

# Reflections on the Future of the Synod

Summary of the Florida-Bahamas Synod Survey, conducted June 19 through July 22, 2017  
Percentages based on 202 responses, unless noted otherwise.

## 1. Which of the following descriptions fits you best? (N=202)

%

- 59.4 I am a member and/or active participant of a congregation in the Florida-Bahamas Synod
- 33.7 I am a rostered leader in the Florida-Bahamas Synod
- 6.9 Other (responses included parish deacon, retired rostered leader, lay church staff)

## 2. How do you believe the synod actively lives out its mission: "Boldly sharing Christ, passionately making disciples and faithfully doing justice"? (135 comments were coded)

- 24% of comments were about the synod having room for improvement in this area
- 19% of comments were about the synod providing necessary leadership, structure and oversight to help live out its mission
- 13% of comments were about the achieving its mission through ministry, collaborations and initiatives at both the congregational and synodical level

## 3. The synod should focus on supporting congregations and leaders in the following five (5) ways? (N=202)

%

- 58.4 **Help congregations connect with their communities**
- 57.9 **Help congregations increase vitality & sustainability**
- 42.1 **Promote spiritual behaviors and discipleship**
- 41.1 **Identify ways congregations can collaborate**
- 39.1 **Encourage identification & development of leaders**
- 35.1 Provide training for elected congregational leaders
- 32.7 Support social justice efforts
- 25.7 Support & equip congregations in communication technologies
- 24.3 Promote Youth and Family Ministry
- 16.3 Promote outdoor and campus ministries
- 15.8 Coordinate youth and family ministries and events
- 14.9 Promote Young Adult Ministry
- 9.9 Deepen financial generosity
- 9.4 Deepen connections with global partners
- 8.4 Promote Women's Ministry
- 5.4 Promote Men's Ministry

## 4. What challenges lie ahead of us as a synod in the next three (3) years? (146 comments coded)

- 19% of comments were about the need for better outreach or evangelism efforts
- 14% of comments were about being relevant to people whom need the gospel
- 13% of comments were about the state of small churches with low numbers of members

**5. Identify the strengths and gifts you think will be most important for the effectiveness of the new bishop. Please look through the list of gifts first, then choose the five (5) gifts you feel are most important. (N=202)**

%

<b>46.5</b>	<b>Pastoral care of pastors</b>
<b>40.6</b>	<b>Development of leaders</b>
<b>36.1</b>	<b>Innovation and creativity</b>
<b>34.7</b>	<b>Working with congregations during crisis &amp; transition</b>
<b>31.2</b>	<b>Evangelism and mission</b>
25.7	Building community
23.3	Strategic planning
23.3	Theological interpretation and reaching
21.8	Ecumenical relations
19.8	Multicultural ministry
19.8	Preaching/worship leadership
18.8	Social ministry and Public policy advocacy
17.3	Conflict management
15.8	Children, youth and family ministry
15.8	Media and communication
15.3	Ministry in daily life
11.9	Administration
8.4	Stewardship
7.4	Financial management
7.4	Ministry with seniors
6.4	Christian education
3.5	Global mission

**Finally, in a sentence or two, please share what gifts you or your congregation bring to the synod. (123 comments were coded).**

- **23% of comments suggested the congregation or individual works well with their community**
- **11% said their congregation is small but vibrant or has a strong tradition**
- **Nine percent indicated their congregation is loving and giving**

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Percentages based on 202 responses, unless noted otherwise.

## 1. Which of the following descriptions fits you best? (N=202)

%

33.7 I am a rostered leader in the Florida-Bahamas Synod

66.3 I am not a rostered leader in the Florida-Bahamas Synod

## 2. How do you believe the synod actively lives out its mission: "Boldly sharing Christ, passionately making disciples and faithfully doing justice"?

### % Rostered responses (N=49)

28.6 room for improvement

20.4 synod provides leadership, structure and/or oversight

16.3 ministry, collaboration, and initiatives

16.3 worship, service

6.1 systemic change / social justice issues

4.1 companion churches / ecumenical partnerships

4.1 not sure

2.0 Random comment

2.0 synod programs like Diakonia

### % Non-rostered responses (N=86)

22.1 room for improvement

18.6 synod provides leadership, structure and/or oversight

14.0 community outreach

10.5 ministry, collaboration, and initiatives

9.3 not sure

8.1 Worship, service

4.7 synod programs, like Diakonia

3.5 systemic change / social justice issues

3.5 random comment

2.3 companion churches / ecumenical partnerships;

2.3 support of congregational programs

1.2 Good start

## 3. The synod should focus on supporting congregations and leaders in the following five (5) ways? (N=202) (Top five responses reported)

### % Rostered responses (N=68)

57.4 Help congregations connect with their communities

55.9 Help congregations increase vitality & sustainability

51.5 Promote spiritual behaviors and discipleship

41.2 Encourage identification & development of leaders

38.2 Provide training for elected congregational leaders

### % Non-rostered responses (N=134)

59.0 Help congregations increase vitality & sustainability

59.0 Help congregations connect with their communities

45.5 Identify ways congregations can collaborate

38.1 Encourage identification & development of leaders

37.3 Promote spiritual behaviors and discipleship

**4. What challenges lie ahead of us as a synod in the next three (3) years?**

<b>% Rostered responses (N=49)</b>		<b>% Non-rostered responses (N=86)</b>	
13.2	small churches, small membership, lack of rostered leaders	14.9	better outreach
11.8	better outreach	9.7	being relevant
10.3	being relevant	7.5	small churches, small membership, lack of rostered leaders
7.4	accommodating an aging population	6.7	growing congregations with synod help maintenance mode
5.9	staff burnout	4.5	reaching people w/ different views of God
4.4	supporting pastors	4.5	replacing members
2.9	primarily a social club	3.7	accommodating an aging population
2.9	replacing members	3.0	leadership crisis
2.9	leadership crisis	2.2	Accepting RIC
2.9	financial burdens	2.2	Financial burdens
2.9	political divide	2.2	Political divide
1.5	growing congregations with synod help	2.2	Staff burnout
1.5	reaching people w/ different views of God	2.2	supporting pastors
1.5	following through on plans or ideas	2.2	working with a new bishop
1.5	maintenance mode		

**5. Identify the strengths and gifts you think will be most important for the effectiveness of the new bishop. Please look through the list of gifts first, then choose the five (5) gifts you feel are most important. (Top Five responses reported)**

<b>%</b>	<b>Rostered (N=68)</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Non-rostered responses (N=134)</b>
52.9	Pastoral care of pastors	43.3	Pastoral care of pastors
47.1	Innovation and creativity	41.0	Working with congregations during crisis & transition
45.6	Development of leaders	38.1	Development of leaders
33.8	Evangelism and mission	30.6	Innovation and creativity
33.8	Strategic planning	29.9	Evangelism and mission

**Finally, in a sentence or two, please share what gifts you or your congregation bring to the synod.**

<b>%</b>	<b>Rostered (N=27)</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Non-rostered responses (N=82)</b>
22.0	working with the community	23.2	working with the community
14.6	strong tradition	11.0	gifted clergy and leaders
9.8	small but vibrant	11.0	small but vibrant
9.8	loving and giving	8.5	welcoming and accepting of diversity
9.8	financial security and resources	8.5	loving and giving
9.8	our culture	8.5	strong tradition
7.3	strong programs	7.3	strong programs
7.3	evangelism	4.9	financial security and resources
4.9	welcoming and accepting of diversity	4.9	perseverance
2.4	gifted clergy and leaders	3.7	evangelism
2.4	perseverance	2.4	people provide strong leadership

# Open-ended responses to Reflections on the Future of the Synod

Comments were edited for clarity.

## 2. How do you believe the synod actively lives out its mission: "Boldly sharing Christ, passionately making disciples and faithfully doing justice"?

- Your font is terribly small.
- Worship, service to members and community, service to the greater world.
- Working for change in policies and attitudes which oppress others. It is not enough to provide a food bank. We need to change the reasons that cause people to be food insecure. Salaries are too low, housing is too high, education costs are high, government investment in the life of its people is nil unless they are already wealthy
- With the outreach to the community at large. Being open and accepting of all, no exceptions
- With regards to justice, the synod is active in things like global hunger, the malaria campaign, and social ministry, as well as advocacy for people who have no voice (such as refugees). Making disciples is supposed to be the main task of each church and, to that end, Rev. Bob Schmalze and his son Aaron have done good work with their "Seven Habits of Christ" book and workshops. But more needs to be done at the local level.
- With all the miniseries and work being done in our synod all to the Zolof of Zgod
- We're not so bold. We can do better in this area. We do are passionate about making disciples, but fall short on the area of justice. As far as I know, only a few congregations, including our Synod, embody such mission statement. In my opinion, we could and should do more.
- We worship and share the Word and the Sacraments weekly and try to be God's light in our communities.
- We have many outreach ministries, as a synod, and in local congregations which have found local and varying areas of community need in our own locations. Communications from the Synod, as well as the church-wide ELCA, make us aware of the social and political issues our leaders are addressing as a church and by individual congregations whose stories are told. This provides not only encouragement, but ideas which we can consider adapting in our own settings.
- We have made a good start.
- We are constantly losing membership. That shows, how we live out our mission.
- We ARE active! Can we be more so? Certainly. It is the generations that will perpetuate the life of our church that we need to hear from, however. What is ministry to them, for them? They are bold. We can instill in them the passion for being and making disciples. They already get the "doing justice" part. We all love to see young - AND OLD - together, serving and making a difference. Re-presenting the love of Christ. We are in a very challenging territory, or mission field. More doing; less analyzing.

- Together In Mission support Accompaniment with companion churches in Haiti, Guyana, Suriname and Cuba Advocating for welcoming and affirming the place of all believers in the Church without regard to race, color, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical/mental/emotional-abilities, age, language or other expression of diversity Interfaith relationships Encouraging congregations' servant ministry outreach within their communities Encouraging congregations' support of global ministries Providing human and support resources to congregations and conferences for education, training and encouragement
- To some extent. Generally, we tend to keep our vision firmly fixed on the past as we struggle to boldly march forward into the future.
- Thru synod programs such as Diakonia, we are sharing the word and providing leaders with the necessary knowledge to be disciples.
- Through the witness of the local congregations and the advocacy and partnerships of the Office of the Bishop. Local congregations vary widely as they minister in their communities. The key areas of witness through the Office of the Bishop, mission development/redevelopment; global witness especially among the Caribbean churches; service partnerships; Luther Springs; Bishop's School.
- Through the support they offer congregations to carry out ministry along with various Synod-wide educational, justice and training events. The support of the Synod Parish Deacon program which encourages people to develop a deeper faith experience is also key.
- Through the ministries of congregations and individual people.
- Through education of those called to the public ministry, supporting all pastors in their call is one way. Perhaps sharing guidelines for our individual congregations for support with our Deans. With public worship and open time with your congregation leadership.
- Through congregational ministry, collaboration and synod initiatives, and through individual journeys of faith.
- Through Congregational and missional ministries reaching out into communities and making a difference for Christ.
- This is a very active synod and it is very public via emails, social media, etc. The synod provides opportunities galore to participate in God's work.
- These are trying times politically, and our congregation identifies with groups across the political spectrum. We have a skilled and capable leader in our pastor, and through his guidance we have been able to focus on community needs. We have active and continuing support for homeless women veterans, a local home for emotionally and physically challenged also receives regular support from our congregation. In addition, our congregation also supports Metropolitan Ministries, a Tampa Bay Area ministry providing aid and shelter to the economically disadvantaged. We also support the work of Lutheran Services, the charity arm of our denomination. In my opinion, we don't just talk the talk, we walk the walk.
- There are great things happening throughout the Florida-Bahamas Synod - places where individuals, congregations and affiliated programs are actively engaged in meeting the needs of their communities and where they are focused on cultivating disciples (not just members). I don't doubt that there are groups, that when brought together, are great demonstrations of our church "boldly sharing Christ." As I contemplate this question, however, I don't know that the Synod IS actively living out its mission - at least not fully.

- The visibility and mobility of the presiding Bishop is one of the most powerful tools this Synod has. Both Bishop Schaefer and now Bishop Lohman are easily accessible and very inspiring with their presence in the various congregations. The program, "Our Hands, Our Work" has also inspired lots of "good deeds"!
- The synods mission is truly leading the way and sharing its knowledge of the churches' needs.
- The synod seems to promote and encourage new ways to reach people.
- The Synod provides a necessary base for outsourcing consultation regarding general administration issues, constitutional structure, focus on mission, stewardship, and to conforming to ELCA guidelines.
- The synod mainly fulfills its mission statement through its congregations. It secondarily fulfills it through the mission support dollars it passes onto churchwide, where mission is engaged through programs and grants to congregations. The synod directly does mission in a few specific ways: Global Mission coordination, Candidacy, and campground ministry. It primarily hosts conversations of planning, collegiality, or teaching (assembly, rostered leaders conference, diakonia) as means of fulfilling the mission statement directly.
- The synod lives this out best when we share in the work of following Jesus so that we can grow in faith as we serve others in word and in deed.
- The synod lives out its mission through the body of Christ working together in churches and mission sites throughout the synod.
- The synod is most visible in mission through its rostered leaders at the congregation level. Providing support through materials, themes and going where the congregation cannot go by itself is a priority. The synod is a unified voice which calls for tolerance in diversity - in who we are and what we think.
- The Synod is largely silent in the life of our church.
- The Synod has followed the progressive agenda of the church in Chicago and does not follow biblical teachings
- The synod focuses almost exclusively on a left of center notion of doing justice.
- The Synod actively lives out its mission through many outreach programs both local and global. I am grateful for the Diaconia program which gave me the opportunity to be a Deacon at Trinity Lutheran Church in St. Petersburg.
- The synod actively espouses the mission line. However, the main expression of that mission is the office of the bishop. The bishop's office tends to focus on a functional level and not effectively on a ministry level. Communication and relationships are often superficial and based too often on bureaucratic processes, assumptions and projections rather than on sincerely established lines of communication that lead to true fellowship in Christ and a sense of mutual support.
- The synod actively encourages individuals and congregations to do these things.
- The mission is executed through the congregations of the Synod. The key to success of the church lies in the "boots on the ground" ministry of each congregation in its community. Through the actions of our members, living the faith, we can bring the good news to many.
- The congregations all have important ministry that touches people's lives with the Good News of Jesus Christ! I do not think we celebrate the gift that we are to the world. We look at negative statistics, feel challenged and hide! I think, like very generation before us, God leads us through the Red Sea and to the Promised Land. God is using us today! I particularly feel that

Reformation 500 has opened many doors to the RC Church as a partner in mission. The RC church--and every church--faces the same issues that we do. Let's partner with them and see how God will bless the work!

- Synod creates a unity out of the diversity of the action and non-action: thinking ministry and active ministry. "To be rather than to seem." I don't think we make disciples very well but I do feel that we do justice. Sharing Christ to define. Teaching, preaching does not seem to have too much effect. Doing that which Christ says in most of His teachings and connecting it with the doctrine we hold is crucial. "May God's word pure and Luther's doctrine sure to eternity endure."
- Synod appears to effectively communicate the gospel to congregations and interested members. Programs and partnerships contribute to "faithfully doing justice."
- Supporting local congregations in caring out this mission, with occasional synod sponsored events.
- Still too new to the synod to have an observation.
- Sitting in the pew of a congregation does not allow a congregant much of an opportunity to see how the synod lives out its mission. The pastor must be fully engaged in the mission of the synod and able to bring that mission to the congregation in a meaningful and worthwhile way. At the same time, the synod must help to equip the pastor with the tools necessary to articulate the synod's mission not just expect that the pastor should already have those tools. So, to that end, any synod that can inspire its members through the pastor is actively living out its mission.
- Sharing: Welcoming all people at worship, members living the/ir faith week by week. Making: Education i.e. Sunday School, community forums, confirmation, Daycare to High School; and inviting others to work with us and learn how to be the people of God, every day. Doing: Engaging communities at every level to stand up for equality, against injustice, and working to alleviate suffering in any form including homelessness, hunger, poverty and racial injustice.
- Sharing Christ's love with others by example.
- Sharing - through Word & sacrament; community presence & proclamation; support of area food/clothing distribution services Making disciples - spiritual formation & bible study (I believe we can do a better job in biblical/theological education) Doing justice - participation in local DART organizations; speaking publicly on justice issues (race, poverty, equality, ecology, etc.)
- Resourcing congregations and other expressions within the synod, lay leadership guidance (i.e., roles in diakonia and synod parish deacon programs), rostered leadership development (i.e., candidacy committee and first call), healthy congregation fostership, mission/SAWC development, churchwide mission support
- Providing leadership support for congregations and church agencies who are "in the trenches" doing the sharing, making, doing.
- Provides the leadership, mentoring, and encouragement of congregations- pastors and parishioners, to proclaim the living Grace of God. While this is most evident in providing rostered leaders, it is supported through other facets of the Synod such as conferences, retreats mission interpreters, materials, and private words of encouragement. The Synod is the forefront of guiding the spiritual life of persons and translating that into persons who, in times of good and ill, can live fully in God's love.
- Proclaiming a gospel of love for all human beings proclaiming equality.



- Primarily through pastors, rostered leaders and congregations doing Word and Sacrament ministry and the discipling and justice ministries that flow from this.
- Primarily by providing opportunities for people to gather for worship and be refreshed in their relationships with God and each other. Secondly by providing opportunities to grow in knowledge of the scriptures and related topics. In my experience, we do far less well at "boldly sharing Christ, making disciples, and faithfully doing justice". This is where our leaders would like us to be, but it is very far from where we are.
- Planning for Congregational Ministry was great as impetus to reevaluate current ministries and become more involved with community. Synod a great resource.
- partly
- Our congregations are very diverse. Some are boldly sharing Christ more than others. Some are passionately making disciples more than others. Some are faithfully doing justice more than others. Some are very missionally focused and take pride and delight in their outreach ministries. Others want to take care of themselves and fear the day that they will no longer have their church building and dear friends worshiping in the same space.
- One way is through its work in local communities, supporting existing ministries that may or may not be Lutheran based. For example, my church is active in the local food bank and FAITH network (interdenominational group for justice)
- Not to bold. We do not appear on the screen of the public much at all, seldom or never in the news, no billboards, etc. Bishop should be seen to more than just ourselves, sharing the Gospel as our face in Florida and the Bahamas and beyond.
- Not sure what the synod is doing to "live out its mission."
- Not sure
- Not so much with justice
- modeling practice and worship by Jesus' example
- Ministering to and encouraging all, from the cradle Lutherans to those unaffiliated. Reaching out to the marginalized and teaching by word and action that doing so is Christ's mandate.
- Members of congregations should be encouraged to sign up for the Synod newsletter to keep abreast of what is happening in Florida. Congregations need to share info they receive from the Synod as well. I don't know if the Synod actively lives out its mission.
- Lutherans are not known for witnessing as a denomination
- lame on "Passionately" making disciples
- It tries but not very visible to the communities we live and work in.
- It plans programming and special events that enable all of us (clergy and laity alike) to learn and grow in our faith and service. It provides information to our congregations about what's going on in the synod and at the churchwide level. It offers us opportunities to serve in various ways in our churches, our communities and our world. It speaks out on behalf of the poor and the marginalized and is intentionally inclusive in its language.
- It is very hard for me to say as we see or hear nothing from the Synod as to the as to its activities. I just recently decided to get connected with the Synod via this e-mail.
- It does not actively live out its mission.
- It assigns competent and bold rostered and lay leaders who inspire congregations to do God's mission in the world.

- In the recent years, The Office of The Bishop has actively engaged the congregations to live out God's call. By providing resources and encouragement at all levels. Excitement for sharing the Gospel has been very visible.
- In participating in all aspects of the church. We work at living out our mission through our partnership with the ELCA, Synod Assemblies, Conference on Ministry, and in our day to day dealings with our 178 congregations.
- I think we actively live out our mission by being actively involved in our community. As a very old downtown church we have a history of being. Aware of the needs of our neighbors and the worldwide church family.
- I think that the synod needs to do more in being out and about (the synod leadership) in the congregations and communities and less (if possible) in administration. The "synod" isn't visible in our congregation except for the one time in the year when the Bishop has been with us. Please, not a criticism, just an observation.
- I think that "boldly" is a challenge, "passionately" is maybe too great an emotional demand (we are not all "passionate" and we are not all still endowed with youthful vigor), "faithfully" is a good reminder about justice in our Synod.
- I see this as aspirations for many of our congregants and congregations. Stoics are learning how to be bold, passionate and faithful. Faithfully doing justice might be the one we accomplish most thoroughly because of our social ministries and advocacy work.
- I realize I am not privy to observing collectively that much ministry across the length and breadth of our synod, but as a pastor I do not see very much of either boldly sharing Christ or passionately making disciples. I do see some doing justice faithfully. Jesus did not sit in synagogues waiting for strangers to enter and boldly share God with them. He did not compete with humanitarian efforts to meet people's needs and then figure that somehow people would get the message that this is "God's love being shared." The Church today is far better at challenging members than it is making disciples, even though it doesn't do that great a job at the former. I believe these are two very different missions, the latter being from Christ that we make disciples. We don't choose Christ; he chooses us. We don't practice discipleship we live it. If we are disciples we don't make decisions about how to volunteer; we use the gifts we've received to do whatever it takes. I don't think we can "make" disciples but I do believe we can grow them.
- I hear more about justice than anything else. Sharing Christ is tricky except as incidental to other things, but I would to see us engaging neighbors and communities more. And I would love to see more discipling.
- I must say, I don't see them doing much to support congregations. I do believe that they gladly share the beliefs in Christ, however I thought think synod needs to humble themselves and see what smaller congregations are doing.
- I find the synod inhibiting rather than helping in some aspect of congregational life. More resources may be available than we have used but it is not very easy to learn what they are.
- I feel like we could do a better job personally, congregationally, district and synod level.
- I don't see it other than together in mission
- I do not think it does.

- I do not see the synod activity engaged as t the local level except through the local congregations which need the help and support of the synod what can we do together as partners not opponents)
- I don't know it does.
- I believe the synod/bishop functions mostly as a 1) ceremonial head and 2) financial gatekeeper Other than the call process (where the synod functions as gatekeeper) - the "old" purpose for the synod - to resource and support congregations - died when the ELCA refocused the church into three equal "expressions" In real, practical ways - my people only know about the bishop and the synod because I mentioned it all the time to foster partnership. Other than call process and constitution - no one in the office this office could ably answer the question - what does the synod do?
- I believe the Synod supports and encourages congregations to support missions such as Lutheran World Relief, etc. I believe the Synod supports the Diakonia program which is supportive of Pastors who use them in various ways, in worship, visitation, and whatever area needs attention.
- I believe the Synod is working towards this mission when it empowers the laity by continuing to train, educate and send them out to serve in the church and community - i.e. diakonia, Parish Deacons, Mission Interpreters, Youth Leaders/Ministers, Women in Ministry. --- Justice work seems to happen elsewhere and not in our local churches. (small pockets but not understood throughout the Synod). Opportunities of training, understanding, and the ability to start justice work seems to be lacking. We are finding those opportunities through other denominations and we are not advertising these to our congregations and rostered leaders.
- I believe the synod and the ELCA actively lives out its mission within the shared networks of the organizations. I read the e-Spirit and all the links within it. Our pastor does an excellent job of communicating all churchwide activities. However, if I were not an active member and read these communications, I would not know how the synod lives out its mission. Throughout the day, I listen to various radio stations and watch cable TV but don't hear anything about what we are doing to live out our mission.
- I believe the Florida-Bahamas Synod lives out its mission in descending order when related to the above segments in quotes. By that I mean, the synod is best at "boldly sharing Christ." It is probably mainstream in "passionately making disciples." The third segment of "faithfully doing justice" is not surprisingly the weakest, in my estimation. One of the justice issues that is falling short is the active and intentional inclusion of the LGBTQ community in the life and ministry of the synod. Even though officially declared to be a Reconciling in Christ (RIC) synod, a clear majority of congregations have yet to follow through on becoming RIC themselves; i.e., openly and publicly declaring in their welcoming statements that their welcome extends specifically to LGBTQ persons - among other marginalized people. To simply say that all are welcome is insufficient.
- I believe that we need to dedicate more synod resources to sharing our Lutheran vision of the Gospel with those who do not currently participate in a worshiping community (publicity: internet, paid advertising.,). By real, hands on, ministry in our local communities, residents around our congregations will see that our grace-centered faith is real and active. I believe that every Sunday should be "God's Work, Our Hands" Sunday. We also need to get back to an emphasis on catechetical training for adults.

- I believe that the Synod's statement would fit my view and understanding better if the word order were inverted, that is, if it began with Doing Justice, making disciples and then boldly sharing Christ. Justice must stand at the beginning of all that we do as believers in Christ Jesus. Notice that Paul states, that the Just shall live by faith.
- I believe that the Synod provides the local bridge to help our congregations know and understand that they are part of the bigger church body. The Synod can often take stands and assist in direction that will help move that mission along. Individual Council members can play a role in their specific areas to make this happen on the congregational level. They can also provide assistance in helping with conflicts when those arise. It is up to the Synod to be out in front on many of the social justice issues that affect the entire state. Having a strong dedicated Bishop will help that process.
- I believe our deaconia program is extremely useful in our churches and in our neighborhoods.
- I am relatively new to the F-B Synod, so I'm still watching and learning.
- I am not sure. Sometimes I sense we are too focused on church budgets and attendance.
- I am new to this synod and have not felt much involvement of the synod in my local congregation here. As a new member of our congregation's council, I am interested in being involved with the synod. In past similar roles, I have filled in other congregations I have turned to the synod for assistance with: locating new pastors to extend a call; seeking guidance for conflict within a congregation; keeping in touch with the mission of the ELCA worldwide and locally; guidance in creating congregational policy / procedure; and guidance in determining missions and services. I would expect this synod to also provide direction and leadership in all these areas.
- I am afraid that many congregations and pastors do not make outreach a priority. Some are hesitant to do justice because it might be divisive.
- I am a new member of a church in this Synod, so I do not feel equipped to answer this question intelligently.
- Honestly, I'm not sure. Based on what I read in newsletters, it seems that is happening. But, our rostered leaders and council have given our congregation literally zero information as to what the synod is doing. We are an active and growing congregation, not in the call process, so we are not on the synod's list of problem children and thus, we really have very minimal contact with synod. This is sad. It would be nice for ALL congregations to have the occasional contact with someone from synod.
- Gold plated Hot Air talk.....If you could only follow it up with some action
- Global Mission
- Getting outside the church buildings into the community to make a difference in the lives of those outside the faith.
- Equipping Leaders Multiplying disciples
- Encouraging congregation to practice these values and connecting with the leadership.
- Doing well
- Disappointing is probably the best way to describe what the ELCA Supports. Stop the liberal agenda and represent what Bible says. Do not make up new ways of interpreting it!
- Demonstrating inclusion of all people in its churches without discrimination of any group. Boldly speaking the Truth based on the teachings of Jesus. Embracing the "Prince of Peace" and living a life based on love, peace forgiveness and reverence for all of God's creation. Believing in our

faith and courageously sharing our devotion with others. Reaching out to our communities and providing assistance for those in need. Defending the rights of others and intervening when social justice is at risk. Our mission must be to do good in the world as Jesus taught us.

- Caring for its congregation members and their families.
- By working together and bringing our many gifts to bear.
- By reaching out to the member and disciples to share Christ Love and forgivingness with others. Starting Mission developments so new people can actively serve in their community. Also, growing and redeveloping Luther Spring into a resort area so more people can enjoy God's present and solace together in a wonderful environment.
- By providing opportunities for education and interaction through camps, conferences, and seminars; providing resources; for congregations in crisis; and providing materials and programs for the recruitment and growth of lay and rostered leaders.
- By helping local congregations be as healthy as they can be and equipped to carry out this mission.
- By equipping congregations to do live out our mission statement. By supporting organizations like Lutheran World Relief, Lutheran Services of Florida, and Luther Springs By education and advocacy awareness
- By equipping and supporting individual congregations in their missions to also share Christ, make disciples and seek justice.
- By encouraging, resourcing, and connecting congregations and rostered leadership in a way that builds up the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- By encouraging congregations to be mission oriented and reach out to the community by helping those in need; i.e., feeding the homeless, food banks, etc.
- By educating the baptized members of the synod in the needs of our people today. We are active in promoting issues of social justice such as racism, gender bias, gender identity. We work together to increase the quality of life for the poor, homeless, and sick. We seek to participate in God's mission by focusing on our sameness as Christians instead of quibbling over our differences.
- By doing life together through joint conferences and service opportunities.
- By coming alongside dwindling congregations helping them compose a meaningful mission statement and to learn how to reach out into their surrounding community to help impact their immediate area through some sort of service outreach. By coming alongside seemingly healthy congregations to help them by offering them long range planning and Mission statements that are reflective of what that congregation is now accomplishing and what it would like to accomplish in the future. Helping the leadership and Pastor to keep focused on the mission!
- By being very up-beat with communications. All Synod members must have an opportunity to sign-up for this newsletter. Sharing news makes for greater participation. Run an every-Congregation campaign.
- By being present in our communities. Walking beside those in need. Global Missions, LWR, various feeding programs, etc.
- By actively living and doing God's work
- Boldly stand up for progressive and fair policies for all people - not just Lutherans.
- Boldly sharing Christ

- Being a leader in facilitating great ideas around the synod through the Newsletter. The Bishop attending various churches within the Synod during the church seasons and the church's celebrations.
- Because I have only lived in Florida for 2 years and have only attended a Lutheran church in Florida for 14 months, I have limited ability to answer this question. My exposure has been to the congregation to which I belong and how that congregation serves the needs of those in the community through dinners for the needy, clothing giveaways, respite care for Alzheimer's victims, and pre-school for the youngsters in the community.
- Barely....just look at the stats of our synod...if we were living it out...would we be in such a decline??? When was the last time did we, as a synod, openly and honestly discuss the direction of God's church...let alone our synod...we talk about everything else...yet very little about the real mission and how to move it forward. How much time does our FB Synod Council spend each time they meet in real discussion and discernment as to the vision...and mission...the values of our synod??
- At the local level, very well with numerous congregational outreach programs for both members and nonmembers. At the synodical level biblical outreach has seemed subordinate to social statements which reflects the larger church wide atmosphere. Put another way, it is easy to discern the ELCA's sociology but not its theology.
- As colleagues, partnering congregations, and resourcing leaders to grow in faith and discipleship, and witness to the power of Christ in our lives and communities of faith.
- As "passionately and faithfully" are words with various levels of impact, a discussion related to this is important. What I believe to be passionate and faithful may not be in alignment with reality.
- appropriately addressing the needs of the community and congregation
- Apparently, I'm not aware of what the synod is doing on these issues. Does that mean it's not obvious (visual) to me? I like the document I just read and would like to use it for our own congregation.
- A very large and disproportionate amount of energy and focus are used concerning "Faithfully doing justice". It is hard to review the steady decline in the number of congregations and members and honestly say we are "Boldly sharing Christ and passionately make disciples."
- 1. Being Christ in our midst. Bring and keep awareness of social issues such as immigration, middle class disappearing, wage, race, age discrimination, law enforcement and prison reform towards justice for all. 2. Speak boldly to these and other issues. Christ as teacher. 3. Helping with relief in all areas. Christ as healer But, above all, worship of the Triune God as community.
- Sharing through sermons/homilies in individual churches and showing through volunteer works in the church and community, making disciples through encouraging participation in outreach ministries, doing justice through advocacy at all levels of government.

#### 4. What challenges lie ahead of us as a synod in the next three (3) years?

- Without yielding on its historical Lutheran roots, to make a greater effort to reach out to ethnic minorities with the Good News - in other words, adapting to the changing demographics of becoming less "white" as we include more Hispanics, African Americans, and "people of color." As we live in a global village, we need to become more aware of our global partners in the Church, especially those denominations with whom the ELCA has what used to be called "pulpit

and altar fellowship." To demonstrate and live out what a camp song says: I am the Church, you are the Church, we are the Church together.

- With the election of the new Bishop we will have to see how they react to the different situations. We need to grow and all congregations need to be more accepting and willing to work on helping each grow. Diversity is key.
- We need to find new ways to grow our congregation, and we look to synod leadership for assistance in achieving that. Other denominations and independent churches appear to have grown through sports type offerings. Maybe the Synod could promote a low impact Lutheran softball league, for example. I don't advocate having sports dominate, but it could become a draw to younger age groups, those who would be the future of our denomination.
- We need to continue efforts to become a place of worship that appeals to and serves a more multicultural and diverse population. We need to reach young families and find ways to meet their needs and encourage a life of faith and worship. We need to focus less on politics and more on Christ centered evangelism and faith outreach. This can be done through social programs, but leave the politics at home please!
- We face challenges of an increasing amount of hate and violence in the world that grows out of fear by those who create and stir up trouble claiming they are doing so in the name of God. We must confront that by discussing it openly and therefore need leaders equipped to know the Word of God and can dissect and explain why those hate mongers are wrong and not of God, not of the Holy Spirit. We also need to get our graphs correct and not use wrong data. "White" is a minority in the state of Florida. There are also large pockets of refugees, now citizens from former communist countries. We must be knowledgeable of the customs of others without feeling we need to change who we are, just accepting of who others are. And, we "must" remember how to LOVE the sinner, while identifying and hating the sin.
- We are maybe losing touch with our youth! Maybe in today's political climate, we should not let the "conservatives" or "fundamentalists" be the voice of all Christians.
- We are facing the closing of many small churches/ministries and a lack of rostered leaders. Why are we not looking at how we can lift many of our active current non-rostered leaders into a role of helping smaller churches instead of trying to pay and support a rostered leader salary which they cannot fund?
- We are challenged to think and act globally and locally in sharing the Good News and be involved in Justice ministry.
- We are a very well-intentioned gathering of religious clubs that, primarily, exist to meet the needs of each club's members. If we are to grow into being the Body of Christ there will need to be deep and difficult changes and it will require prophetic leadership to accomplish them. If we wish to continue as a gathering of religious clubs we will (and probably should) cease to exist.
- viability of congregations, especially those who have lost touch with the Holy Spirit and their neighbors; ongoing changes to neighbor demographics compared to existing congregation membership; "butts and bucks" congregation/synod mentality versus Pauline discipleship; retirements of rostered leaders; finding our social justice voices/hands/feet as congregations/conferences/synod; technological (in)capabilities of congregations/conferences/synod
- Turning words and intentions into action and mission.
- Trying to keep our membership rolls up especially with the children

- To continue growing and spreading the Word as well as supporting and encouraging our pastors and lay leaders/deacons.
- To build up activities and activity bcc engage our communities to go forward with great commission. Do the unchurched know the gospel of Christ
- To assist in making the church relevant in people's lives today. To assist and grow people's faith walk so that they live that out 24/7 and make their decisions every day through the lens of loving one another as Jesus called us to do. We can't leave any stone unturned, if that be on the job, in our communities and in the political arena. Our congregations must be deeply a part of our community--reflecting a knowledge of the concerns of that community and the demographics. We must throw off that adage that we are limited because that is way Danes or Germans or other Europeans did it. We should acknowledge mistakes in the past, we can grow and NOT repeat those error. This should also be reflected in our leadership. As we look ahead to the next few years it should not be time to be discouraged of the decline in numbers of the church. We should be concerned with deepening the spirituality of those here now to lead the coming generations to a greater age when love and grace will be the touchstone of everyone's life.
- There still seems to big divide on RIC even if kept "under the rug" in some congregations. Even though this is a changing society, there are many senior members who have resisted the introduction of this proposal. Some don't even want to be part of the discussion. Knowing how long it takes for change to be implemented stands the reason that this will be a slow and patient process.
- There are a lot of congregations that are shrinking in numbers and sense of mission to their communities. I think it will be a challenge for the synod to help leaders identify their mission and find sustainable ways to share the gospel with their immediate communities.
- The widespread geography of the FBS seems to be a problem. We have seen our bishops "burn out" too quickly partly because of the long distances they need to travel to cover the entire synod. A new way of handling the many duties of the new bishop needs to be addressed. Possibly additional staff might be the answer. One of the greatest challenges will be finances. We need to educate our congregations in the work that the synod does.
- The usual declining membership, fewer youth and increasing numbers of senior. Seniors also live longer, this means many more people with limited mobility to visit and fewer volunteers to do so since they also are aging. Society is more polarized. Congregations are not immune to political polarization. Greater emphasis on respectful communication, acceptance, appreciation of each other, patience, honest pursuit of reconciliation needed. With lack of universal care churches might be "healing grounds" where perhaps clinics may be run.
- The unavoidable closure and merger of congregations. Ability to recruit experienced and talented pastors to come to the synod, which requires competitive and comparable compensation/benefits guidelines. Create a healthy job description and culture for a new bishop to serve in. A case for synod relevance beyond being an employment broker and conflict management service.
- The synod faces an economic crisis brought on by a high mortality rate (the losses from death continue to exceed the growth in membership). In the face of decline, organizations double down on what they believe their core offerings are. In this case, we will emphasize Word and Sacrament. However, secular spiritualities look for direct action as the first concern. We must do



better in the community for the invitation to the Table to be received as genuine. More importantly, the growing diversity of the state population require the synod to be far more intentional in acquiring cultural competencies at all levels; especially, around Florida's history of racial violence and bias.

- The shrinking the church is experiencing in North America is, in part, a symptom of a leadership crisis. Part of this crisis is the shortage of clergy, but also in the gifts and paradigms necessary to lead the church well. This leadership crisis is also evident in the business and political worlds. Raising up leaders for these settings is crucial for the church. Stewardship behaviors are also changing as designated giving becomes a more common way for people to feel connected to their donations. This has positive outcomes in some ways, but creates some issues for the longer-term function of congregations, synods, and churchwide.
- The same that challenges congregations...Aging of the church body with less younger families attending church
- The same challenges that face all of Christendom in the US (apathy) and the ELCA, (lack of central authority).
- The retirement of many church leaders.
- The population of retired persons and families will grow as more business enter the state. This will challenge congregations to offer more to families and older adults. We need to learn to integrate these programs so both age groups will benefit.
- The landscape is diverse and the miles are many. It will be difficult for the Bishop to feel like this Synod is accessible to the office while at the same time keeping self-care in front. How do we nurture and support our bishop while asking for movement throughout such a large territory?
- The lack of growth as old members die and new younger members not participating in church especially traditional denominations. The current tolerance in mostly republican state of bigotry, religious intolerance and hate of others. The lack of leadership and spiritual to lead charge to reverse the above.
- The ELCA no longer represents the Bible but a liberal agenda. It's not going survive and it shouldn't
- The continuing increase in the numbers of unchurched in the community present a great challenge. Reaching, especially young families, welcoming them into a church family, and incorporating them into the life of the church is vital to stop the declining numbers of practicing Christians in our society. There is a challenge to maintain Lutheran theology and doctrine while being flexible enough to attract younger members of society with less traditional methods of worship, including the use of blended services and contemporary services.
- The continuing demise of the small pastoral centered dying congregations. The need to stop providing "band-aid" ministry to these congregations, instead using the resources from sale of properties and assets to sponsor creative new ministries. Justice issues around improving our outreach among LGBT people, racial and ethnic majorities and young millennials.
- The challenge for the synod will be creativity in mission and ministry thus the work of the next Bishop will have to be that of helping congregations into new ways of being, creative mergers and at moments constructive death. This work will in my estimation require a leader who is able to create and suggest new models, which preserve the core of what people love, while making ministry sustainable. It would be helpful for the leadership of the Synod to spend time helping

members of congregations to understand or figure out for themselves what it means to be Lutheran.

- The biggest challenge is growth. We need to find a way to add members.
- The biggest challenge is for church leaderships to remain true to the teachings of Jesus in a toxic political climate where divisions in society are reflected in the divisions within congregations. How do you speak prophetically when such a message may alienate members; yet not to speak is to water down the meaning of the gospel of loving and caring for others?
- The bigger challenge that I see is to pay attention of our community growth and find ways to reach to them. We're doing well in the 50 yr. and above group. But we are lacking in the child, youth and young adult groups. Our own ways of stewardship are misunderstood by many as being a financial issue only and they don't understand that is something more than that; i.e. giving, carrying, nurturing etc.
- The age of the congregation members. The lack of finances. The inability of congregations that are willing to work together.
- The ability to retain membership in the church.
- That our churches our aging out. We need to find new ways spread the Gospel to other generations. We are becoming a polarized society. The Church needs to help heal the schisms.
- Synod and individual congregations need to embrace inclusiveness without forgetting, ignoring or setting aside biblical mandates for godly living.
- Supporting pastors through difficult times in their ministry. Rethinking the call process - I don't have much confidence in the current system.
- Stop dwindling congregation sizes and increase youth awareness of the church.
- Specific outreach to young adults not associated with a worship community
- So many congregations are failing / shutting down we need to build up our existing congregations and make them stable.
- Small congregations that can no longer sustain their facilities. High retirement rate - transition and mobility. Seeking and empowering new ways to be the church.
- Secularization of life as it effects all aspects of our thinking. Spirituality needs to be a key practice--that means more than just teaching the Bible. The work of the Holy Spirit needs to be kept front and center. To continue some of the emphasis of the 500th Anniversary, i.e. our confessional heritage as it can be practiced in our contemporary world.
- Redefining expectations between our congregations, synod staff, and our new bishop. Being a public church in the proclamation of the gospel while working to bridge the growing divide of polarizing politics. Encouraging creative partnerships to help move congregations from survival mode, to sustainability, to vitality.
- Recruiting pastors to fill open spots, increasing multi-cultural awareness and sensitivity, and promoting healthy leadership.
- Reaching people with the good news of the Gospel by making it simple--stick with Jesus' commandment to love one another and reexamine the many burdensome doctrines that distract from that such as Trinity and substitutionary atonement.
- Re-framing concept of Church" in our changing context
- Rapidly changing demographics, polarization in communities and politics, engaging in a new generation in faith practices, learning how to be church a new.
- Providing resources to local congregations with limited financial resources.

- Provide a new vision.....make disciples and motivate them with Christ's challenge.
- Promote development of medium sized churches.....200 members. Large enough to do social ministries, small enough for individual ministry
- Political divisions, aging membership, the real perception that the church is often anti-gay, anti-immigrant and does not follow the words of Christ.
- Our Synod has been on a steady decline since 1988. We are losing churches and participants. Fewer churches and fewer participants means less offering income, less benevolence. The Synod leadership desperately needs to pour its time and resources into building up congregation leaders, clergy and lay. The Synod needs to guide churches back into the communities they are located in. Pastors must understand that they are servant leaders to their congregations and communities. Our Synod needs to raise the bar of expectations of the new pastors brought into the Synod. Don't bring any "duds" into Florida. Cut loose programs that make us feel good but do not directly build up leaders. Make sure that the next bishop is a LEADER! A person who can make tough decisions and inspire the Synod Council to make tough decisions. Focus completely on Leadership Development or we will not have a Synod in 20 years.
- Our identity is at stake. 2009 promoted tolerance for all and promised to live in peace with those with "bound" consciences. However, I believe that we are becoming increasingly intolerant of those who do not support and promote issues of gender identity, racism, and other social justice issues I am concerned that many leaders will not only leave the ELCA but will leave ministry all together as they feel marginalized and shamed into positions they are not comfortable with. I also believe that to have a stronger synod the bishop must have more input into calls and congregational matters such as when a congregation is no longer viable. Our lay members are not properly equipped to go through transition and call of a new pastor. And our potential pastors are stuck in the middle with no recourse.
- our continuing aging
- One of the biggest challenges is in calling a new pastor to a congregation. Congregations seem unwilling to pay pastors a decent salary and yet still want them to work 70 hours a week. There are many congregations that can't afford a full-time pastor and unless there are creative solutions these congregations are likely close.
- One day at a time
- Of course, there are many challenges, and they are mostly the same as for the ELCA and the other traditions with which we are in full communion. But perhaps the key to confronting many of these is this: taking the theological richness of the Lutheran tradition out to the world, by word and deed, in events and service that reach out (in ways far deeper than the usual token "outreach" projects that churches are accustomed to supporting, with routine ineffectiveness) to our neighbors and draw them in to us, and to Christ, and lead them to join with us as His body for all the world to see and hear and touch and believe.
- Need more missional pastors focused on mission and congregational development
- My first concern is to support our newly elected Bishop so that he doesn't "burn out". Perhaps come up with a new dynamic in dividing the Synod so our assistants can stay within their region and not have to travel as much. To have our Bishop use face time and electronic communication with congregations. To assist congregations in growth and education by using educated people; lay and rostered people at the direction of the Bishop

- Most individuals within our society have become so prosperous that they feel they no longer need God to save them. They see themselves as being in total control, and thus the means to their own salvation. This hubris will be very difficult to overcome in a society dominated by instant information and instant gratification. Unfortunately, this attitude will lead to fewer bodies in pews, fewer dollars in the offering plate, and less concern for those less fortunate than ourselves.
- Most every shrinking and aging membership-based congregations will not change; they are unwilling to. I have witnessed this without exception for over fifty years, ever since we moved into the Postmodern Age. As a result, they will continue to disappear in increasing numbers. For the future of Christ's mission in most of our synod, we should move with the Holy Spirit by putting significant effort and resources into planting new discipleship based communities that have a chance of growing instead of dying. I have also witnessed this with five new church starts.
- most congregations in the synod are in serious decline many pastors are discouraged and Every pastor I know has received broken promises from the synod - regarding follow through (esp. fr Asst/Bishop) lots of people are moving into the state of FL - but we don't reach many of them the synod is mostly irrelevant - given that it does little
- Many congregations are on the brink of extinction. Synod leadership is challenged to find ways to not abandon these centers for mission.
- Making Lutheranism known throughout Florida with its works
- Maintaining vital ministries in our communities regardless of our decreasing membership and financial support. Ensuring that tenets of the Lutheran faith remain a part of our communities versus the non-denominational bent today. Finding appropriate ministries for older, mostly retired volunteers to participate in.
- Maintaining viable congregations as they continue to shrink in size.
- Maintaining Lutheran congregations and keeping BIG non-denominational churches from taking over. Providing Ministers of word and sacrament that also have knowledge and desire to make " cold calls" to community and neighborhoods close to churches. They need to lead their Flock-members by example-! The new younger Pastors are feeling that they are entitled to have things given to them and we need them to lead and teach the word.
- Maintaining current members, how to reach out to others, implementing new >deals and ways.
- Maintaining and growing members. Financial sustainability of congregations  
Developing/attracting clergy to serve in congregations
- Loss of membership
- Loss of congregation members, stagnant growth, not enough children and young people
- living in a state and a country that is divided between the "have's" and "have not's"--regarding basic resources, civil rights, access to health care and fair treatment at the hands of the local, state and federal government etc. and the divisiveness in our culture.
- Lifelong learning and discipleship
- leadership that challenges.... exploring new connection with each other...
- Keeping our youth involved with the Lutheran Church as they leave for further education or jobs. So many are leaving for the Community Churches where it is more of a performance, load music.

- Keeping our membership actively involved in the affairs of the church. Too often, members speak of growing their individual congregations but having vibrant and dynamic participation in the church encourages others to at least look to see what's happening in that congregation. Visitor's usually do not return to a place where the members do not seem enthusiastic about what is taking place around them.
- keeping our churches open!!! So many of us have decreasing membership we need to attract more members
- Keeping congregations alive and thriving by ensuring leaders (to include pastors) within congregations are trained, engaged with other congregations within the synod and are engaged with and supporting the synod.
- Keep relevant for members who are tradition and conservative politically. Currently we wonder if there is a place for us in the ELCA
- Just trying to bring together a divided and not unified church
- It was difficult to pick just 5 areas that the synod should focus on the previous page. For congregations, finding ways of engaging people in the ministry of the congregation and feeling like they are a vital part of that ministry is what will help our churches continue to fulfill their missions. If the synod can find ways to help promote spiritual behaviors and discipleship, along with collaboration between churches, this could be an overall benefit for not only the congregations but also the synod. Another challenge is the size and distance involved with the Synod, which is particularly an issue for an incoming Bishop and synod staff.
- Increasing membership...bringing in more families(young)
- increasing church membership
- Increasing active membership. Make family worship inviting. Wish I had the answers. I share my love of Trinity every chance I get.
- Increasing a deep, soul-searching way to reach those who don't want what we are currently doing. How do we reach them, especially our children (who were exposed) and our grandchildren (who were not exposed)? Let's develop some exciting ways to bring Christ into today's world that will speak to those who know Christ/or don't want the "old" way.
- Inclusivity for all Loving our perceived enemies
- Impact of narrow thinking, as in rejection of climate change (Florida underwater), gay rights, other progressive ideas.
- If we keep doing what we are doing the way we are doing it, the future seems bleak. I believe the Synod should lead the effort to streamline organization, spiritually and emotionally invigorate the faith and practice of the clergy, and challenge every congregation to incorporate our impeccable theology of grace into a vibrant ministry.
- If we don't start boldly sharing Christ and passionately making disciples then we will become even more efficient in closing congregations.
- Identify and connect to the needs of our communities. We do a great job of serving ourselves as Lutherans but how are we connecting to others? Equip us to be 1st century Christian disciples.
- I truly believe we need to focus on a few key areas to maintain relevance and move the church forward. 1. We need to spend more time in the Word and do our work (not just talk) based on that. 2. We must be present outside the 4-walls of the church building. 3. We must focus on creating "disciples," not members. This opens incredible opportunities when it comes to connecting with the diverse communities across our state. Disciples will more naturally engage

in bringing the Church and Christ to people where they are at (in the faith journey, not geography). 4. We need to assess our current capacity and prioritize to accomplish the vision and mission of the church. This means asking hard questions and a willingness to engage in not only difficult conversations, but making difficult decisions.

- I see many of the congregations in my area "circling the wagons" and trying to survive. We need to develop in our leaders a different attitude: the willingness to be creative in congregational life and outreach to the community. To trust that as we do the right thing, with passion, our congregations will be revitalized by the power of God. I believe that low morale amongst the clergy needs to be addressed. We need to find ways to refresh and encourage our rostered leaders. I believe that the new bishop needs to be a "cheerleader" and a true Barnabas among us. We need a pastoral bishop. No one in most of our settings has any clue what a "Lutheran" is. We need to change that. As Dave Daubert says, "We are the denomination best positioned to answer the faith questions of our time." Smart, targeted advertising is key. We need "tech natives" to show us how to be effective on social media. What I've noticed among the younger members in my congregation is a hunger for theological depth and meaningful, prayerful worship. We need to be relevant and sensitive to the modern attention span, while also being proud of our liturgical traditions. While praise worship can be wonderful, it's not the only answer. Worship services need to touch our congregants at a deep level. Such worship needs to be followed by faith development. As I once heard at LTSS, we've got Christian Ed all wrong. Jesus played with children and taught adults. We play with adults and teach children.
- I feel sustaining membership and growth within the congregations.
- How we live out our faith in the public arena with the many who do not believe, accept or even look or speak like we do? We need to be radically intentional about the Christ who lives in our hearts.
- How to stem the downward trend towards extinction...of the 175 congregations at least 85-90% are stagnant, dying or dead.... Elect a bishop who has a vision and can assist lay/clergy leaders in shaping that vision/mission on a synod-wide scale. Develop and promote specific vehicles for EDUCATING, INSPIRING & EQUIPPING lay/professionals as to how to discern values, vision and mission for the synod as well as individual congregations
- How to provide ministries to those who are looking to "make a difference." Churches need to open doors to the homeless community with food pantries, free breakfast, etc. When we say, "All are welcome" we must mean "ALL." Membership dropping. Fewer young people in congregations. Growing aging congregants.
- Helping fill the pews.
- Growth, or lack thereof.
- growth, identity, and spiritual renewal
- Growing members in areas where there is an aging population.
- Growing irrelevance of our church structure to our troubled and divided world. Be bold to discover Christ in our world while being strongly attached to our Lutheran theological grounding. I am very concerned about, what seems to me, a downward trend in biblical and Lutheran theological literacy. Most people looking for a church want a "friendly community".
- Getting youth and young adults involved in church. They are the future.
- Getting people to return to church. Attracting young families and developing their leadership skills. We must grow the churches.

- Getting new members. Keeping up with a fast-changing world that is not turning to organized religion. Delving into factual history of our religion throughout the last two thousand years. Being progressive in thinking instead of blanket accepting a doctrine that has been passed down through time and essentially blocked many stories which included the contributions of women. An example is how the Bible was interpreted by the men who wrote it.
- Get out of the office and be more in the congregations. How can the office obligations be minimized and delegated so that the "Synod" is obvious out in the communities?
- For me the biggest challenge is finding a way to "modernize" the church, by which I mean effect changes that will make it more in step with our fast-changing society. Too many churches remain mired in the old model that no longer works and are resistant to change. In addition, the synod needs to do more to coax struggling congregations to enter multi-point parishes. Too many churches are no longer able to afford a full-time pastor and yet are reluctant to join forces with another congregation.
- Follow biblical teachings and not the progressive liberal politically correct corporate agenda of the church in Chicago.
- Focusing on the Right-Hand Realm and allowing its members to exercise their Vocations in the Left-Hand Realm.
- Finding relevance
- Financial.....keeping the doors open of those churches with small (less than 100) attendance.
- Financial- the synod appears to be heavy in administrative expenses; a lot of travel expenses and a lot of conferences. The synod needs to really review financials. The trend is our churches are decreasing and our membership is decreasing. If this trend does not reverse, there will not be enough funding to support the synod. The local churches are asked to give more each year and support more national and synod endeavors but tithing locally is decreasing and we must focus on paying bills to keep doors open. Technology can help front office work through shared phone lines, fax lines, messages. Instead of each church having their own assistants or none, is there an opportunity to share resources so all church offices in a community can be open and respond to our community needs. Similar story around property management. Not all churches can afford a full time or part time sexton or property manager but what if together each congregation could support one person. All churches could save and maintain nice facilities Membership- we must review new ways to invite people into the Lutheran church. We must grow in disciples. Most churches are struggling so each conference/community must begin to find ways to work together to grow. Why the Lutheran church? What do we do? All churches in one area putting out one add to show multiple locations to serve their spiritual need. Which service works best for you, etc... Vision- what is the vision of the synod. What are the goals? How do the locally churches help?
- finances Structure
- Fear! Cortisol stunts creativity. Trying to do things as usual - Millennials won't stand for it Trying to do things because they work for others - creativity needs to be local.
- Faithfulness to the proclamation of the Gospel. Response to the demographics.
- establishing a foundation for changing demographics and increasing population
- Electing a bishop willing to serve for the time elected.
- Discipleship. Keeping God in the midst.

- digital churches and new generation with new technology church.
- Developing an understanding of the Office of the Bishop that balances the personal ministry of the bishop with his/her self-care. We face the need to accept collegial ministry as the norm and expectation. How can we strengthen and support ministries and adjust expectations to a new reality that there may no longer be one pastor/one parish norm.?
- Decreasing number of seminary students and roster leaders. Decline in church attendance while Florida is increasing in population. Church's struggling with their own finances don't contribute to the church at large including synod. Lack of volunteerism at churches to sustain programs.
- Decreasing membership. Lack of being willing to realistically look at ourselves and discern how we are failing our members, and more importantly...the people who could be or were churched and fell away. Why? How did we as congregations fail to share God's love?
- Declining membership!
- Declining membership and generosity. The "I don't make commitments" attitude. Skepticism as to the church's relevance.
- Declining in membership Congregations with a lot of elderly boomers and unable to be more evangelistic Inability to embrace change and new generations in the leadership to have less old guard leading the church and more Gen X and Millennials
- Declining congregational membership, lay leadership skills to promote sustainability and growth, and on-going social justice issues.
- Declining age of population of many congregations and lack of young families who seek the church as an important part of their family focus.
- Creating a stronger sense of who we are as a member of the ELCA.
- Continuing to maintain members and growth of membership in a church that has not been moving forward in it style of worship. Empty nester do not like to worship the way we have been worshipping for the last 200 yrs. Even blended services are not a good option for empty nester. This is not your mother worship service style if you want to move into the future and open the eyes of new people. Music needs to be uplifting, joyful, meaningful and tune the they can sing. They need program for their groups, coffee clubs and reading groups etc.
- Continuing to embrace the "Great Commission" Helping struggling congregations meet their Spiritual/Financial needs Facing the reality of declining membership/churches/rostered leaders
- Connecting with the many people that are moving here--not only the baby boomers but also the wonderfully gifted African American and Hispanic peoples. Connecting with Ecumenical Partners in new and effective ways that will build the body of Christ. Finding ways to build community in this BIG state--maybe we just need to say that we are three regions that will operate independently and meet as a synod every 2-3 year.
- Congregations need to work together in each conference. We shouldn't each be doing the same things independently.
- Congregational support, letting Lutherans know where our congregations are, and teaching the public what ELCA Lutherans stand for as the Gospel of Jesus Christ and attract them to become part of our communities.
- Collaboration between and among congregations Demands placed on the Bishop related to expectations within the Synod and churches Engaging new members and sustaining members in a prayerful and enriching manner



- Changing the focus of our discourse -- more substantive theological and biblical understanding as we move again into a newer age. As we become clear on the unique nature of our witness in the faith we will become stronger as a resource for those seeking good Christian witness.
- Changing society. The public that thinks that all "Christians" are alike and can thus reflect poorly on all churches.
- Can't read this.
- Being true to the teachings of Jesus and taking on a more visible role in our communities. We must be more committed to speaking Truth to Power. We cannot be afraid to be outspoken about human rights, discrimination, war and violence and the destruction of our planet. We must be the voice for our children, the poor, the elderly and the most vulnerable of our world. We must be leaders and emulate the work of Reverend Martin Luther King and Mother Teresa. The church must represent a morality that respects every life and invests in helping all humanity live with dignity and abundance.
- Being relevant to those under the age of 65 Being relevant to those under the age of 30 Being relevant to those under the age of 18 Demonstrating/communicating/promoting our relevance in the three instances just cited through advocacy, participation in the public arena, and showing leadership Developing viable alternatives to the traditional congregational physical plant and staffing, for both financial and relational reasons Finding and keeping cleric and lay leadership
- Becoming relevant to the younger generations. But still being true to our heritage and the Bible.
- Becoming bold enough to make meaningful, positive, and lasting change in our synod and its congregations.
- Avoiding going along with societal trends to get along. We must remain true to the Gospel.
- Attracting and retaining young professionals and young families. Provide a theological reason to be ELCA Lutheran and not just a "church of you'll come which can be interchangeable with any number of denominations based on activities and services.
- As in many mainline denominations where membership is declining, we need to publicize locally what we are doing. Perhaps some who were raised in a church but have left it, don't realize how our church is evolving and embracing diversity in membership, worship practices, and open discussion of Biblical, theological and social issues. We need to be an inviting church, and welcome and show a genuine interest in those who come through our doors. I'm happy to say that our local newspaper in Gainesville, Florida affords space for coverage of religious subjects, and announcements of activities in individual congregations and worship spaces.
- Aging out congregations, financial stability, the will to learn how to effectively communicate the Gospel to generations who reject church and do not know or care to hear the language we prefer to speak in terms of faith, life, and spirituality.
- Aging congregations Reduced number of candidates for ministry Demonstrating relevancy to changing world
- Actively support congregations to be more effective in ministry and sustaining financial stability
- 1) Developing qualities of excellence in leadership at all levels, particularly the congregation leadership level. 2) Expectations of Rostered Ministers fully participating in the life of conference and our synod for the sake of MISSION.

- 1) Making church relevant for our youth 2) Reversing the decline in membership and attendance 3) Projecting an image of inclusiveness (knowing this can drive some away) 4) Boldly proclaim Jesus' in face of cultural agnosticism
- 1. Electing a Bishop that is not overwhelmed with the work involved in being a Bishop; 2. Increasing congregational membership to keep the doors open for many congregations; 3. Developing ministerial leaders; 4. Creating higher paying industries in Florida to support the Synod and congregations.
- 1. Coping with the diminishing influence of the church in our culture and society 2. Coping with the diminishing influence of the church in our culture and society 3. Providing congregations with tools needed to deal effectively with diversity and conflict
- 1. As always provide the spiritual foundation- word, sacrament, prayer, compassion for living in our world as it is. 2. Encourage pastors in their leadership role and continue to match pastors with congregations 3. Encourage congregations to find ways to serve in community and to be sure doors are open and very welcoming to all
- 1. Have younger people more active in the congregations - youth and young adults. They need to be more visible. 2. Have members of congregations take a more active part in Bible studies. Most in congregations are not real knowledgeable on Bible. 3. Making the church relevant in today's world.
- -changing models of congregational life so to reinvent and redevelop -leadership development, rostered and lay -core theology while diverse in demography
- - the continual growth in population - aging congregations and pastors - making faith real and applicable to empty-nesters and Millennials - limited financial resources (those under 50 are less inclined to join and contribute offering) - "grilling the gourmet burgers that come from sacred cows" - ecumenical and inter-faith ties
- To proclaim a Church for All without exclusion. Review the Application Term versus Vocation.
- Clergy shortage and congregations unable to afford leaders

Finally, in a sentence or two, please share what gifts you or your congregation bring to the synod.

- Working with community groups, youths, congregation groups
- We keep going with little support of synod. Our Faith is strong.
- We have gifted individuals who can provide leadership and skill for ministry activities in our Central Florida area. Most serve best for specific events or activities instead of ongoing committees/teams.
- We have clergy gifted with strong homiletic skills and have developed good social ministry programs.
- We have an incredible outreach in our community and continue to be a vibrant congregation with all age groups represented
- We have an important history to build on -- with students, with the community, and with the wider world.
- We have a multi-generational congregation with strong focus on youth and making difference in the broader ministries of the church.

- We bring the love of the church as a family and outreach to community to be one with Christ in our daily lives.
- We bring the gift of welcoming diversity.
- We bring an openness of mind and heart to new ideas and hope for the future. We bring a love for youth and families. We bring a yearning and joy for hearing and sharing the gospel.
- We bring an active, thriving involvement in our local community both at the congregational and individual levels. Our outreach programs are locally driven and locally derived to provide impact beyond our small size.
- We bring a place of love and acceptance as an RIC Congregation in a traditional and conservative area. We can be a model for other congregations who are wanting to bond more closely to reach out more effectively
- We are working hard to find innovative ways to effectively do parallel ministries:1) Ministry to those who know little about Jesus and are thirsty for the Gospel (primarily young folks at this point, but certainly not limited to that age group) 2) Ministry to the life-long mainline Christians who are coming to Florida to retire. These are disparate groups with widely varying needs, but we believe there is much to be gained in bringing them together in one congregation. It's tough, but we are seeing some interesting, positive things begin to happen.
- We are small but active and we welcome people of all colors and abilities to our midst
- We are reinventing our congregation after three years of division. We bring enthusiasm, determination and the love of God. St. JOHN, SUMMERFIELD WILL RISE AGAIN
- We are positive, strong and determined to bring the Gospel in our location. We share love mutual understanding and do our best to model Christ like behavior
- we are not timid
- We are forward looking, risk taking, and committed to a future focused vision.
- We are excited to be part of a redevelopment process with a very gifted and dynamic full-time pastor after some years of crisis and three different good but only part-time pastors. We have a very dedicated group of members who give greatly of time and talents in the various ministries within our church as well as outreach to our community and beyond. We had a vibrant campus ministry program in the past, and look forward to growing that ministry once again, as we feel it is vital to offer a place of belonging, sharing, worship and growing together in our faith, for the large campus communities, undergraduate and graduate students, faculty and staff in our city.
- We are consistently trying to be involved in areas of justice and families.
- We are committed to Word and Sacrament Ministry in the Lutheran Tradition. We are committed to discipleship, Christian education, family ministry, community outreach, supporting global mission, support of military families, etc... We will be less helpful in advancing the ELCA's goals regarding political advocacy and in encouraging a quia subscription to favored socio-economic theories.
- We are committed to making real a vision that honors and respects the past but boldly embraces and moves forwards into the future.
- We are a warm welcoming congregation, sharing God's word throughout our community. To remind us to do as we have a sign as we exit the parking lot which reminds us the we 'Are Now Entering the Mission Field'.
- We are a vibrant congregation with a young Pastor who has been with us for just over two years. Even though this transition has brought on some and dissension, as expected anytime

there is change, to the point where some have left, there has been a halt to the 'bleeding' and a leveling off as new members have joined the congregation.

- We are a very small congregation, that is looking forward to change in our own church. With the changes, we are looking forward to new ideas and ministries that will lead to spiritual growth in our church and community.
- We are a small congregation, but very caring. Strongly supportive of each other and of others in need.
- We are a small caring but insular community set in traditional beliefs and ways
- We are a reconciling congregation that lives diversity in our community and daily life. We can help others in their journey to become a multicultural church.
- We are a multi-ethnic congregation in a suburban setting. We are open to new ideas but lack direction in developing programs.
- We are a loving and giving congregation that is committed to the community.
- We are a healthy, vibrant congregation that goes beyond itself with mission, energy, and financial support.
- We are a congregation of strictly Seniors. Average age of 70 plus. We are active in our mission of sharing a Food Shelf with another church. We have many ministries that are active and ongoing. We are inactive in recruiting other church members. We have a Pastor who is overpaid along with support staff. The Council goes along with what has been done in the past. Gloria Dei in Leesburg
- We are a congregation of fewer than a hundred members, many of them seasonal, most of them seniors, but we are very active year-round in servant/outreach ministries in the community and generous in our financial support, which, nonetheless, is at present insufficient to sustain the fixed costs of the congregation. Our leadership is intentional in trying to think outside the box. Liturgically we are the opposite of stagnant, having recently learned one new liturgical setting with plans in the works for another; our pastor and music leaders are enthusiastic teachers in this regard. I am involved in music ministry, servant ministry, and affirmation of diversity as a core component; I am involved in multi-congregational and conference gatherings and have been a voting member or volunteer at most synod assemblies and all but one churchwide assembly since 2005.
- We are a community in constant reform that we proclaim love and respect to every person without exclusion
- We are a close-knit family of believers who include and welcome all people.
- Visioning, Leadership and support in music/worship, Youth Ministry Leaders, feeding the poor, partnering with other denominations/organizations.
- Trinity brings a community of openness to all. We have a growing leadership involvement in the congregation, in service to community needs, involvement in local Justice ministry and connection with interfaith worship and service.
- Thru prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Our congregation support our leaders and the Synod, financially and pray fully.
- This congregation supports the synod in as many ways as it can being a small church body. Although money should not be such a large factor, we, nevertheless, make out contributions as we are able. We are a gift to the synod in as much as we support the efforts of the synod leadership to conduct the business of the regional and churchwide organization.

- The gift of caring and compassion for all mankind
- Strong worship, caring ministries, spiritual growth, use of media, willingness to work together, enjoyment of community life.
- St. John, Winter Park, has the gift of a large facility, centrally located for synod events that we offer. We have varied and talented leaders for synod level service. Personally, I have training as a leader/presenter in Healthy Congregations and Bridgebuilders as well as personal coach by Dr. Peter Steinke. I am a certified Transitional Ministry leader from the Interim Ministry Network. I have served on the NWOS Consultation Committee, Discipline Committee, and Candidacy Committee. I am a writer for Sundays & Seasons and have planned worship for NWOS synod assemblies. I still have a sense of humor and hope for the future of the Church, so I would welcome the opportunity to serve on the synod level.
- Spiritual renewal and multicultural, ecumenical outreach are the ongoing themes that not only drive our outreach ministries, but what also offers an invitation identity to the community. We share with our communities what it means to be "Lutheran" but more so what it means to be a "Christian" within the many conflicting, divisive issues that are facing our communities, society, and the world today.
- Spiritual and faith filled worship as a springboard. We want to keep ourselves healthy as a congregation and looking outward. Unfortunately, we will probably not grow substantially in the future.
- Spiritual & stewardship gifts.
- Several core groups of passion- local outreach, education, family ministry
- Seven years ago, we took a chance and reached out to the homeless on the streets of Cocoa Beach and Cape Canaveral. That initial outreach led to a food pantry, bicycle ministry, Laundry day, veterans assistance, and Christian counseling. Those efforts have blessed our church with spiritual growth, increased worship attendance, and enhanced stewardship. As one new member recently told me, "I'm here because you are doing what a church is supposed to do." Our congregation could train others in the synod to do similar outreach. I have written a book based on our experience entitled, "Strong Drink for the Perishing: Transformative Outreach to the Homeless." I'm hoping that this book, which is set up as a study guide and training manual, will help in that one possible resource for congregational renewal.
- Putting our faith into action. Preaching for life change. Caring for people. Authentic Biblical community
- Prayer. Entrepreneurial experience and skills.
- Outreach to new people moving to Florida, and getting them involved in the mission of our church.
- Outreach and openness are visible so that we work to be God's hands.
- Our Savior brings the gifts of openness and senior ministry
- Our presence and outreach as visible reminder of the Holy.
- Our gifts, both personal and parochial, involve meaningful interaction with the community around us. This is the age for the gospel to be seen in public, rather than kept behind closed doors.
- Our financial gift of course Supporting and sharing with others the synod's initiatives and programs Faithfully supporting in prayer

- Our desire to bring new generations into the Body of Christ by reaching out to young families and youth.
- Our congregations welcome the stranger, understands the need for both outreach and in-reach as we care for one another. Our congregation is attractive to Millennials.
- Our congregation, though small, does many outreach projects to our community. We are trying to be a light where we are.
- Our congregation thrives as it is centered in Word and Sacrament, welcomes all, serves the community and continues to wrestle with the issues that we all face, not as burdens, but ways that God can continue to create the New Jerusalem in our midst.
- Our congregation supports the community around the church. We have free breakfast for the homeless every Sunday before worship. We have free supper before our Wednesday night worship, called G.I.F.T., Generation in Faith Together. It's a very relaxed service, held in our fellowship hall. It is designed to hear scripture, break into multigenerational groups to discuss and pray, then reconvene for a sermon, Eucharist, and hymn singing...to "Go in peace and remember the poor." Different ministries gather following the service; choir, Youth Group, "Sunday" School, adult Bible Study. The time is designed to minister to the families who have children in the Church Pre-School. They can retrieve their children, come to supper, and worship. With other activities taking them away on Sundays, the mid-week service gives them an opportunity to be part of a worshipping community.
- Our congregation participates in various collections of food and clothing, etc. benefiting the needy in our community. We are blessed with a very talented music ministry. We have many members involved in the VBS and religious education classes as well as adult classes.
- Our congregation is well established and we have been blessed to have had the same pastor for 15 years to provide stability. Over time however, the average age of the congregation has gotten older. Our congregation has a wonderful traditional music program, a very good contemporary music program, and a sprinkling of congregants of races other than the "middle age white" group. These are strengths that we can and should build upon. The danger in having a traditional service with traditional music at 8:30 and a contemporary service with contemporary music at 11:00 is that we are almost two separate congregations, except when we go to one 10:00 service during the summer. We need to make sure that we don't become divided, but I don't know how to address that issue.
- Our congregation is very 'seasonal' but has members very willing to serve while they are attending during the 'season.' Helping with the ministry of the Lutheran Home in Naples is something our pastor has done. We also have several retired pastors that assist in services while they are in Naples.
- Our congregation is sound financially. There are talented individuals who could be asked to do more for the larger church if opportunities were presented.
- Our congregation is sort of an outpost of liturgical Lutheran worship and acceptance in a sea of rigid fundamentalism. I am concerned that without synod support, we will be absorbed and homogenized.
- Our congregation is small but extremely faithful. With a membership of 50 during the winter and about 30 the rest of the year we worship 45-50 in winter and 25-30 in summer. The members of my congregation are retired and many volunteers within our communities- we're located in the middle of nowhere so ministry occurs in the closest small/mid-sized towns. My

personal strength is in helping the congregation see their growth and change over the 4 years I have been here. We have moved from a conflict based congregation to a congregation that laughs and cries with one another.

- Our congregation is in the middle of many 55 communities, and we seem to be reaching them with some success.
- Our congregation is growing because we take a timeless message, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and share it with our community through Word, Sacrament and Service in innovative ways. We realize that although a 1950-1960 model of church is comfortable and easy, the Gospel calls to be daring and engaged.
- Our congregation is flexible, adventurous and so loving.
- Our congregation is a 100% contemporary congregation. I feel we are meeting the needs of "real" people in our community and showing what the ELCA stands for and believes...without an organ, hymnals, or pretentiousness.
- Our congregation has quite a few deacons and several in training. Through the extensive classes, these deacons have a strong foundation in the Lutheran faith, plus a variety of different spiritual gifts, that could be used in support of the Synod and finding a way to utilize them could be a big plus for the synod.
- Our congregation has members that actively participates in local justice efforts (F.A.I.T.H. in Volusia County) and worldwide aide efforts, such as sewing blankets/quilts that are distributed through LWF. They also support local leadership development by financially helping youth attend Lutheran Summer Music.
- Our congregation has developed synodical and conference leaders. We also strongly support our community through the food bank, homeless shelter, and teen center.
- Our congregation has a strong Pastor, good leadership and an immense amount of room for growth. But, the congregation which is aging out, huge lack of youth, must be willing to listen, God is calling... the winds are asking us to follow God down a new street.
- Our congregation has a deepening sense of the radical grace of God reaching into the whole community and welcoming all people. While we have not fully realized the goal of valuing all people, we are working on this welcome in important ways. The core of the congregation values presence and showing up as part of the larger church and in the community. Ours, like every congregation, has gifted people with professional and life experience that can be shared for the enrichment of the whole church.
- Ongoing faithful financial support; high number of members engaged in conference, synod, and churchwide ministries; support of called staff in sharing their gifts of leadership well beyond the congregation,
- Nurturing the few youths left in our church.
- Nativity Lutheran Church has a strong commitment to reaching the community and providing services such as our food pantry, rummage sales (called "Junktiques") and Vacation Bible School.
- My congregation pulls from a long history of social ministry and advocacy and continues to do a good job caring for the poor. We also continue the long history of liturgical worship.
- My congregation is too busy trying to survive to consider its own gifts. In fact, we are more focused on keeping our own little corner of "our church" alive, we have very little sense of the larger church. The gift I bring is largely rejected by the Congregationalists of our denomination and that gift is the gift of discernment in that I and many others realize that if the ELCA is to

survive, it cannot do so with a congregationalist polity. Perhaps it is God's will that the ELCA not survive. If that is so, I hold on to the promise that the Church of Jesus Christ will and that the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

- My congregation is in transition right now. We had a schism that dragged on for 3 years. We are trying to rebuild and recapture our former programs. We have finished the interim process, but lack enough funds to call a pastor. We continue to serve the community as we can and hope to be "back in full swing" within the next 3 years. Help from the synod would benefit us greatly.
- My congregation has a strong ability to respond to specific, clearly defined projects and programs.
- My congregation brings gifts of maturity and experience. The members, although many are elderly, are dedicated and faithful Lutherans who serve as they are able. They are involved in outreach to the homeless and impoverished, and to those suffering with Alzheimer's and their families.
- My congregation brings a determined spirit to live and thrive despite all adversity. Those qualities are what it will take to bring our Synod into the next decade and beyond. We all must look deep and find the true character of what lies at the heart of Christianity, love and grace.
- Multicultural Passion for social justice Diversity Young people
- Multicultural and different languages ministries.
- Ministering to the elderly, Providing a membership "home" for incoming retirees, outreach with music
- Me: pursuit of the ministry of Word & Sacrament, eagerness to contribute during seminary years, passion for interfaith mercy and justice efforts. Congregation: generosity of talent and treasure when needs are personified, pursuit of excellence in worship and music for the glory of God
- Love of Jesus. Love of the Gospel. A willingness to serve.
- Leadership in parish worship. Outreach ministries.
- Knowing in our hearts what our mission and reason for being where (& when) we are. We are where we are because we are needed where we are.
- Innovation and creativity and the desire to move from a culture of members into one of discipleship.
- Inclusive hospitality and a heart for the poor
- I will share the following as my perceived strengths of my congregation and known strengths for me: We / I build relationships within our church, we/I empower others and we/I believe in open, honest and faithful communication....and finally we are true believers in the power of prayer.
- I was recently accepted to seminary and am currently going through the candidacy process, so I imagine this could evolve over the next few years. I am a strong and mission-driven leader; an imperfect Christian with a willingness to roll up my sleeves and be first in line to do the work we've been called to do.
- I think our congregation brings the gifts of service, faithfulness, outreach, and community (inside the church and with other organizations) --all without the benefit of strong/good leadership in the church.
- I now live in Minnesota and enjoy it here very much! I supply preach in my retirement for several pastors and volunteer at Mayo Clinic and Mayo Hospice leading grief groups. I have no



interest in returning to FL - it is way too hot and humid for me. If I did live there, my gift of listening and then responding appropriately would be volunteered.

- I love of God and the will be make a difference in growing the Lutheran church. The people of the ELCA have a duty to pass it on.
- I hope to be a candidate for rostered ministry soon. I bring a profound engagement with scripture, tradition and contemporary society, a love for vital worship and spirituality, an understanding of how to develop congregations, and a willingness to take the time to be present with members of the congregation and neighbors.
- I hope I have an open mind to listen without judging.
- I have a love for the Lutheran style of worship and its love for all persons. Our congregation reaches out to community needs and needs of our own members.
- I feel that I bring, and my congregation shares, a keen awareness of the importance of the body-community of Christ. I, we, have the gift of compassion in proclaiming the present and still-to-come reign of God in Christ Jesus.
- I do not know. Unfortunately, the only time our church seems to get involved with synod is when we are going through conflict. We should do more and see more of the synod than just during conflict. I think we can offer more but I do not know what else now.
- I bring the strength of having the courage to confront antagonists, thereby empowering those who want ours to be a healthier congregation. Our congregation brings the gift of many members desiring to openly welcome all people, and facilities to share with the community and the synod.
- I bring the gift of being able to tell the Story in words and being able to create programs that enhance or encourage others to do the same. My church offers a traditional liturgy like what I grew up with as a lifelong Lutheran, not everyone wants contemporary worship.
- I bring the gift of being able to see things from various perspectives and views. I'm intelligent and a compassionate with a heart for pastoral care.
- I bring leadership and organizational development, change leadership, vision and mission discernment. The congregation brings financial resources and commitment to social and servant ministry.
- I bring experience with and commitment to multicultural ministry, as does my church to a certain extent. I also bring involvement in global mission and leadership at the conference level.
- I believe I have gifts in the areas of 1) contemporary biblical criticism/understanding and 2) experience in sharing healthy patterns of behavior and living together as God's people within congregations. My congregation is a two-site ministry which provides for a variety of development and service opportunities: different worship times & styles; multiple bible study groups; bread ministry; Stephen Ministry; Men's group; youth ministry; WELCA; two pre-schools, etc.
- I am retired clergy, but I have gifts in helping congregations in several areas. I have kept up to date on worship, which was my original graduate endeavor. I am qualified and experienced in encouraging LGBT ministries because of my background with Reconciling Works. I have done extensive interim ministries but do not desire to do any more full-time interims. However, I may be able to be of some strategic help.
- I am retired and am available for interim ministries, and supply work. I am also a certified pastoral counselor soon to be serving congregation and community with a faith based

counseling ministry. The congregation of which I am a member is one that primarily serves the community with Word and Sacrament, help to the poor and needy, Bible study, and support of world missions.

- I am not sure. This congregation is barely hanging on and it is not only this one but others as well.0
- I am not currently serving a congregation, however, the congregation in which I worship serves the community in a multitude of ways. Also, its music ministry is excellent and its youth and family ministries are active and serve the community well.
- I am disabled and cannot be in public anymore, but as a hermit I meditate and pray. I would like information to direct my intersessions.
- I am a retired pastor, and I will support my synod with prayer and good will.
- I am a church deacon in a very giving church.
- How we minister to our congregation and to our community.
- good question :-) we give a bunch of money to the synod and try to put on a good game face we try to partner with churches in our area and the pastor tries to support colleagues
- GIFTS??
- Friendly and open to new comers. Poor in sharing Christ's mission. Theologically shallow. We need help.
- For myself I am active in the Women of the ELCA - serving on the SWO board. I am also working with as a Missions Interrupter - telling the story of the church. I work in the church office, so I believe that brings a unique perspective to the table. My personal belief about the church is that we are here to make our communities a better place...to provide not only food assistance, but to be a willing and accepting partner. There are many people in our congregation that also believe that we are here to serve the community, not ourselves/members
- First, our congregation is growing - where others are failing. We have many gifted leaders. Bible study groups and New Life small groups. Through our school we bring many children to Christ. We are a very active congregation with many opportunities to serve.
- First, I bring many gifts to this synod: communication, pastoral care, interim ministry, leadership and teaching. Since I am currently an interim pastor, my congregation is exploring ways to be an asset to this synod with their gifts.
- Financially we support the synod. Participation as members of committees, etc.
- Faithfulness! And a dedication and willingness to share time, energy, and resources to bring Christ to our neighbors, both near and far!
- Experience. Support. We are a positive and healthy congregation that has made some good decisions about transitioning from one pastor to another.
- Even though we are mainly senior citizens, we have many who are interested in continuing education, looking ahead and bringing God, comfort, and guidance and food to those who are in need. We try to bring education in the form of groups, speakers, and interest. Often with only small participation. I would certainly be happy to bring our "Discover Your Ministry" workshop to any synod/congregation that's interested. Pastor is well versed in coaching/preaching when and where. We also have some people versed in strategic planning and collaborating with other congregations. Is there a way to access your office to find ways to present our offerings and maybe for us to learn through others?

- Empathy and administrative abilities but, I am in the process of moving membership away from my current "church family" because of continued conflict and drama despite very real efforts to bridge the gap and to have open honest dialog on issues.
- Connection to the Finnish snowbirds visiting southern Florida.
- Congregation ~ brings a witness to the power of trusting in God, being faithful to our support of mission support during financial crisis. Watch as the Phoenix arises. Personally ~ have the gift of non-anxious presence to help guide through crisis and transition. I have a strong theological foundation and a gift of preaching/teaching.
- Conflict management and understanding of systems. Managing change.
- Community involved pastor who also engages the congregation to be active in all aspects of faith development.
- Can't read this - don't have my magnifying glasses with me.
- bilingualism through mission development
- benevolence
- Being bilingual and multicultural, I believe that I have been gifted with the ability to understand White America and the Other America. Ministry is not my job, but my life. Learning to live out the Gospel of the Risen Christ has taught me how to die to self and live for the higher principles of the Kingdom of God. We need to be a living presence in our world today, the living presence of the Historical Jesus.
- Being a retired pastor's wife, I try daily to proclaim the good news to everyone, whether at home or at synod assembly.
- As an RIC congregation, we are just beginning to chip away at the "us vs. them" philosophy of many congregations. We are all church together. Let us build a house where ALL are named their songs and visions heard and loved and treasured taught and claimed as words within the Word.
- As an ordained pastor for 43 years I bring a love of my Lord and a compassion for His people. I bring continued prayers for all who find themselves in need of God's love shared by all believers.
- As a young --10years old congregation we need to hear more about what we and the synod can do together Beyond the synod assembly and the bishop visiting there is a void. How do we fill that void?
- As a member of St. Mark Lutheran Church, Dunedin, FL and a Lutheran heritage, I favor a feasibility study of planting an orange grove on the vacant lot next to our church. This will be a sampling of old Florida to our increase in visitors. This could be a Junior Achievement or Community Service effort with a roadside juice stand to offset costs. The land could always return to a vacant state for a different project.
- As a leader and active member of a local congregation I strive to become engaged in the wider world to know what is going on look at the shrinking church and work to increase the church.
- An eagerness to join with the Lord as He guides in the doing of marvelous new things for the evangelization of the world!
- Amid the struggle of a seasonal congregation, our congregation has a deep commitment to care for one another as well as outreach to the community. Our greatest challenge is finding ways to channel the individual heartfelt passions of our members into a unified mission/ministry of the congregation for mutual support of the work we do in Jesus name.

- Although we are a small congregation of primarily retirees, the percentage of volunteers is outstanding. I also believe there are some wealthy members who would contribute to ministries and efforts outside the walls of our church once alerted to them.
- After forty years the pace of ministry and not passion for ministry led me to retire fifteen years ago. The last ten of those forty years were in Florida-Bahamas and I served synod in evangelism and leadership development. Since retirement, individual congregations have sought me out and used me. However, even though I offered year after year synod has not called on me even once. It was like when you retire we need you to help with interim ministries and advise us on Fall foliage tours. Now, before our new bishop is installed, I will have turned 78.
- A young committed congregation seeking to outreach to the community seeking to share the ministry of God's love and Christ's ministry.
- A witness to what a safe place is for all peoples. Along with being a small congregation trusting in God's possibilities for mission and ministry.
- A mission outpost where God has planted us...in making a difference and being the "image of Christ" in our community. We are known on the community grapevine as the church that cares/feeds/supports all! Not just its members.
- A life-long love for the God revealed to us through Jesus Christ and an openness for how to best communicate this to those who have not heard or perhaps have misheard the message.
- 1) an active social ministry for and in the community (be doers of the word and not hearers only). 2) a strong sense of good worship and music that has variety and teaches. 3) lay leadership that is as important or more important than a single pastor leadership 4) those who pay the bills need to be inspired and supported in their ministries. 5) mission is the job of the faithful, not some leaders; active "religion" rather than passive "religion".