

**Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod Bishop Election Report**  
**Research and Evaluation**  
**Office of the Presiding Bishop**  
**January 2019**

Territory

The Metro DC Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America covers 2,155 square miles. Geographically, it ranks 58th out of the 65 synods in the ELCA. The smallest area covered by a synod is the Saint Paul Area, 1,535 square miles; the largest area covered is Alaska, 571,951 square miles. The median territory covered is 22,000 miles. Twenty synods in the ELCA cover 10,000 square miles or less. Figure 1 shows the territory covered for Metro DC, its neighboring synods and two synods of comparable worship attendance.

**Figure 1: Territory of the Synods in Square Miles**

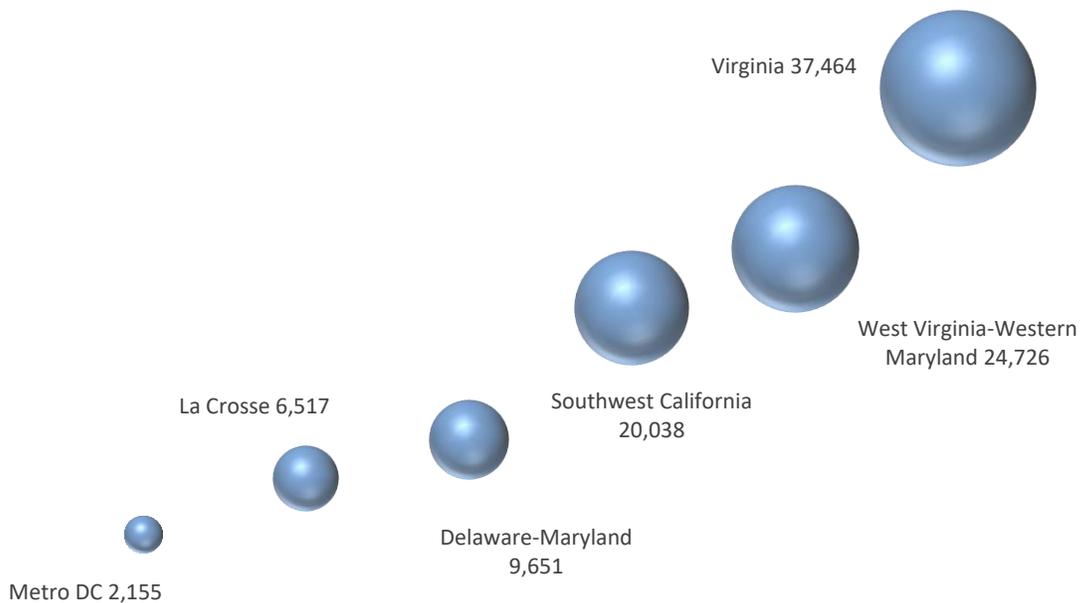
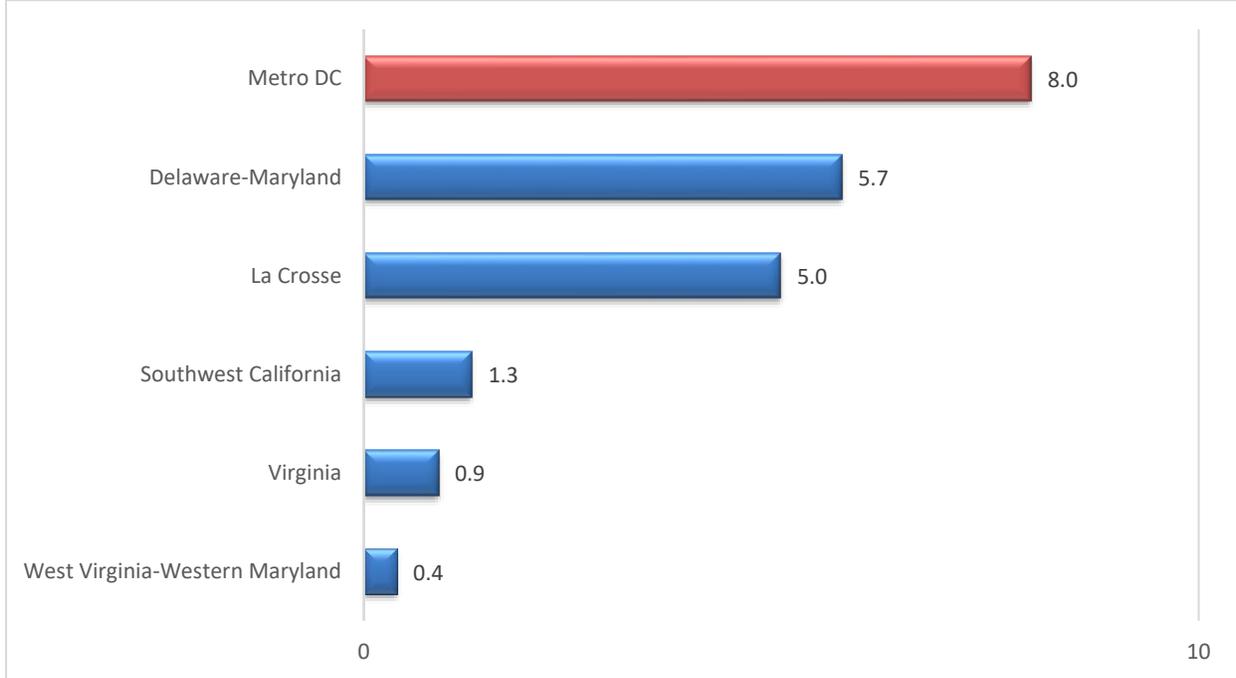


Figure 2 shows the number of Lutherans per square mile in Metro DC and the other synods analyzed for this report. There were 26,992 baptized ELCA Lutherans in the Metro DC Synod in 2017, which is eight baptized members per square mile. Delaware-Maryland and La Crosse have five to six baptized members per square mile. Southwest California and Virginia have about one baptized member per square mile. West Virginia-Western Maryland has less than one baptized member per square mile.

According to the 2010 US Census, the population of the territory of the Metro DC Synod was 5,007,982. The 2018 estimate is 5,541,618, and the population is predicted to be 5,832,741 by 2023. Baptized ELCA Lutherans account for 0.5 percent of the population currently. In 2000, ELCA Lutherans accounted for 0.9 percent of the population (39,263 baptized members out of 4,343,417 people). Since 2010, the population of the Metro DC Synod has increased 11 percent while the baptized membership of ELCA congregations has decreased 18 percent.

**Figure 2: Baptized ELCA Lutherans per Square Mile**



**Baptized Membership and Worship Attendance**

At the end of 2017, the Metro DC Synod had 72 congregations. In 2007, there were 80.

In 2017, the baptized membership of the synod was 26,992 or an average of 375 per congregation. The average number of baptized members in a congregation in the ELCA was 383. Also, in 2017, the congregations of the synod baptized 312 children and 25 adults while also affirming the faith of 325 adults.

In 2017, the aggregate weekly worship attendance in the synod was 7,787 (29% of the baptized members) with an average of 109 in worship per congregation. The average weekly attendance for a typical congregation in the ELCA in 2017 was 98 or 26 percent of the baptized. Table 1 shows average weekly attendance for Metro DC, the other synods used for comparison in this report and the ELCA.

**Table 1: Average Weekly Attendance 2017**

Synod	Average Weekly Attendance	Percentage of Baptized Members Attending Worship
Southwest California	9,360	35.5%
Virginia	11,221	34.5%
<b>Metro DC</b>	<b>7,787</b>	<b>28.9%</b>
Delaware-Maryland	14,913	27.0%
West Virginia-Western Maryland	2,460	23.7%
La Crosse Area	6,658	20.3%
<b>ELCA</b>	<b>899,000</b>	<b>26.0%</b>

Sixty-one percent of the congregations in the Metro DC Synod had 100 people or fewer attending worship during an average week in 2017 (see Figure 3) while these same congregations accounted for 31 percent of all worshipers in the synod. Forty-six percent of the people in the pews are in congregations worshipping more than 150 people; these congregations account for 20 percent of all the congregations in the synod. Lord of Life in Fairfax, St. Luke in Silver Spring and Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in McLean all have 300 or more people attending worship in a typical week. In 2007, the aggregate weekly worship attendance in the synod was 11,071. The average number attending worship during an average week per congregation in 2007 was 145. Since 2007, the percentage of congregations with 50 or fewer in worship has increased from 20 percent to 32 percent. The number of congregations worshipping over 200 per week has decreased from 23 percent to 13 percent in the same time frame.

**Figure 3: Percent of Congregations and Worshipers by Typical Worship Attendance for the Congregations of the Metro DC Synod in 2017**

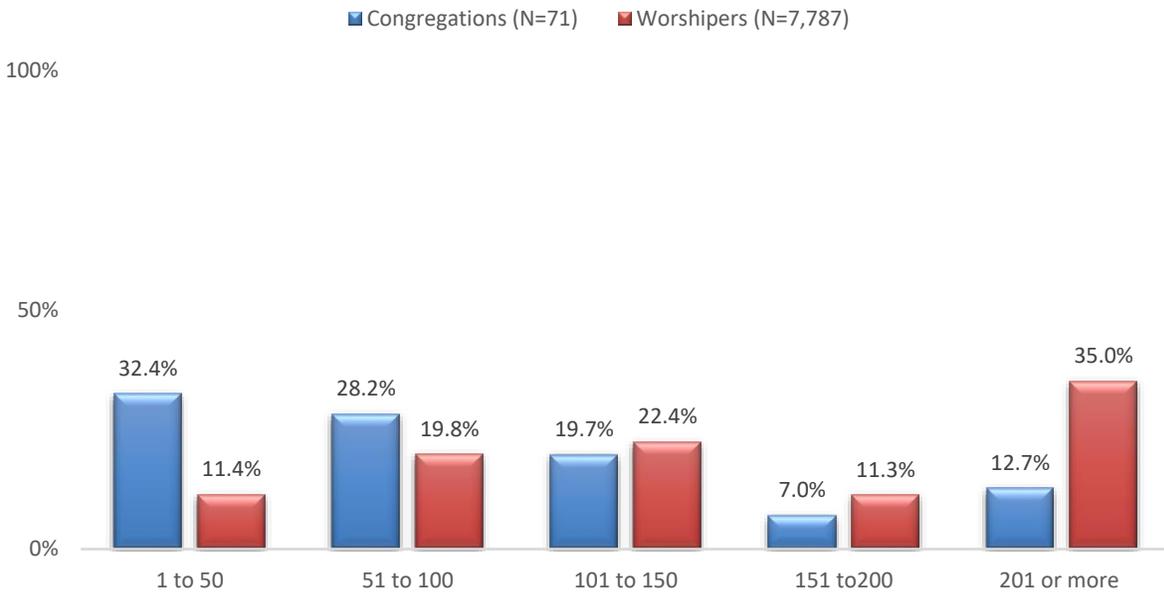
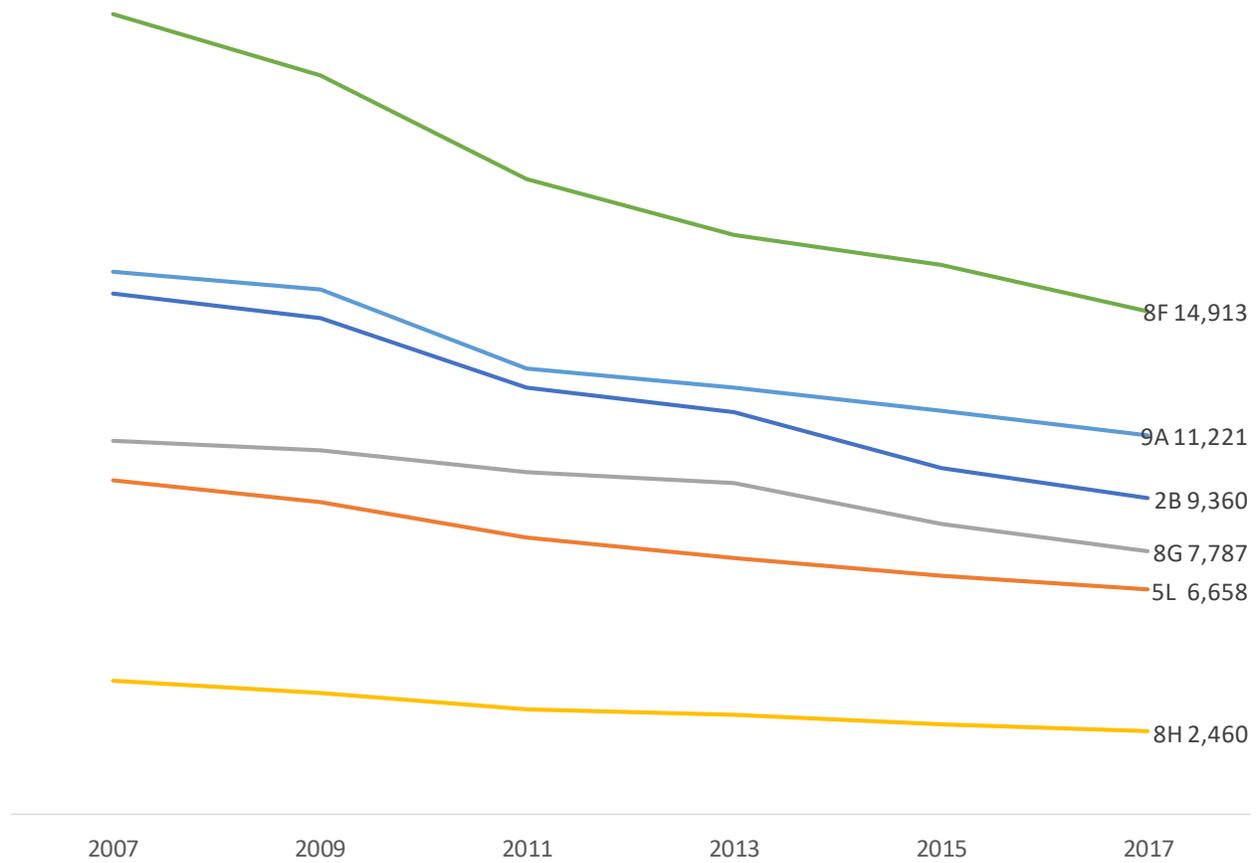


Figure 4 presents the trend in worship attendance for the Metro DC Synod and the other synods referenced in this report for 2007 to 2017. All synods have seen declines in the past ten years: Southwest California -39%, West Virginia-Western Maryland -38%, Delaware-Maryland -37%, La Crosse Area -33%, Virginia and Metro DC -30%. The decline in average attendance for the ELCA from 2007 to 2017 was -34%.

**Figure 4: Change in Worship Attendance from 2007 to 2017**



**Giving**

Total giving (undesignated and designated giving) from the members of the Metro DC Synod in 2017 was \$29,229,863; the average amount given per attendee was \$3,754 (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Total Giving per Worship Attendee**

Synod	Total Giving Per Worship Attendee - 2007 <sup>1</sup>	Total Giving Per Worship Attendee - 2017
<b>Metro DC</b>	<b>\$3,207</b>	<b>\$3,754</b>
Virginia	\$2,213	\$2,479
Delaware-Maryland	\$2,031	\$2,337
SW California	\$2,195	\$2,124
West Virginia-Western Maryland	\$1,875	\$1,952
La Crosse	\$1,512	\$1,808
ELCA	<b>\$1,996</b>	<b>\$2,289</b>

<sup>1</sup> Adjusted for inflation to reflect 2017 dollars. The actual amount for Metro DC in 2007 was \$2,714.

In 2007, total giving to the congregations in the synod was \$30,052,185 (\$35,510,837 in 2017 dollars). The average amount given per worship attendee in 2007 was \$2,714 (\$3,207 in 2017 dollars). Despite giving more, these attendees have been unable to offset losses due to the overall decline in worship attendance.

Operating expenses in the synod have increased as a percentage of total giving from 81 percent in 2007 to 89 percent in 2017.

Mission support is the amount of money shared through congregations for the ministry of synods and the ELCA churchwide expression. Table 3 presents mission support both as a percentage of undesignated giving from congregations and per average attendee. The congregations of the Metro DC Synod share 0.6 percent more of their regular giving as mission support than the ELCA as a whole. The average attendee shares \$88 more per year (Metro DC \$195, ELCA \$107).

**Table 3: Mission Support as a Percentage of Congregational Undesignated Giving and per Worship Attendee - 2017**

Synod	Percentage of Congregational Undesignated Giving for Mission Support	Mission Support per Worship Attendee
<b>Metro DC</b>	<b>6.07%</b>	<b>\$195</b>
West Virginia-Western Maryland	9.79%	\$172
Virginia	6.98%	\$147
Delaware-Maryland	5.99%	\$122
La Crosse	7.46%	\$118
SW California	5.82%	\$110
<b>ELCA</b>	<b>5.49%</b>	<b>\$107</b>

The Synod Office and Its Financial Resources

Section 10.21. of the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* outlines the primary purposes of synod offices.

10.21. Each synod, in partnership with the churchwide organization, shall bear primary responsibility for the oversight of the life and mission of this church in its territory. In fulfillment of this role and consistent with policies and procedures of this church, the synod shall:

- a. Provide for pastoral care of congregations and rostered leaders in the synod;
- b. Plan for, facilitate, and nurture the mission of this church through congregations;
- c. Strengthen interdependent relationships among congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization, and foster relationships with agencies and institutions affiliated with or related to this church as well as ecumenical partners.
- d. Interpret the work of this church to congregations and to the public on the territory of the synod.

Despite the consistency of responsibilities, the amount of money available to synod offices to carry out these responsibilities varies widely. Table 4 shows mission support figures for the synods referenced in this report. It also should be noted that Metro DC is part of the Mission Support Experiment and is retaining mission support for congregational vitality grants and the salary of the Director for Evangelical

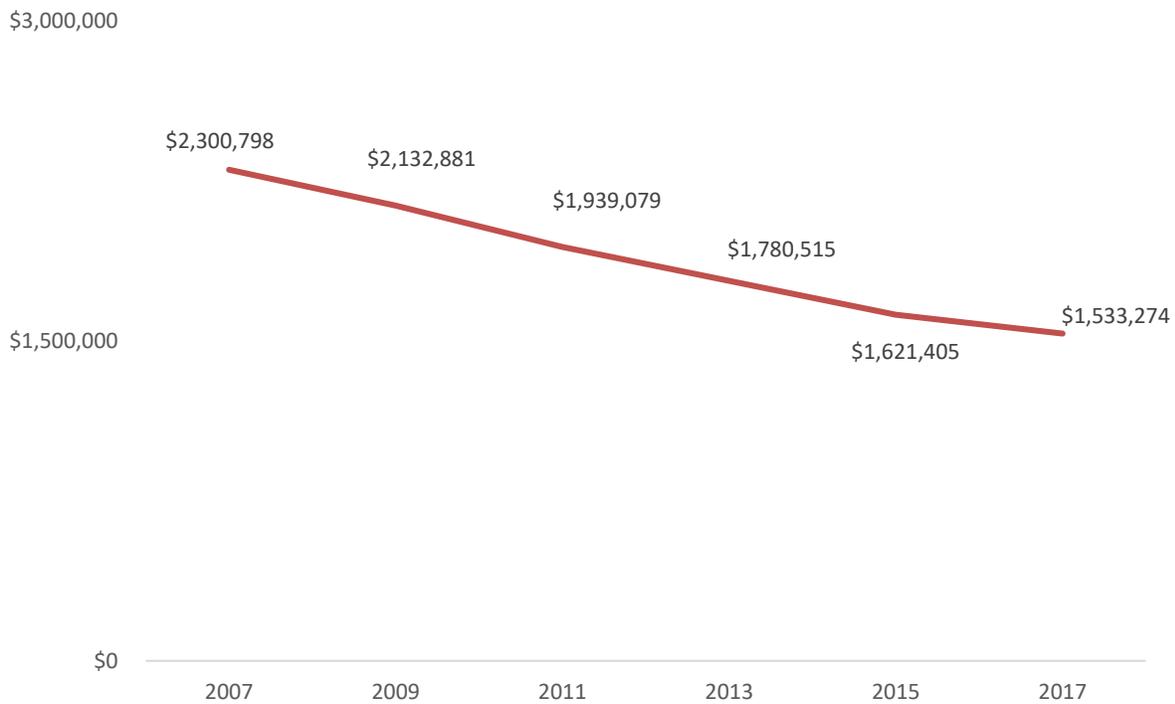
Mission. In 2015, prior to the start of the experiment, the Metro DC Synod shared 50 percent of its mission support with the churchwide organization.

**Table 4: Mission Support in 2017**

Synod	From Congregations	Percent to Churchwide	Amount to Churchwide	Amount Remaining in the Synod
SW California	\$985,326	50.00%	\$492,663	\$492,663
La Crosse	\$779,618	50.00%	\$389,809	\$389,809
<b>Metro DC</b>	<b>\$1,533,274</b>	<b>35.00%</b>	<b>\$536,646</b>	<b>\$996,628</b>
West Virginia-Western Maryland	\$416,763	33.30%	\$138,782	\$277,981
Virginia	\$847,738	50.00%	\$423,869	\$423,869
Delaware-Maryland	\$1,859,866	50.00%	\$929,933	\$929,933
<b>ELCA</b>	<b>\$94,375,013</b>	<b>47.06%</b>	<b>\$44,412,881</b>	<b>\$49,962,132</b>

Figure 5 presents the amount of mission support income shared with the Metro DC Synod office from the congregations of the synod from 2007 to 2017.

**Figure 5: Congregational Giving to Mission Support for the Metro DC Synod from 2007 to 2017<sup>2</sup>**



<sup>2</sup> These figures have been adjusted for inflation to reflect 2017 dollars. The actual dollar amount in 2007 was \$1,070,918.