

2014 Report of Region 8 of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
to Synod Assemblies

For those new to Region 8, the Region is composed of eight synods in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States of America: Northwestern PA Synod, Southwestern PA Synod, Allegheny Synod, Lower Susquehanna Synod, Upper Susquehanna Synod, DE/MD Synod, Metropolitan Washington DC Synod, and WV/WMD Synod. On this territory, we find a wide variety of ministry locations: the region is composed of nearly 1100 congregations and nearly 453,000 baptized members with three major urban centers: Washington, DC, Baltimore and Pittsburgh, as well as many mid-sized cities and suburbs, and numerous town and country parishes (some dating to pre-Revolutionary War days). Region 8 also includes numerous institutional expressions of mission and ministry: the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, (the first and oldest Lutheran Seminary in North America) founded in 1826; three colleges of our Church: Gettysburg, Susquehanna and Thiel, eight outdoor ministry sites and numerous expressions of social services, schools and advocacy ministries.

While no one particularly enjoys reading constitutions and by-laws, it is important for churchwide, synodical and congregational leaders to ground their understandings of regions using Chapter 18 of the ELCA Constitution which defines regions “as a partnership between groups of synods and the churchwide organization for the purpose of exercising mutual responsibilities,” (August 2013 ELCA Constitution, 18.01, p. 141), going on to state that the function of the “regions shall be a means for coordinated responses by synods and the churchwide organization to mission and program opportunities within the region,” (18.11.11, p. 141).

Keeping all of that in mind – along with the Region 8 bishops perspective that it is not the region that creates program, but, that the region works with programs that others recognize as valuable to fulfill the Constitution’s description of the Region’s role – what follows is a brief description of several activities here in Region 8.

While not all regions operate in this manner, Region 8 finds value in cooperating on some key aspects of the First Call Theological Education (FCTE) program. Primarily this means the planning and implementing of a Region 8 FCTE Annual Conference; the office works with a Region-wide advisory council in planning. I also take primary responsibility for the details to arrange this event – from publicity to contracts to registration to evaluation to hospitality. In addition to the conference, each synod also provides more contextual opportunity.

In addition to my service at every synod’s candidacy committee meeting, I serve as the ‘go to’ person for all things candidacy. This varies from month to month, but, includes arranging Theological Review Panels and Competency Assessment Panels (as well as the follow-up report writing) and responding to the particular questions that often stymie synod staff people. Each year we hold a Region-wide candidacy gathering for each synod’s candidacy staff and committee chair person; also invited are any number of colleagues in ministry from across the region. In 2013 we utilized the skill of several LTSG colleagues to discuss the implications for the candidacy of the changed Association of Theological Schools’ guidelines for Masters of Divinity degrees. This resulted in the agreement to work cooperatively on a Region 8 project in the areas of candidacy and theological education. Region 8 bishops totally support this ongoing work and we anticipate having a plan in place by early 2015.

I give thanks to God for the many talented colleagues in ministry throughout Region 8 who volunteer their time in service of the ministry of the Gospel on our territory; my colleagues in ministry who serve on synod staff also willingly offer their numerous gifts and talents in our shared work and I express not only my thanks to God for these partners, I thank you for your support of their work here in Region 8.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy E. Gable, Diaconal Minister,
Coordinator for Missional Leadership - Region 8