

**Board for National Mission
Policies for the Office of National Mission
Under
The Seven Mission Priorities
of
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
Adopted October 2020**

Introduction

Bearing in mind our common and unwavering doctrinal subscription in Article II of the Constitution of the The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and the provisions set forth in the bylaws of the Synod, the Board for National Mission establishes the following policies for the Office of National Mission under the mission emphases and priorities established by the Synod in convention.

Mission Priority 1

Plant, sustain, and revitalize Lutheran churches

Preamble

The Board for National Mission establishes policy for the Office of National Mission to assist districts and congregations through their districts in planting, sustaining, and revitalizing Lutheran congregations around Luther's seven marks of the Church: the preaching and teaching of God's entire Word, Holy Baptism, Holy Absolution, Holy Communion, called pastors, public prayer and thanksgiving, and faithful suffering under the cross of Christ (AE, Vol. 41; p. 148-165). Word and sacrament ministry is central to planting, sustaining, and revitalizing congregations, in order to reach the lost and bring them into the fellowship of saving faith. Where Christians faithfully and regularly receive the means of grace in the Divine Service, they are sustained in their faith and live out their faith in Christ in loving service to God and their neighbor in their respective callings. Lutheran congregations encourage the baptized faithful to continue to grow in Christ through the ongoing reception of the Lord's Word and sacraments; through ongoing catechesis, increasing opportunities for Bible study and prayer; through the mutual conversation and consolation of Christian brothers and sisters; and by faithfully bearing witness to Christ in their various stations in life. Lutheran congregations encourage their members to confess the goodness of God's created order and to love God's design for marriage and family, affording the baptized faithful opportunities to bear witness to their Creator and Savior by serving all people in need with the mercy of Christ. Lutheran congregations seek fraternal support from the church-at-large and willingly receive loving consultation from other pastors, circuit visitors and district officials.

Policy

1. Support of Districts

- a. The ONM will work with districts to develop activities, services and resources to assist districts and coordinate collaboration among districts as they network with their congregations and schools in ministry and outreach to all people.
- b. The ONM will aid districts in recognizing, promoting, expressing, conserving and defending their confessional unity in the true faith (Constitution Art. III [6] [7]).

2. Outreach, Church Planting and Church Multiplying:

- a. The ONM will partner with districts to encourage congregations and their leaders to work in cooperation with other congregations and their circuits to determine opportunities to multiply churches locally among all people.
- b. The ONM will partner with districts and congregations through their districts to develop witness and mercy opportunities that will lead to the establishment of Word and Sacrament ministry in all settings, including Rural/Small Town and Urban/Inner City locations and locations with diverse cultures.

3. Revitalization:

- a. The ONM, in cooperation with districts, will provide congregations with avenues, activities, services and resources for strengthening their witness to the Gospel, their mercy toward all their neighbors and their life together to help expand the work of the Gospel through their active and vibrant ministry in all settings, including Rural/Small Town and Urban/Inner City and locations with diverse cultures.

4. Care for LCMS young adults as they transition from dependency to independence:

- a. The ONM will support development of intentional ministries to LCMS young adults as they leave their homes and congregations for college or career so that young adults may affirm the dignity of all people from all cultures.
- b. The ONM will encourage districts to urge parish pastors and congregations to maintain contact with parishioners who serve in our Armed Forces and the respective “contact congregations” near the military bases where they are stationed.
- c. The ONM will encourage and support campus ministry and Gospel outreach to both domestic and international students and faculty.
- d. The ONM, in cooperation with districts, will provide congregations in campus ministry settings with avenues for strengthening their witness to the Gospel, their mercy toward their neighbor and their life together to help expand the work of the Gospel through their active and vibrant ministry.
- e. The ONM partners with districts to develop witness and mercy opportunities that will lead to the establishment of Word and Sacrament ministry in campus ministry settings.

5. Cross-Cultural Missions & Ministry in the United States

- a. The ONM partners with districts, congregations through their districts, RSOs, LCMS educational institutions and auxiliaries to develop and maintain Word and Sacrament ministry within cross-cultural groups, with initial consideration given to current demographics.
- b. The ONM partners with districts, congregations, RSOs, LCMS educational institutions and auxiliaries to develop and maintain Word and Sacrament ministry ~~Black and Hispanic populations~~ with people of all cultures.
- c. The ONM partners with districts, congregations, RSOs, LCMS educational institutions and auxiliaries to identify prejudice and injustice wherever it occurs and work to correct them.

6. Worship:

- a. The ONM through the districts will encourage congregations to strive for uniformity in the liturgical practice of the congregations while continuing their appreciation of some variety of responsible practices and customs across different cultural groups that are in harmony with our common profession of faith.
- b. The ONM will embrace, recognize and pursue opportunities to provide teaching, resources and events to deepen a Lutheran understanding of worship and to encourage congregations to strive for uniformity in worship practice.
- c. The ONM, through the districts, will encourage members of the Synod to use exclusively doctrinally pure agenda, hymnbooks and catechisms in church and school (Art. VI, 4).
- d. The ONM will recognize and honor the need for our congregations to earnestly seek to be faithful in our rich worship heritage while at the same time welcoming, where appropriate, doctrinally faithful worship using “new song” that clearly proclaims the Word.
- e. The ONM will foster a Lutheran perspective of the church’s worship life throughout the Synod, where the accent remains solidly on the action of the Holy Trinity for our salvation within the Divine Service, prayer offices and family devotions.

Mission Priority 2

Support and expand theological education

Preamble

The Board for National Mission establishes policy for the Office of National Mission to support district and congregational ministries which provide for and enhance ongoing theological education for individuals, families and church workers. Such education will include a focus on the application of the Lutheran Confessions to contemporary life and a defense of the Christian faith against challenges from current societal trends. The Office of National Mission will also endeavor to increase communication and build cooperative relationships between ministry areas under the ONM and the Recognized Service Organizations of the Synod which share allied interests with those ministry areas in supporting and expanding theological education.

Policy

1. The ONM will provide resources to districts to aid in recognizing, promoting, expressing, conserving and defending their confessional unity in the true faith (Constitution, Art. III [6][7]).
2. The ONM will provide resources and continuing education opportunities to develop Lutheran pastors, school teachers, administrators, leaders and other church workers who are both knowledgeable and competent to confess and teach the doctrine and practice of the LCMS as it is taught in the Holy Scriptures and confessed in the Lutheran Confessions and the Constitution, Bylaws and resolutions of the Synod.
3. The ONM will collaborate with the Concordia University System in providing resources to aid districts and congregations in encouraging and recruiting the youth of the Synod to consider entering into church work vocations or secular callings where they can serve as faithful Christians in business, law, politics, medicine, etc.
4. The ONM will collaborate with the Synod's Pastoral Education program and Concordia University System in providing resources and continuing education for our faculties and students, so that they are able to effectively identify and address current theological, ethical and social issues that threaten the Church, marriage, family, society and culture.
5. The ONM will collaborate with the Synod's Pastoral Education program and Concordia University System in identifying opportunities to enhance and strengthen a Lutheran ethos and worldview in the culture of our congregations and schools.
6. The ONM will provide information and resources to aid the leadership of Synod, districts, congregations and RSOs in their efforts to educate members on how they can be engaged Christian citizens in the public square and in relation to laws impacting the conscience and religious freedom of all citizens and identifying prejudices and injustices, offering distinctively Lutheran theological insight and biblical applications based on the guiding principles of the two kingdoms.

Mission Priority 3

Perform human care in close proximity to Word and Sacrament ministries

Preamble

The Board for National Mission establishes policy for the Office of National Mission to support districts and RSOs as they coordinate the response of congregations and individuals in meeting human need. Whether in response to a disaster or to a short-term or ongoing human need, Christians have the joyful privilege of sharing Christ's love with others in body and soul. The greatest human need is the spiritual suffering that leaves the world in sin, death and darkness. The LCMS also promotes good health for church workers, congregation members and the community. Acts of mercy must be in proximity to Word and Sacrament ministry, offering the opportunity for all to be given and to be sustained in saving faith.

Policy

1. The ONM will aid congregations and individuals through their districts to serve their neighbor in immediate human need as the result of a domestic disaster or catastrophe, in disaster response training and protocols and in their local response efforts.
2. The ONM will encourage congregations through their districts to participate in the parish nurses program as they strive to promote good health and wellness through education and service.
3. The ONM will advocate for and support congregations through their districts and RSOs as they promote good health among their members and the communities where they serve.
4. The ONM will coordinate with the Synod's Ministry to the Armed Forces staff to provide Operation Barnabas resources that enable congregations to welcome military veterans in LCMS congregations and communities.
5. The ONM will work with districts to provide resources to assist pastors and congregations in ministering to individuals and families suffering under the society's assault upon God's gifts of marriage, family, human sexuality and the sanctity of life and the dignity of every person.
6. The ONM will work with districts to provide resources to assist pastors and congregations in ministering to individuals and families suffering under the pain of divorce, barrenness, domestic violence and the abuse of children and the elderly.

Mission Priority 4

Collaborate with the Synod's members and partners to enhance mission effectiveness

Preamble

The Board for National Mission will establish policy for the Office of National Mission to promote life together within the Synod and its districts. As members of the body of Christ we will celebrate and develop team-work and avoid isolationism. We will share our gifts as an organic whole between the members of Synod and (without compromise in doctrine and practice) also with partners, such as, other church bodies, partner churches, and RSOs, and auxiliaries such as the LWML, LLL, LCEF and the LCMS Foundation, in addition to para-church and secular realm agencies that may complement mission and ministry.

Policy

1. The Office of National Mission will serve congregations and schools through the districts of synod by ensuring the provision of resources and opportunities for:
 - a. assisting congregations and schools to experience life together in doctrine and practice (koinonia);
 - b. assisting congregations on how to help sister congregations develop overall mission effectiveness that is faithful to the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions;
 - c. partnering with other districts to practice life together in doctrine and practice;
 - d. assisting district presidents, synod praesidium and district coordinators to support life together in doctrine, practice and mission effectiveness within their respective districts and between districts;
 - e. assisting schools, congregations and districts in practicing life together in doctrine and practice for the sake of sharing the ageless Gospel through intentional outreach and witness;
 - f. developing ways to work through the challenging diversity among districts and other church bodies and groups of people towards implementing increased partnership and mutual support in the church's mission.

Mission Priority 5

Promote and nurture the spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being of pastors and professional church workers

Preamble

The Board for National Mission establishes policy for the Office of National Mission in recruitment and retention of pastors and professional church workers. The Office of National Mission, in collaboration with the Chief Mission Officer, the LCMS Office of Pastoral Education and the Concordia University System, will assist the Church as she recruits workers (Matthew 9:37-38) and cares for their needs (Hebrews 13:17 and 1 Timothy 5:17-18). The Church will promote the relational, emotional, physical, financial, vocational, intellectual and spiritual well-being of her workers.

Policy

1. The ONM will aid and provide resources to congregations through their districts to actively recruit new full-time church workers, endeavor to retain currently active full-time church workers, and seek to restore to active status former church workers interested in returning to full-time church work.
2. The ONM will aid and provide resources to districts and congregations through their districts to provide private confession and absolution, and evangelical support, counsel, encouragement and care. These resources will be for pastors, teachers and other rostered and non-rostered church workers, including those serving in specialized pastoral ministry such as hospital chaplains, military chaplains, prison chaplains, etc. An emphasis will be made to educate rostered and non-rostered church workers with issues of cultural and cross-cultural relations.
3. The ONM will identify, promote and collaborate with RSOs and auxiliaries serving in areas of church-worker care, including debt reduction and addiction care.

Mission Priority 6

Enhance early childhood education, elementary and secondary education, and youth ministry

Preamble

The Board for National Mission establishes policy for the Office of National Mission to encourage and strengthen the Lutheran ethos (Resolution 8-01A) in our early childhood centers, elementary and secondary schools, and in youth ministry. Youth ministry will focus on teaching youth to pray, confess, and live faithfully in their vocations, and in the promotion of church-work vocations and faithful service to society in secular callings (see Mission Priority #2). Enhancement of our schools will emphasize doctrine and practice that is faithful to the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions; curricula that is informed and shaped by the educational reforms of the Lutheran Reformation; church-based schools; affordable tuition; recruitment and training of Lutheran teachers and administrators; and resources for assisting congregations in the establishment of new schools.

Policy

1. The ONM will work cooperatively with and on behalf of districts and congregations to promote and offer resources for establishing and enhancing a Lutheran ethos in our schools and youth ministry, emphasizing:
 - daily prayer which utilizes Holy Scripture, Luther's Small Catechism, the hymnal, and the liturgical tradition of the Lutheran Church;
 - the centrality of the forgiveness of sins;
 - memorization of Holy Scripture and Luther's Small Catechism;
 - ongoing training of teachers in Holy Scripture and our Lutheran Confessions;
 - integration of our scriptural and confessional worldview into all the arts, sciences, and academic disciplines, recognizing these disciplines as gifts of God to be informed by the Word of God;
 - an understanding of the place of law in the secular and spiritual kingdoms;
 - honor and respect for parents and authorities as representatives of God;
 - a partnership and involvement with parents in every aspect of their child's education and spiritual growth; and
 - the promotion of Christian vocation characterized by faith in Christ and love for one's neighbor.
 - the reception and acceptance of children and young adults from all backgrounds and cultures without partiality or prejudice.
2. The ONM will offer support and provide resources to districts and Lutheran schools to promote and enhance the connection of those schools to the Word and Sacrament ministries of local congregations and the doctrinal oversight by their pastors.
3. The ONM will provide resources to districts and Lutheran schools to promote and enhance the outreach of Lutheran schools to their communities with both the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the opportunity for all families to receive the benefits of a Lutheran education.
4. The ONM will provide resources and opportunities for continuing education for Lutheran teachers, administrators and youth leaders to be faithful to the Scriptures and the Confessions and effective in their respective callings.
5. The ONM will grant accreditation to Lutheran schools, preschools, and early childhood centers that are consistent with the aforementioned policies.

Mission Priority 7

Strengthen and support the Lutheran family in living out God's design

Preamble

The Board for National Mission establishes policy for the Office of National Ministry to promote and strengthen a Christian view of marriage and family life in a culture which is becoming increasingly secularized. God has created man in His image (Genesis 1:26-27) and has designed the family wherein each member is given holy vocation, but this created order is under attack by the sinful flesh, the world and the devil. A Christian view of marriage, life and family will be in accord with God's Holy Word and the Lutheran Confessions. The work of the Office of National Mission will address the manifestations of family from conception to natural death. (2016 Convention Resolutions: 14-01; 14-02A; 14-03A; 14-04; 14-08A; 16-02A; 16-03)

Policy

1. The Office of National Mission will serve congregations and schools through the districts of Synod by ensuring the provision of Scriptural, ecclesiastical, natural-law and vocational resources for the following:
 - a. godly marriage, life and family
 - b. the defense and nurture of the vulnerable and defenseless from the threats of abortion, euthanasia, sexual and domestic abuse, neglect and abuse of the elderly and disabled, and any medical and/or technological manipulation that seeks to change the very good creation of male and female, or strives to modify what it means to be *human* according to the Word of God.
 - c. the enhancement of relationships, connections and sponsorships between adults and youth within the same congregation.
 - d. the service of men and women who are single in the body of Christ either by choice, gift or circumstance (Matthew 19).
 - e. equipping district coordinators to serve as liaisons between the districts and the Office of National Mission for the enhancement of godly marriage, life and family.
 - f. the Biblical understanding of being a single man (Matthew 19), or husband (Genesis 1-2; Ephesians 5:25-33) or father (Genesis 1; Proverbs 22:6).
 - g. the Biblical understanding of being a single woman (Matthew 19), or wife (Genesis 1-2; Ephesians 5:22-24) or mother (Genesis 1; Titus 2:3-5).
 - h. the Biblical understanding of the leadership and nurturing roles of men and women in the body of Christ, the family of God.
 - i. serving families and individuals who suffer from the pain and isolation of barrenness, divorce, death, disability and other manifestations of the brokenness caused by original sin.
 - j. serving people of all cultures and helping them navigate challenges they face.