

Report of Region 8 of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
to 2011 Synod Assemblies

Perhaps it is time for a review of exactly what Region 8 is, and, what it does. While no one particularly enjoys reading constitutions and by-laws, it is important for 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 2009 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).

Building on this understanding, Region 8 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 plethora of ministry locations: the region is composed of nearly 1150 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. From open farm land, to the industries of coal and steel, to the centers of government, culture, society and education, the region encompasses a great variety of people, places and issues. The industrial, mining and farming communities have seen declines in population; yet, the cities have seen significant growth, including African American, Latino and African immigrant population increases. This experience is mirrored in the Lutheran Church in this region.

The partnership between the Region’s synods is expressed in many practical ways. **First**, and perhaps foremost, is the area of the identification and nurture of rostered church leaders. Dedicated and talented folks involved in this work guide and lead folks from the earliest stage of candidacy through the time of First Call in service. In my role as Coordinator, I serve as the ELCA representative for this work, providing education and guidance for an interdependent process. **Second**, and a less apparent to the casual observer, is the area of campus ministry activities that occur on our numerous public university campuses. Ministry leaders in this highly specialized venue of ministry service are really mission developers, guiding young adults through an important part of adult faith formation. **Third**, is the partnership we enjoy in the work of the collection and maintenance of our denominational history here in the Region. Because of our geography and history we have two locations for Region 8 Archives; the East location is carried out in partnership with the LTSG archives program. The West location is supported through the efforts of archivists at Thiel College. **Fourth**, is collaboration with other churchwide staff, such as our eight Directors for Evangelical Mission, who work in areas of mission development and re-development within each synod in Region 8. Additional dimensions of this collaboration with churchwide staff is seen through the annual Region 8 Global Mission, World Hunger, and Companion Synods gathering; and, it is seen in the important conversations about mission support to both churchwide and more local agencies that are understood best as an interdependent network of synods.

The coming year promises to be one where we in Region 8 seek appropriate balance between carrying forward what have been helpful and beneficial ministry activities while exploring and engaging in new opportunities for cooperative ministry. There is a good spirit among the leaders of the Region who are committed to the mission of the ELCA and who desire to find ways to embody that mission, particularly in the area of campus ministry and candidacy.

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