



# SYNOD STEWARDSHIP & SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY REPORT

*We strive to be the best stewards of the resources and gifts entrusted to us*

2010-Present

Over the last ten years, under the leadership of the Synod Council, Bishop Mike, Pastor Liz, Ida McAllister and others, we have worked together as a synod to:

- ✓ **Reduce deficit spending.** We have lowered our reliance on our Synod Support to Ministry fund to balance the annual budget from \$69,000 in 2010 to \$0.00 in 2019. Average yearly reliance from 2011 to 2018 was \$39,000.
- ✓ **Increase efficiencies.** Getting the most out of our funds through careful financial management, strategic spending, and regular review of the costs of contracts and services. Moved from being renters to owners of our office space (thanks to the generosity of Ascension Lutheran Church).
- ✓ **Open up a new revenue stream.** In 2016, we invested in upgrading ministry center and creating an alternative revenue stream through rental income. The rent pays for the building utilities, freeing up mission support to go to ministry in and beyond the synod. 100 % of building utility expenses are covered by rental income.
- ✓ **Keep mission support from congregations steady.** Our congregations actively support the ministry of the whole synod through financial mission support. As some grow, they give more. As some have smaller budgets and income, they provide less. Average income from congregations has been around \$480,000 since 2010.
- ✓ **Model growth giving.** We have increased our support for ministries of the ELCA from 40% to 41.5%.
- ✓ **Plant new ministries.** The Neighborhood in Bentonville, AR was the first new congregation in the Arkansas-Oklahoma synod since 2001. Comunidad de Esperanza, in Tulsa, OK, our first Latinx ministry, was started in 2014 and continues to grow and thrive.
- ✓ **Complete *Living God's Abundance*.** Our first ever synod capital campaign raised \$218,000 which continues to grow ministries, inspire leaders and foster vibrant connections throughout our synod.



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To continue this work, in August 2019 a new Synod Mission Support Team was created to further and focus the current strategy. Under their leadership, we are launching the **NEW Synod Sustainers Initiative** in the Fall of 2020 to open up the opportunity for individuals to invest above and beyond what they give to their local congregations in the work and ministry of the synod. Along with ongoing mission support from our congregations, over the next 2-5 years, this new opportunity will help us:

- ✓ **Cultivate an individual donor base** of at least 100 households.
- ✓ **Close the gap.** Eliminate draws from reserve that are used to balance the budget (approximately \$25,000 -30,000/year).
- ✓ **Plant new ministries and congregations** (a \$500,000-750,000 investment for each ministry over 7-10 years). This assumes a full-time, paid developer model.
- ✓ **Continue to develop the Lutheran Ministry Center** in Tulsa as a resource for ministry and gathering place in the Synod.
- ✓ **Provide support for congregations and ministries** through grants and resources beyond what current synod staffing and finances can allow, continuing to grow vibrant ministries, inspire leaders and build vibrant connections throughout our synod and beyond.