

## **Ministry Through the Synod**

The word 'synod' comes from two Greek words 'syn' and 'hodos', which mean 'together way'. It is through the synod that congregations walk together and carry out the mission of the ELCIC within BC, across Canada and around the world. There is strength in our unity. We create the opportunity to do together what we cannot do alone.

*For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them:*

*Romans 12:4-5*

God calls us to be disciples and to share the gospel. We have the opportunity to do that firsthand at the congregational level. We have the opportunity to support other hands doing that with us at the synodical and church wide levels.

### **What does the synod do?**

The BC Synod does what congregations cannot do individually. It provides leadership for Lutherans in BC, assists congregations in their ministries, and carries out other ministries on behalf of congregations. The synod has the responsibility to:

#### **Develop and revitalize missions**

The ELCIC is a Church in mission. The Evangelical Declaration states that we 'commit ourselves as church to respond faithfully, promptly and flexibly to the many opportunities for mission'. Your generous support has provided funding for these mission projects in the last two years:

Shepherd of the Valley, Comox (mission congregation), Christ the King, Surrey, Surrey Urban Mission (at Christ the King), Lutheran Urban Mission Society (downtown Vancouver), Lord of Life, Sandspit (Queen Charlotte Islands), Oakridge Lutheran (cross-cultural ministry).

We celebrate the fact that two mission congregations have recently come off mission support. King of Life, Coquitlam was founded as a mission outreach in 1983 and is now a flourishing and growing ministry, reaching out to many families in the community. Hills of Peace, Kamloops is experiencing similar growth and vitality after being supported and nurtured by you as a mission congregation since 1978.

Your synod Missions Committee would like to develop new ministries and revitalize existing ministries. It has drafted a Mission Outreach Manual, which suggests ways for your congregation to receive support for new mission projects.

#### **Provide training for leaders in the congregation**

Together with the other three western synods, we own and support the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Saskatoon. We continue to train and educate pastors according to our strong academic tradition and thus provide congregations with the best pastoral care available. Your CTCL (Committee for Theological Education and Leadership) works together with congregations to recruit, approve, supervise and support ministerial candidates.

We have also identified lay leadership training as a priority. Synod programming continues to focus on learning opportunities such as “The Priesthood of all Leaders”, our leadership development day held last spring. Our Minister of Youth provides leadership training opportunities for young people. ‘Stewards of Grace’, our synod learning event for clergy and lay leaders in 2003, will present stewardship as a much broader theme than the traditional approach. In addition, we are working together with the Anglican Diocese of New Westminster to provide workshops that support congregational leaders and their ministry.

### **Address faith and justice issues**

As a Gospel people, we are called to engage in advocacy for justice and peace, to feed the hungry and to work toward a more equitable distribution of resources. The synod Faith and Society Committee works to raise awareness among our members about vital justice issues, so that we can discern an appropriate response in light of our Christian principles.

As a synod, we speak out collectively about what we believe is God’s vision for humanity. When we join our voices with our ecumenical brothers and sisters, the message rings even louder. Recent examples include our response to the Treaty Referendum on Aboriginal Land Claims. At the national and international level, we participated in the Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative (CEJI), a campaign launched in 1998 to cancel the external debts of the world’s 50 poorest nations. Canadian churches gathered over 635,000 signatures nationwide. This campaign played a major role in leading the federal government to cancel all bilateral debts owed by a selected group of Highly Indebted Poor Countries (Since then the US, France, and Britain have followed suit).

### **Establish and support specialized ministries**

Christ calls us to minister to all people in all places. Through the synod we reach out beyond our congregations to establish and support many specialized ministries. These include ministry to children, families and youth (outdoor ministries, campus ministry and confirmation camp), ministry to the impoverished and neglected (Lutheran Urban Mission Society and Surrey Urban Mission), ministry to the sick and infirm (hospital ministry), ministry to the imprisoned (prison ministry) as well as pastoral counseling and spiritual direction.

### **Identify and develop programs and resources**

Congregations are always looking for resources, which enable them to minister more effectively. Participating together as a church community, we share and develop educational programs and resources grounded in our theology.

*Partners in Faith:* a program initiated by the national church to unite church and family as partners in ‘passing on the faith’. A resource person is available in each synod to work with congregations to this end. Synods have held conferences on this theme and recently two BC congregations have covenanted with the national church to be teaching resource congregations. (Mt. Olive, Surrey and Peace, Vernon).

*Minister of Youth:* identifies resources and provides training for youth and youth leaders.

*Learning Ministries:* our synod learning ministries coordinator trains and provides up-to-date resources that strengthen congregational education programs.

*Stewardship Consultant:* assists congregations with stewardship education and resources.

*Director of Ministries:* works with synod committees and resource people to identify and develop resources; assists congregations to access these resources.

*Confirmation Camp:* synod pastors organize this event as way to strengthen community and identity among Lutheran youth.

*Kairos:* jointly we support this coalition of Canadian religious organizations that promotes human rights, justice and peace and addresses ecological issues. Kairos develops new resource materials annually and regularly updates its excellent website [www.kairoscanada.org](http://www.kairoscanada.org)

## **Communicate and Implement Ideas**

Your synod is a gathering point for new and creative ideas that shape and direct our church. These new ideas are shared at synod and national church meetings and gatherings. Youth events, conference and synod conventions are forums in which we come together as a community to worship, renew and direct our collective ministry efforts. Synod council, program committees on Missions, Faith & Society, Stewardship, Youth, Worship, Theological Education and Leadership, the Lutheran Student Foundation, the Evangelical Lutheran Women (ELW) all meet to discuss how we might best carry out God's work in this time and place.

The Director of Ministries and synod staff provide a central hub where information and resources are gathered and communicated. We continue to develop and encourage use of our communications tools: the BC Synod website [www.bcsynod.org](http://www.bcsynod.org), the BC Synod News newsletter and "Gracewords" email forum. Through these tools, we communicate information, ideas, plans and events throughout our church community.

## **Strengthen partnerships with national and global church bodies**

As members of the ELCIC, we are involved in national and international church witness through programs such as the Global Hunger and Development Appeal (GHDA). Among other priorities, GHDA funds domestic projects that address poverty in Canada and through Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR) it helps fund development programming and overseas relief.

We also support missionaries abroad, and now through the Good News Partner program, missionaries to Canada. Rev. Etienne Fombgami and his family have come from Cameroon to spend three years in Canada proclaiming the gospel across the ELCIC. Another recent initiative set up and facilitated by the National Office is the Companion Synod Program, whereby each synod can enter into a covenant relationship with one of the ELCIC's Partner Churches. The BC Synod voted in convention to pursue this opportunity with the Peruvian Evangelical Lutheran Church.

We witness through participation in ecumenical groups such as Kairos, the Church Council on Justice and Corrections, and the Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada. As a member of the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) the ELCIC presented a submission to the Romanow Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada. Also, through the CCC, we intervened in the 'oncomouse' patent case before the Supreme Court of Canada in May 2002.

Congregations in shared ministry with the Anglican and/or United Church are grassroots examples of ecumenical partnership. At the 2001 national convention, BC synod members representing all our congregations were among the delegates who voted overwhelmingly to approve the Waterloo Declaration, which means the ELCIC is now in full communion with the Anglican Church of Canada.

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) binds together more than 65 million Lutherans from 133 member churches. This global Lutheran community extends our reach as the BC Synod to participate in areas of common interest such as ecumenical relations, theology, humanitarian assistance, human rights, communication and the various aspects of mission and development work. In July 2003 the ELCIC hosts the LWF Assembly in Winnipeg.

### **Nurture the identity, unity and vision of the ELCIC**

Congregations are joined together as one under the direction of synod bishop, Gerhard Preibisch. The Bishop bears responsibility for the proclamation of the Word of God and faithful administration of the sacraments; is responsible for ordination to ministry of Word and Sacrament and consecration of diaconal ministers; guides the call of pastors who serve the church and cares for the well-being of all synod ministers and congregations. The Bishop further supports the people of God by listening to their concerns and encouraging them in their witness as members of the body of Christ. The bishop consults regularly with the other synod officers and synod council. All five synod bishops work together with the National Bishop Ray Schultz to nurture the identity and unity of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. Bishops hold up before us the vision of the whole church and remind us of our responsibility to be faithful to the Gospel as communities within the household of God.

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