.
- **To Be Strong Leaders:** Pastor Kathie Nycklemoe and Pastor Charles Ortloff have drafted a plan and are working with the Lay and Clergy Leadership Development Team to plan spiritual renewal events for rostered leaders and their spouses in 2006.
- **To Be Joyful Witnesses:** The workshop, "Church Communications Made Easier," designed to facilitate better communication between the churchwide, synod, and congregation expressions of the church, was held five times in July and once in October.
- **To Be Joyful Witnesses:** A synod bulletin insert is being developed, and is set to launch in December (watch the next issue of *River Crossings!*).
- **To Be Joyful Witnesses:** A new section of the synod web site, called "Synod Content for Church Publications," has been launched. It features events and short churchwide and synod news items of particular interest to congregation members. Congregations can easily copy and paste these items into their newsletters and bulletins.
- **To Be Joyful Witnesses:** Conversations are taking place with the South Dakota Synod involving "Faith Family Style," a model of ministry that emphasizes parents as the primary faith educators of their children.
- **To Be Strong Leaders:** The 2006 Theological Conference will focus on health for rostered leaders.
- **To Be Strong Leaders:** The Recruitment Task Force has created monthly bulletin inserts aimed at raising up future leaders.

- **Communication:** The strategic plan logo, along with the words, "Called into God's Marvelous Light: To Be Joyful Witnesses, To Be Christ-Centered Disciples, To Be Strong Leaders," has been added to the synod office's letterhead.
- **Communication:** The last few months of *River Crossings* have featured a column about strategic plan happenings. This will continue through 2007, so you can stay informed.
- **Communication:** The synod web site now features a strategic plan section. Visit [www.semnsynod.org](http://www.semnsynod.org) and click the "Strategic Plan" button on the left.

## What you can look forward to in 2005

The theme for 2005 is "A Synod Joined in Prayer." The middle section of this newsletter features a prayer calendar with synod congregations and ministries on it. You can start using this resource this Advent in worship and in your daily prayer life.

If you are receiving this newsletter in print, you will notice a color poster included that says "2005: A Synod Joined in Prayer." You are encouraged to display this poster in your congregation throughout 2005. If you did not receive a poster, please contact the synod office to request a copy.

The Congregational Renewal Team is also working on other ways to bring our synod together in prayer. Keep watching *River Crossings!*

Other items slated for 2005 include:

- **To Be Joyful Witnesses:** Natural Church Development will begin, with six to nine congregations participating.
- **To Be Joyful Witnesses:** A congregational worship leaders group will be organized.
- **To Be Joyful Witnesses:** Mission sites in the synod will be assessed.
- **To Be Joyful Witnesses:** The first bi-annual youth leadership event will be held.
- **To Be Joyful Witnesses:** The first annual rural life harvest festival will be held.
- **To Be Christ-Centered Disciples:** A synod resource fair focused on Christian education will be held.

## Synod Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives

### Goals

#### A. Vision: To Be Joyful Witnesses

Goals:

- Equipping the baptized to be witnesses
- Identifying and supporting new congregations as mission sites
- Revitalizing congregations
- Connecting our local and global context
- Strengthening the relationship between evangelism and worship
- Paying particular attention to youth, young adults, young families, and rural congregations

#### B. Vision: To Be Christ-Centered Disciples

Goals:

- Deepening prayer lives
- Grounding in the scriptures
- Attending worship weekly
- Increasing generosity in stewardship

#### C. Vision: To Be Strong Leaders

Goals:

- Raising up new leaders to serve Christ's church
- Equipping lay leaders in the congregation
- Supporting healthy rostered leaders

In addition, the Bishop's Office will:

- interpret the interdependent relationship of congregations, the synod and the Churchwide organization;
- develop ecumenical connections within the synod;
- provide resources to pastors and congregations; and
- facilitate open communication, especially when important and difficult issues are involved.

### Objectives

<i>Objective</i>	<i>Vision Statement</i>	<i>Objective</i>	<i>Vision Statement</i>
<b>2005</b>		<b>2007</b>	
A synod joined in prayer	B	A synod joined in sharing the faith	A
Natural Church Development begins with six to nine congregations	A	Bi-annual youth leadership experience	A
Organization of congregational worship leaders group	A	Rural life harvest festival	A
Assessment of mission sites in the synod	A	Spiritual emphasis continues for rostered leaders	C
First bi-annual youth leadership event	A	Natural Church Development multiplies	A
Annual rural life harvest festival	A		
Synod resource fair focused on Christian education	B	<b>Currently ongoing programs:</b>	
		Lay School of Theology	C
		First Call Theological Education	C
		Theological Conference	C
		Church Council training	C
		Stewardship Committee	B
		Global Mission/Companion Synods Committee	A
		Candidacy Committee	C
		Endowment Committee	C
		World Hunger Task Force	A
<b>2006</b>			
A synod joined in Bible study	B		
Mission Partners reorganized to support new mission site	A		
Youth/young adult event for discerning ministry	C		
Spiritual emphasis begins for rostered leaders	C		
Synod resource fair focused on worship materials	B		
Rural life harvest festival	A		
Natural Church Development multiplies	A		