

Report of the Director for Evangelical Mission
The Rev. Dr. Philip C. Hirsch, Assistant to the Bishop

The Holy Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth.

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

There are 77 Communities of Faith (75 Congregations + 2 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)

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

Analysis of 30 Declining or small Congregations:

4 are larger congregations that have been in significant decline over 3 or more years.

26 report less than 50 in average worship attendance:

Bethel, Lovettsville VA*

Zion, Lovettsville VA*

Epiphany, Dale City VA*

Messiah, Alexandria VA*

Nativity, Alexandria VA

Epiphany, Alexandria VA

Advent, Arlington VA

Hope, Annandale, VA

Epiphany, Burtonsville MD*

La Sagrada Familia, Langley Park MD*

Christ, Bethesda MD*

Hope, College Park MD*

Abiding Presence, Beltsville MD*

Hope, Clinton MD

St. John's, Riverdale MD

St. Luke's Derwood MD

Good Samaritan, Lanham MD

Zion, Tacoma Park MD

Living Faith, Rockville, MD

Community of Christ, Washington DC (Closing)

Holy Comforter DC*

St. Matthew's DC*

Grace, DC*

Our Redeemer, DC

Georgetown Lutheran, DC

Peace, Bermuda

2 of 30 are thinking about or planning to close or merge:
Community of Christ in Washington DC is voting to close in 2016
Epiphany, Dale City is voting on merging or closing in June 2016

2 of 30 are re-building sanctuaries and will need significant redevelopment of the congregations
St. Matthew's in DC
Christ in Bethesda, MD

Most have a part time pastor* or are significantly underpaying the full time pastor

My efforts this year have been focused on the work that is reflected in the Report of the New and Renewing Missions Table and the Stewardship and Mission Support Table. Additionally I have been working on the following initiatives;

1. The New Connections campaign. An effort to help every congregation find new ways to reach new people with the hope of the gospel. There will be a lot more at the assembly.
1. Evangelism Workshops were offered in fall of 2015 and we will be inviting all leaders involved in outreach or evangelism to attend a workshop with Bill Tenny-Brittian in 2016 or 2017.
2. Stewardship Workshops were also offered twice in 2016. In 2017 we will host a gathering with Clif Christopher who wrote "Not Your Parents Offering Plate" Day is being determined.
3. Leadership Initiative: A series of workshops will be held beginning in the fall of 2015 for pastors who will learn how to lead new ministries in their congregations. This training is being conducted by Intentional Impact, a group that has worked with the Metro Chicago Synod in a similar way. It is being supported, in part, with Bethany Funds.

I would like to acknowledge and thank The Rev. Anteneh Gebreselassie, Coordinator for African National Ministries and The Rev. Shannon Anderson who is the program associate for supported congregations. I am also grateful for the work of The Rev. Joe Vought, The Rev. Jeanette Leisk and the members of the New and Renewing Missions and the Stewardship and Mission Support Tables for their faithful work and joyful partnership.

Most especially, I find deep joy, laughter and determined persistent grace filled work among my colleagues in the Synod Office: Bishop Dick Graham, The Rev. Amy Thompson Sevimli, Katharyn Wheeler, Maddie Tallman and Karen Kruger.

In Christ, Pastor Philip C. Hirsch