

WHAT IS A SYNOD?

Our English word synod comes from two Greek words *syn* + *hodos* that literally means "a way together." In and through synods, congregations and other ministries "walk together." Synods are an expression of this church, just as are congregations and the churchwide organization. They coordinate the work of congregations within their territories. Synods plan for the ELCA's mission (which is one dimension of God's larger mission) in their area. The synods are grouped into nine regions which are points of connection for synods and the churchwide organization.



The ELCA's 65 synods vary greatly in size, geography, membership, staffing and program. Our smallest synod has 30 congregations – the largest nearly 300. Geographically, in the Saint Paul Area Synod, most congregations are within a half-hour drive of the synod office; by contrast, the Rocky Mountain Synod includes 20% of the continental U.S. land mass, requiring frequent staff travel by air. From Alaska to the Caribbean, from the tip of southern California to Maine, the 65 synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America carry out their mission of Making Christ Known!

Each synod in assembly elects a bishop and other officers. As the synod's pastor, the bishop oversees the ministry of other pastors and congregations. Together with her/his assistant(s), the bishop provides support to congregations. This includes assistance in calling pastors and other staff; support in times of difficulty and congregational conflict; and, joining in the celebrations of congregations. Bishops also oversee the administration of the synod, supervising the work of other officers and staff. In addition, they serve as bishops of the whole ELCA, coming together regularly in gatherings of the Conference of Bishops.