



Central States Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

January 18, 2012

Dear Partners in Ministry,

I am pleased to announce the formation of the next Partnership for Missional Church (PMC) cluster in our synod. The first cluster meeting is scheduled for May 4-5, so responses to this invitation are needed immediately and will be limited. Pastor Len Dale and others are ready to answer questions, and meet with congregational leaders as needed.

Our experience over the past six years with 26 congregations in two PMC Clusters has proved invaluable. PMC is not simply another program or strategic mission planning event. Pastors and lay leaders soon realize the three-year PMC process is complicated and challenging work that guides congregations with the help of various spiritual disciplines to make adaptive missional changes in their ever changing context.

PMC cluster events are structured to provide time for pastors on Friday, congregational sharing on Friday evening, teaching on Saturday morning and planning on Saturday after lunch.

Year One is about learning to listen—to God, to one another, to the people in the community around the congregation. Year Two is about inventing and taking risks through missional experiments. It is about experimenting with new approaches to reach others with the Good News of Jesus. Year Three is about focusing and organizing around what has been learned. It is about putting into the congregational system the things that have been learned through the PMC process.

The outcomes are exciting, unpredictable, rewarding, frustrating, and discouraging all at the same time. As congregations take risks, learn from others, dwell in the Word, and process what is happening, the Spirit of God does wonderful things. Congregations that stick to the disciplines of the process soon find themselves energized spiritually and thinking more deeply about God's call to us through the Good News of Jesus Christ.

You are invited to consider becoming a part of the next cluster. The ***Changed by Love, Sent in Love to Serve – Shaping the Church for God's Mission Fund Appeal*** is providing funds for the cost to synod for Partnership for Missional Church. We are also able to provide partial scholarships to congregations who cannot afford the costs. We truly do not want any congregation to decline this invitation because of costs. We will work individually with congregations to negotiate their costs. This is a partnership.



The cost of PMC is \$3,000 per year per congregation, plus the cost of attending three cluster events a year. With the help of the fund appeal, and other partners, we will work to keep the costs to a minimum.

This PMC Cluster is also open to congregations from other church bodies. If there is a neighboring congregation, possibly from a Full Communion partner, that might entertain the possibility of participation in PMC, we encourage you to explore those possibilities. Please let me or Len Dale know of such congregations that we might have conversations with their respective bishop, conference minister or executive presbyter.

Congregations in a parish setting are encouraged to speak with Len Dale so that costs might be agreed upon that would be manageable to all the congregations in the parish.

The first Cluster event will be May 4 and 5, and the location is tentatively set for Kansas City. The place, however, could change depending on the congregational make up of the PMC Cluster.

We will also schedule a half day pre-cluster event for pastors and council members who can attend in order help clarify what will be happening in the PMC process. We have learned that the congregations who did not benefit from the process did not have clarity about their involvement.

If you are interested in more information, contact Len Dale by calling the synod office or by email, ldale@css-elca.org. He will be happy to come for a visit or answer your questions. You may also go to our synod website for video and more information from those who have been in the process (<http://css-elca.org>). And for additional information about Partnership for Missional Church on the Church Innovations website, visit www.churchinnovations.org/01_services/pmc.html.

In order to get our pre-cluster meeting scheduled we will need to close registration at the end of February.

Finally, it is good to know what others have said about the PMC process. The following is a partial list of some of the learning identified by leaders of congregations in the last cluster at St. Louis:

“Pass On-Able” Habits
St. Louis PMC Cluster

Phase 1 - Discovering

- Dwelling in the word
- Importance of listening, planning for listening and slowing down to do it
- Embedding dwelling in the word in the life of the congregation
- Respecting, and reflecting on where we’ve been, where we are and where we are going
- Having congregational conversations intentionally
- Accepting hospitality from those other than ourselves
- Learning to move from a “fix it” mentality to a discovering mentality

Phase 2 – Experimenting

- Keeping on reflecting on what it means to learn from experiments
- Learning to develop discernible habits that engage hospitality
- Using the talents of the congregation in more experiments and being more open to shaping and using the gifts in the congregation
- Doing effective plunging into our community
- More intentional listening
- Keeping in front of the congregation opportunities that come from experiments
- Increasing our communication
- Developing new relationships in the community
- Having excellent failures

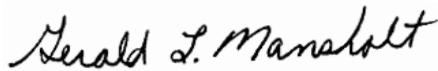
Phase 3 – Focusing

- Focusing on missional patterns
- Being accountable to keep coming back to mission
- Keep opening opportunities
- Developing stronger ties to the community through connections made

At a Conference of Bishops Meeting with the eight seminary presidents last October, one of the speakers quoted Tom Gillespy, State Demographer of Minnesota: *The people who put their energy into getting back to how things were are lost. The people who look to the future to see what might be possible are the people to whom the future belongs.*

PMC is about the future. It is about helping congregations find their way forward into God's preferred (law) and promised (Gospel) future. I hope you will give thoughtful and prayerful consideration to being part of this cluster of congregations in Partnership for Missional Church.

In Christ's peace,



Gerald L. Mansholt
Bishop