

Report of the Director for Evangelical Mission

The Rev. Dr. Philip C. Hirsch, Assistant to the Bishop

This year our team visited over 50 Church Council's for the New Connection's Campaign. Leaders overwhelmingly agree that connecting with new people needs to be a priority for the church. This is both the calling of Christ who said 'Go and make disciples' and the need of congregations that have seen a long trend of decline. (See the State of Congregation data at the end of this report and a separate report on New Connections).

Mostly, I believe we have something good and life giving to offer an increasingly disconnected and skeptical society and it is as simple and profound as: Hope, faith, and most importantly love. This is the great calling of Christ and the work of the local congregations.

How we make connections, build relationships, include new people into the life of our ministries is the pressing question. It happens best when councils and pastors make it a stated goal for the congregation. **When leaders agree and work toward a goal, they are more likely to reach it.**

Help to reach out

To support congregations efforts to reach new people, the synod has offered three Evangelism Workshops (E-vents) and Three Stewardship Trainings with Mike Ward. We took a group to see a growing multi-ethnic congregation in Cleveland OH and are partnering with www.Mosaix.info to help our congregations be more intentional about becoming more diverse. There will be a workshop at the Assembly on this topic and more to come next fall.

Want a Coach?

Most leaders understand the benefit of having a coach help them prioritize and achieve what God is calling them to do. Thanks to the Rev. Dr. Nathan Swenson-Reinhold we now have a vibrant coaching ministry. We are now offering coaching to Church Council's to help set goals and take steps to achieve them. These simple practices are often what makes the difference in getting a congregation moving forward.

www.metroccoaches.com

Leadership Training

How do pastors help shift a congregation's culture to focus more outwardly on welcoming and including new people? How can new leaders be brought along and empowered to take leadership and do the same with others? These are the focus of the second series of workshops by Brian Zehr. More than 20 pastoral leaders are currently enrolled.

This is a report of the state of the congregations in our Synod:

There are 74 Communities of Faith (71 Congregations + 3 SAWCs Synodically Authorized Worshipping Community)

12 Growing (or over 200 in worship and stable)

35 Stable (>50 in worship, few signs of impending financial peril)

27 Declining or small (<50 in worship, cannot fully fund a FT pastor)

25 report less than 50 in average worship attendance:

Of these: 12 have part time pastors and many of the remaining 13, significantly underpay their full-time staff.

2 are re-building sanctuaries and will need significant redevelopment of the congregations

St. Matthew's in DC

Christ in Bethesda, MD

I would like to acknowledge and thank The Rev. Anteneh Gebreselassie, Coordinator for African National Ministries and The Rev. Jeanette Leisk and the Rev. Mark Olson and members of the New and Renewing Missions and the Stewardship and Mission Support Tables for their faithful work and joyful partnership.

Thank you especially to my co-workers in the Synod Office: Bishop Dick Graham, The Rev. Leila Ortiz, Julie Hamre, Katharyn Wheeler, Christy Hardigan, Katie Simbala and Karen Kruger.

In Christ,

Pastor Philip C. Hirsch