


Tri-Synodical Hispanic/Latino Strategic Plan 2003 - 2008



A Joint Project of
Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod
Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod
and
Southwestern Texas Synod

Sponsored and Funded by
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Executive Summary
Tri-Synodical Hispanic/Latino Strategic Plan
Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod
Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod
Southwestern Texas Synod

THE CALL - The call for ministry is for transformation. This is not just about supporting existing ministries or starting new congregations. It is to go where we haven't been before.

THE MISSION - To create a movement of faith that is a missionary, fully integrated, vibrant church with multiple cultural expressions in order to lift up Jesus as Lord and Savior of all people.

God's Mission – To love and save the world through the saving faith in Jesus Christ. (John 3:16-17)

The Church's Mission – To be Christ's body and be used as a vehicle for the saving mission of God: to be disciples who love God and neighbor (Matthew 22:34-39) and to help others become disciples as well (Matthew 28:16-20)

THE VISION OF THE FUTURE – To create a movement of active, living faith in Jesus Christ that is manifested in a missionary, fully integrated, vibrant church with multiple cultural expressions lifting up Jesus as Lord and Savior of all people. A church where people of all ethnic and cultural backgrounds understand that together (“En Conjunto”) they are Jesus' body in mission as they participate in ushering in the reign of God.

The body of Christ within the three Synods of Texas and Louisiana fully incorporates and integrates with our life together the growing number of people in our neighborhoods who happen to be Hispanic/Latino. This new family celebrates the reality of Jesus Christ in our midst through worship, service, fellowship, evangelism, and discipleship.

THE VALUES UNDERLYING THE STRATEGY

- † Be properly motivated – not to get people to necessarily become members of the Lutheran Church, but to introduce them to the living God in Jesus.
- † God’s future is more powerful than our past.
- † Anything and everything can be changed if the change serves the kingdom of God.
- † Those not in the church are just as important as those inside.
- † Discerning Christ’s vision for mission requires Biblical and theological reflection within a particular context.
- † The methods by which Hispanics/Latinos are approached are as important as the message.
- † Family based enculturation and socialization is important.
- † Hispanics/Latinos not only want to work, but to contribute to society for self-satisfaction and value of life.¹

THE STRATEGY – To achieve our vision this strategy calls for our three synods to:

- † **Transformation Ministry** – Strengthening existing ministries and creating a movement of active, living faith in Jesus Christ
- † **New Mission opportunities** – Expanding the outreach of our present Hispanic/Latino ministries, so they can multiply themselves and start new churches
- † **Leadership Development** – Developing Hispanic/Latino lay-servant leaders as well as ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament who are passionate and gifted to carry out effective, strong, viable, and mission-oriented ministries among Hispanic/Latino people
- † **Youth and Family Ministry** – Equipping every synod and congregation in Texas and Louisiana to create a culture which develops vital, active, living faith in Jesus Christ in every child, youth, young adult, and adult
- † **La Frontera** – Promoting and stimulating the work of Lutheran Ministries on both sides of the US/Mexican Border (La Frontera), enabling the collaboration and sharing of resources in order to strengthen their witness and service for the furthering of God’s Kingdom in this very unique part of the world
- † **Resources/Stewardship** – Responding, as an act of hope, to God’s promises
- † **Communication and Evangelism** – Equipping the Hispanic/Latino congregations in the three synods in effective outreach, communications, and marketing to their communities

¹ Some of these values were adopted from the Rev. Dr. Dave Daubert’s Personal Core Values
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THE STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Transformation Ministry

Goals:

1. Recapture and recover our theological identity and essence
2. Identify and utilize our synodical gifts of the people of God
3. Create a passion and urgency within the three synods for the evangelical task of ministry among all our people as faith formation
4. Encourage every member to grow into a deeper life of prayer, affirming its commitment as a praying church²

Action Plan:

1. Work with each congregation/conference to assess their context, community needs, support base, and their Vision for Mission in their area
2. Make it possible for each pastor and layperson within our congregations to have the opportunity to make a re-affirmation of our faith, our Baptismal covenant, and a new covenant relationship – addressing their commitment to Jesus and to our neighbors
3. Increase the theological training for laity of all ages, with special emphasis on adult Bible literacy for the purpose of nurturing spiritually growing adults
4. Recognize, affirm, and unleash the gifts of cross-cultural commitment
5. Expand worship life with diverse, inclusive, indigenous models
6. Invite congregations and other ministry settings to prayerfully discern God's leading in every aspect of ministry as a praying church³ — as Luther said in the Small Catechism: “In fact, God's kingdom comes on its own without our prayer, but we ask in prayer that it may also come to us”⁴
7. Commit to the understanding that personal renewal is interdependent with corporate renewal; congregations and all ministries are encouraged to evaluate all programs and intentionally expand opportunities for faith formation for all ages. Offerings might include: solitude for prayer and study, community-building retreats, public witness, and sacrificial service⁵
8. Call the educational ministries of the church to teach, model, and mentor individuals and groups. In developing prayer leaders, the church values children, youth and young adults as a priority. Creative styles of expressing prayer may include, and is not limited to: dancing prayer, signing prayer, painting or drawing

² Brent Dahlseng, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Evangelism Strategy

³ Brent Dahlseng, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Evangelism Strategy

⁴ *The Book of Concord*, ed. By Kolb, Wengert, Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2000, p. 356

⁵ Brent Dahlseng, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Evangelism Strategy

- prayer, writing or reading a prayer, intercessory prayer for friends, family, and the world and contemplative prayer ⁶
9. Encourage members, congregations and other ministry settings to pray for friends, neighbors and family members who are outside the church for the sake of evangelism. This strategy encourages all members (children, youth and adult) to be persistent in prayer, asking “the Lord of the harvest to send our laborers,”⁷ for hospitality in the local congregation and for the formation of disciples within community. ⁸
 10. Request congregations and other ministries consider being part of the ELCA Prayer Network and its related web site: www.prayingchurch.org and the Prayer Partner Network of the Commission for Multicultural Ministries.

New Mission Opportunities

Goals:

1. Identify and select 10 probable sites for new mission starts within each synod
2. Establish a Hispanic/Latino Ministry Center in Dallas/Ft. Worth, Houston, San Antonio, and the Valley as catalysts for faith formation and mission development
3. Each Hispanic/Latino congregation becomes a base for developing Hispanic leaders and ministries, recapturing and recovering our theological identity and essence

Action Plan:

1. Existing ministries will identify potential new ministry areas, prepare lay leadership and implement new satellite ministries during the next five years
2. Double the number of people touched by our existing ministries within five years
3. Start five new Hispanic/Latino missions in each synod
4. Equip existing ministries with the “Dones en Acción” methodology and process. Provide their training through Division for Outreach and Division for Congregational Ministries
5. Develop a strong network of “Mission Partners” and “Mission Builders” for each ministry site
6. Incorporate a Hispanic/Latino Ministry Center in Dallas/Ft. Worth, Houston, San Antonio and the Rio Grande Valley
7. Utilize the “Cathedral Model” in the Rio Grande Valley to incorporate the Hispanic/Latino Ministry Center

⁶ Brent Dahlseng, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Evangelism Strategy

⁷ Matthew 9:38

⁸ Brent Dahlseng, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Evangelism Strategy

Leadership Development

Goals:

1. To see and interpret the Hispanic/Latino context from the “South to the North” perspective
2. Drive leadership development by the “end product” we desire. (“What is the prototype leader that will be needed by virtue of the synod(s)’s need to serve the Hispanic/Latino communities in Texas and Louisiana?”)
3. Pastors who are visionaries as well as coaches and mentors
4. The spirit of the “priesthood of all believers” pervades the three synods
5. Our congregations are communities where pastors equip laity for life and ministry. They are places where all people have permission to discover, to nurture, to develop, and to use their skills and gifts in ministry and service

Action Plan:

1. Incorporate a Leadership Development Institute (El Instituto) in San Pablo, Weslaco by the end of 2003 which will include the following components:
 - a. Faith Formation
 - b. Immersion Experiences
 - c. Commissioning Process
 - d. Continuing Education
 - e. Cross Cultural Sensitivities
2. Support and accompany Lutheran Seminary Program of the Southwest in the preparation of leaders for ministry within the Hispanic/Latino context
3. Support and accompany the Lay Academy (NT-NL), Synodical Authorized Ministry (S.A.M. in SWTS), the Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (T.E.E.M.), ELCA/DM and Melancthon Institute programs (TLGCS)
4. Identify and recruit indigenous lay leaders and candidates for ordained ministries of Word and Sacrament through the use of retreats, workshops, seminars, Bishop(s’) invitational events, and visits to parishes
5. Develop synodical processes to grant official recognition to lay leaders; i.e., licensed lay evangelists, commissioned Eucharistic ministers, etc.
6. Initiate an “Encuentro de Jovenes” – a “Youth Encounter” and/or Hispanic/Latino Youth convocation
7. Support and accompany the annual “Disciple Project” for youth
8. Establish mandatory yearly re-tooling training in the areas of outreach, stewardship, evangelism, discipleship, worship, preaching, youth ministry, and popular religiosity for all pastors involved in ministry among Hispanic/Latino people

9. Expand relational Youth and Family ministry leadership development to include:
 - a. Staffing at least three Hispanic/Latino Ministry Centers with a certified Hispanic/Latino Youth and Family minister
 - b. Advocacy for our synods to be aligned around core values for the purpose of growing spiritual adults and youth
 - c. A “Dream Team” of Hispanic/Latino leaders in Youth and Family Ministry
10. Recruit, equip, train, and commission “Hispanic/Latino Ministry Specialists” who are minimally able to address:
 - a. Ministry Reviews
 - b. Crisis Intervention
 - c. Mission Site Assessment
 - d. Mission Interpretation
 - e. Recruitment of Leadership Candidates
 - f. Pastoral Care Support
 - g. Financial Development
 - h. Immigration
 - i. Immersion Experience guidance
11. Implement a Campus Ministry Outreach program at the University of Texas, Pan American University by the fall of 2003 under the auspices of the Horizon Internship Program. First Lutheran of Edinburg, Texas, Southwestern Texas Synod, and Division for Outreach will support the Intern for Ministry
12. Support, accompany, and encourage partnership among the three synodical Hispanic/Latino Lutheran Coalition Councils
13. Host an annual Tri-Synodical Hispanic/Latino Leaders’ Retreat
14. Host a periodic Hispanic/Latino Family Conference

Youth and Family Ministry

Goals:

1. To identify and intentionally teach the use of culturally relevant symbols, music, rituals, traditions, and practices that have integrity with our Lutheran witness
2. Implement practices of youth and family ministry that grow directly from Baptismal promises are the foundation of each congregation as it supports outreach ministry to the home
3. That people of all ages feel the call to the waters of Baptism and are renewed in their callings, the study of scripture, and worship celebrations
4. To have a network and impulse centers * of faith formation

* See Definitions, Appendix O

5. That synods will have the capacity to support leadership development, congregational outreach, and faith formation
6. To increase the ability of all congregations to:
 - a. pass on faith in Jesus to Hispanic/Latino children, youth, young adults, and families
 - b. identify Hispanic/Latino adults, young adults, and youth who are gifted for ministry
 - c. to train, equip, and resource Hispanic/Latino adults, young adults, and youth for mission
 - d. to provide a safe, caring place for all young people
 - e. to serve families in their neighborhood, regardless of culture
 - f. to celebrate and appreciate cultural diversity
 - g. to increase outreach evangelism
 - h. to value a changing world, embracing Lutheran and cultural identity
7. To have committed mission partners valuing the many gifts of the Hispanic/Latino community supporting all our Hispanic/Latino congregations
8. To have families in every congregation that are trained and resourced through stable congregational support systems
9. To unleash the gifts of young adults for faith and service to Jesus Christ
10. To provide healthy adult role models, supportive peer groups, and opportunities for training, education and purposeful service
11. That children are nurtured and know they are loved and created uniquely by God
12. For all people to be equipped to reach out to their neighbor in the name of Jesus

Action Plan:

1. Create leadership teams with trained laity who will support this goal for all ages
2. Incorporate Milestone Ministry * as a normal faith practice
3. Claim the Core Values for youth and family ministry outreach
4. Provide intentional experience with Scripture through teaching, serving, and personal application of faith
5. Develop worship life that is relevant to the mission context, including language, music, symbols, icons, traditions, etc.
6. Grow synodical staffs to value and understand youth and family ministry as faith formative
7. Incorporate youth and family ministry professionals and volunteers in theological training with emphasis on unleashing the gifts of all people
8. Intentionally support a network of Hispanic/Latino leaders in youth and family ministry
9. Develop and host training, consultation, and programming for Hispanic/Latino people

10. Sustain healthy and effective Hispanic/Latino Lutheran Coalition Councils with lay-led teams focusing on youth and family ministry
11. Support youth and family ministry continuing education for all clergy
12. Train “Certified Youth & Family Ministers” at the Center for Youth Ministries at Wartburg Seminary
13. Train adults in Basic Skills for Youth & Family Ministry
14. Provide Spanish materials to resource faith life in the home
15. Claim Anderson’s 4 Keys for Faith Formation*
16. Incorporate “Dones En Acción” * resources
17. Incorporate “Becoming a Safe Haven”* resources
18. Parenting classes and support groups are held in Spanish and available in our congregations and community centers
19. Develop bilingual, culturally relevant resources for family home use
20. Expand the congregation’s role to fully address Hispanic/Latino needs surrounding issues such as substance abuse, child or spouse abuse, single parent families, extended family systems, families between two or more countries, poverty, education, affordable housing, health care, etc.
21. Develop or facilitate healthy gathering places for young adults
22. Provide relevant leadership development, Bible study, and theological training for young adult Hispanics/Latinos
23. Develop a Lutheran Campus Ministry presence, culturally sensitive to the needs of Hispanic/Latino students
24. Provide trained mentors
25. Bilingual parenting classes are offered to equip families
26. Our congregations, community centers, and our outdoor camping ministry host day camps and family camps

<p>La Frontera</p>

Goals:

1. Experience church growth and evangelism along the border region
2. Provide leadership development for laity and clergy along the border region
3. Sustain community wellness along the border region
4. Have a solid relationship between the communities of La Frontera* and our synodical staff and leaders
5. Make resources available to the ministries of La Frontera

* See Resources for Hispanic/Latino Youth and Family Ministry, Appendix K

* See Definitions, Appendix O

* See Definitions, Appendix O

Action Plan:

1. Support and accompany the Inter-Lutheran Committee on Ministries along the Border (C.I.L.M.F. – Comité Inter-Luterano de Ministerios en la Frontera)
2. Support and accompany the appointed Frontera/Border Ministry Coordinator, Pastor Bill Bruggeman, and Ann Bruggeman, the Health Awareness Director
3. Encourage growth in the mission of the Lutheran Church along the Frontera/Border
4. Develop evangelism and wellness ministries through a holistic approach, attempting to meet the total needs of the communities
5. Organize and implement three gatherings of clergy and lay leaders from both sides of the Frontera/Border to identify needs
 - a. Brownsville to Eagle Pass/Matamoros to Piedras Negras
 - b. El Paso/Juarez
 - c. San Diego/Tijuana
6. Develop curriculum for training laity on both sides of the Frontera/Border to address health issues such as diet, diabetes, and dysentery
7. Conduct four two-day training sessions for laity in the use of Health Awareness Curriculum in their perspective communities

Resources/Stewardship

Goals:

1. Teaching Biblical Stewardship principles
2. Practicing ‘Year Round’ Stewardship in the life of the parish
3. Encouraging “First Fruit” and “Proportional” Giving
4. Identifying and developing the gifts of God’s people for ministry
5. Synodical/judicatories’ Relations.
6. Development of Resources.

Action Plan:

1. Train a group of Stewardship Resource people to go into the congregations and teach sound stewardship principles
 - a. “Step By Step”
 - b. “Theology of Stewardship”
2. Provide resources for Conducting “Annual Appeals” and seeking “Every Member” Commitment
 - a. “How to Improve Financial Stewardship in Your Congregation”
 - b. “Consecration Sunday”

3. Participate in the ELCA stewardship “Hispanic/Latino” ministries
 - a. “Dones En Acción”*
 - b. “Festival de Los Regalos de Dios” *
4. Develop the gifts of God’s people for a life of meaning and purpose through personal study and reflection “Discovering the Gifts of the People: Personal Reflection Guide.
5. Support the development of the Hispanic/Latino Ministry Fund
 - a. Festival de Los Regalos de Dios”
 - b. Endowment Funds
 - c. Grants
 - d. Churchwide Partners

Communication and Evangelism

Goals:

1. Inspire and equip the members of the Hispanic/Latino congregations and missions to be evangelists to their families, friends, neighbors, and coworkers
2. Train Hispanic/Latino lay leaders in electronic communications
3. Provide written congregational resources for outreach
4. Provide mass-market ads in a variety of medias
5. Equip the synods and synod staffs to provide Hispanic/Latino resources

Action Plan:

- 1a. Work with each congregation to lift the ministry of the laity and outreach. The Lutheran emphasis on the “priesthood of all believers” needs to be conveyed through the lens of the Hispanic/Latino community. Each baptized person is called to be an evangelist. Actions to address this strategy could include:
 - Intentional small group ministries/Bible studies for people of all generations
 - Training of lay ministers in a “Stephens” type of ministry
 - Large gatherings (conference, synod, multi-synod) to teach, inspire, and worship
- 2a. Electronic communications is growing rapidly in the Hispanic/Latino community.⁹ By using electronic communications, the church will be able to

* See Definitions, Appendix O

⁹ *Marketing to American Latinos, A Guide to the In-Culture Approach*, M. Isabel Valdes
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- reach a growing segment in this culture. Actions to address this strategy could include:
- Training of pastors and staff in the use of electronic mail as a means of communicating with members
 - Training and development of congregation/mission websites
- 3a. Written resources for outreach should not be just a translation of English resources, but a development of resources that is culturally relevant to the Hispanic/Latino community. Actions to address this strategy could include:
- Development of print communications to be used by the Hispanic/Latino congregations and missions. This could include brochures, written invitations, door hangers, etc.
 - Training of Hispanic/Latino pastors and lay leaders use and distribution of written resources, i.e., door-to-door visitations, mailings, community gathering sites, etc.
- 4a. Mass media communication is also a resource that needs to be culturally relevant (rather than just a translation of English resources). Actions to address this strategy could include:
- Development of print, audio, and television ads for all three synods, in cooperation with the Department for Communications of the ELCA
 - Training of Hispanic/Latino pastors and lay leaders in working with media
- 5a. The synods, synod staffs, and synod leadership need to be equipped to relate and offer resources to the Hispanic/Latino ministries. This could include a change of cultural awareness as well as additional resources. Actions to address this strategy could include:
- Hispanic/Latino immersion experiences
 - Education in Spanish as a second language
 - Inclusion of a bilingual person on each of the synod staffs
 - Translation of the three synods websites into Spanish
 - Translation of the written resources developed by the three synods (including monthly publications) into Spanish

CONCLUSION

This Hispanic/Latino Strategic Mission plan is the result of a long and diverse journey undertaken by Lutheran leaders across our three Texas-Louisiana Synods. It began over a decade ago by visionary leaders called to make disciples for Christ among our Hispanic/Latino brothers and sisters. It was further supported in the year 2000 when the Division for Outreach deployed a dedicated Hispanic/Latino Mission Director, Pastor Joe Garcia. For the past three years Pastor Garcia and dozens of synodical leaders, both

Hispanic and non-Latino, have shared their visions, given their gifts, and immersed themselves in prayer for the planning process. We thank them for their tireless and faithful service to this mission.

We invite others to become a part of this mission. Much will be required in the months and years ahead. Most of all we ask for your prayers for our Hispanic/Latino brothers and sisters, for the leaders who do ministry in their midst, and that we all are sustained by the deep belief given to us by God that the Lord goes with us in all we do – “En Conjunto.”