

Strategic Plan and Beyond

This is the last time you'll hear from the Congregational Renewal Team specifically on the annual focus of the strategic plan. Over the last three years we, as a synod, have focused on prayer, Bible study, and sharing our faith stories. These are not things that we focus on only because they are a part of a strategic plan and then are abandoned as something we once did, but rather members of the synod identified these things as parts of our faith worth our time and attention.

Now that the formal time frame of the strategic plan has come to an end, each individual and congregation is expected to carry out the visions of the strategic plan:

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

You are encouraged to find new ways to carry out the visions and goals of the strategic plan in your congregations. As a synod, we will continue many of the things started because of the strategic plan, including praying for specific congregations each week, publication of the Bridge (including the Bible verse that goes with it), and Natural Church Development to strengthen individual congregations.

The leadership of the synod is talking about the future and how we will be intentional about staying strong in faith and strong as a synod so that our work done in the last three years is not lost. In the meantime, continue in your congregations with the good practices that have been started in the last three years and continue to be Joyful Witnesses, Christ-Centered Disciples, and Strong Leaders.



Get it Online

- Weekly prayer calendar - www.semnsynod.org/prayercalendar.html
- ELCA Prayer Ventures, daily Bible verse, and daily Bible reading - www.semnsynod.org/prayerbible.html
- Weekly Suggestions for Sharing Your Faith - www.semnsynod.org/sharingourstories.html



The Power of God in Telling Our Faith Stories

By Larry Iverson
Synod Minister and Congregational Renewal Team

During this past year we have shared ideas on how people can share their faith stories with others. It has been an integral part of the synod's strategic plan to be joyful witnesses, to be Christ-Centered disciples and to be strong leaders.

The wonderful thing in addition to sharing your faith story about how God has been active in your life is that it also encourages others to tell their faith stories. Jesus told stories to engage people's lives and faith, to speak about justice and show us consideration for God and others, and telling our faith stories can do the same.

It takes courage to witness to one's encounters with God, but sharing our hurts and joys makes us more human and more open to God and others. Hopefully, your worship community has embraced God's power to transform lives for the better as you have told your faith stories this past year, and you will all continue to tell faith stories as a regular part of the witness to your faith.

Seek opportunities at fall stewardship to tell of the use of possessions as signs of Christ's power over everything in your life. Tell of your experiences and trials of faith at difficult and happy times. Witness to the power of Christ to challenge your life at times when you have felt called to speak out about needs of others or injustice. The key is that telling your faith stories must include God. If we continue to model telling our faith stories in the context of worship, we will experience the hopefulness, grace and presence of God in new and different ways.



Called into God's Marvelous Light

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