

Starting the Conversation

A Skit to Introduce the Five Mission Priorities of the Eastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

Coffee Hour at church:

Person #2 is seated at a table with a cup of coffee. Person #1 arrives carrying a cup of coffee.

Person # 1 Hi, _____ (name). It sure is crowded at coffee hour today.
Is it okay if I join you?

Person # 2 Sure, have a seat. I haven't seen you here at church for the last few weeks.

Person # 1 That's right. I've been visiting my sister and her family. It was great that I got to see them, and also attend worship with them at their church.

Person # 2 What's the name of their church?

Person # 1 They belong to First Lutheran Church. It's part of the Eastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada – just like our church is.

Person # 2 I always enjoy having the opportunity to worship at other churches and to find out what kind of things they do differently than the way we do things here at our church.

Person # 1 So do I! Last week, after worship, my sister's church held a discussion group to talk about being a church "In Mission for Others."
Congregations in the Eastern Synod are being encouraged to look at the five Mission Priorities that have been developed to guide us as we try to figure out what kind of ministries God wants us to do right here in our own congregation and community.

Person # 2 Five Mission Priorities? What are they?

Person # 1 I wrote them down so I wouldn't forget.

(Pull a piece of paper out of a purse or pocket. Read fairly slowly.)

We will practice Spirited Discipleship.

We will welcome Diversity.

We will demonstrate Compassionate Justice.

We will establish a Focused Framework.

We will develop Effective Partnerships.

Person # 2 Whoa! I'm not sure I understand what that all means.

Person # 1 Well, it will mean something different in every congregation. But, basically, the Mission Priorities are about looking for ways to grow in faith, to be welcoming, and to respond to needs – and to do so in ways that make good use of the resources that God gives to us.

Person # 2 That makes sense to me. It sounds like the five Mission Priorities are a good starting point for discussion about what it means to be a church In Mission for Others. So, how do we go about getting this kind of discussion started in our congregation?

Person # 1 I checked out the website for the Eastern Synod and there are some great ideas for conversations, as well as a whole series of devotions based on the five Mission Priorities. Congregations are being encouraged to use these devotions at the start of activities such as Church Council, Sunday School Teachers meetings, Women's Groups, Senior's Groups, Choir, and all committees– even the Property Committee!

Person # 2 I wonder if our Pastor knows about all this. There he/she is. Let's go talk to him/her about this right now.

Person # 1 and Person #2 get up from table and head off -stage.

Person # 1 Pastor. Oh, Pastor.

Person # 2 We want to talk to you about something...

Let's Talk About the Mission Priorities

After the presentation of the skit, it is recommended that members of your congregation take some time to reflect on the Mission Priorities as they relate to your congregation. Please allow at least 20 minutes for this conversation, depending on which of the two options you select. If you have a longer amount of time available, you can adjust the time allotted for small group discussion.

Preparation

1. Print copies of the opening paragraph of the five Mission Priorities. Decide if you want one copy per person, or just a few for each group.
2. Prepare five pieces of chart paper, with one of the Mission Priorities printed across the top, and the remainder of the chart paper divided into two columns entitled "Current Successes" and "Areas for Growth."

Example:

We will practice Spirited Discipleship	
Current Successes	Areas for Growth

3. Have markers available and tape or pins for posting charts.
4. Give some thought to the seating arrangement for small group discussion.

Option #1

20 minutes

Step 1 Provide a brief explanation about the five Mission Priorities by reading the following:

Our congregation is an important part of the Eastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. As a member of the Eastern Synod, we work together with other congregations from Sault Sainte Marie, Ontario, all the way to Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, to accomplish the many ministries God calls us to do.

In 2010, we adopted a Vision for Mission. The opening paragraph reads:

Through the Gospel, God calls the whole church to be engaged in mission in response to the needs of others, celebrating what God has done and continues to do through us. Relying on the gifts of the Spirit, we will develop ministries that will inspire and equip us to care for others through the mission work of the synod, conferences, congregations and specialized ministries. As members of the Eastern Synod, we will help one another to embrace our vocations as ministers of the Gospel.

As part of the Vision for Mission, five Mission Priorities have been identified to help guide our ministries throughout the Eastern Synod. The five priorities are:

We will practice Spirited Discipleship.

We will welcome Diversity.

We will demonstrate Compassionate Justice.

We will establish a Focused Framework.

We will develop Effective Partnerships.

Today, we are going to divide into five groups, and each group will take a look at one of these priorities. You will be given a hand-out that explains the Mission Priorities in a little more detail. With your group, please read the paragraph that pertains to your assigned Mission Priority. After that, I would like your group to discuss your Mission Priority and complete one of these charts with your reflections. (*Hold up one of the prepared chart papers.*)

Under “Areas for Growth” be sure to write down any idea that comes to mind. This is a brainstorming session, which means that we will include all kinds of ideas, and we will decide at another time which of the ideas we would like to try.

Step 2 Form groups of 3-10 persons. Give each group a copy of the Mission Priorities. Give each group a piece of chart paper for one of the Mission Priorities and a marker.

Step 3 After 10 minutes, have the groups present their charts to the whole group.

Step 4 Explain that the charts will be posted for the next few weeks. Invite people to take time to put an asterisk (*) beside the ideas they really like in the “Areas for Growth column.” Explain that, after a few weeks, all of the committees of the church will be asked to review the charts and see if there is anything that pertains to their committee which could be incorporated into future projects.

Step 5 Also explain that the Eastern Synod has published devotions that can help us to study further the Mission Priorities, called *Hearts for Ministry*. Leaders across the synod are encouraged to use these devotions at their meetings and gatherings in the coming year. They are available as a downloadable resource from the synod website (www.easternsynod.org).

Option #2

30 - 40 minutes

Follow the same outline as above, with these modifications:

Step 2 After each group has discussed their assigned Mission Priority for 10 minutes, have them pass their chart paper to a different group. (A circular rotation works best.) Allow 5 minutes to review the chart, and add new suggestions. Repeat until groups have reflected on each of the Mission Priorities. (Note: The initial group has 10 minutes. After that, allow 5 minutes per Mission Priority.)

Step 3 Omit the sharing of charts with the large group.

Some Final Notes

Following your discussion time, be sure to post the charts where they will be visible and accessible to many people. Also post a sign inviting people to put an asterisk (*) beside ideas that they really like. Be sure to provide pens or markers for them to use.

Remind committees and groups to review the charts after a few weeks.

Make available *Hearts for Ministry* (a series of devotions for leaders of the Eastern Synod, based on the Visions for Mission) to the chairpersons or leaders of committees and groups in your congregation.

Vision for Mission in the Eastern Synod 2010-2012

A Church in Mission for Others

God calls the whole church through the Gospel to be engaged in mission in response to the needs of others, celebrating what God has done and continues to do through us. Relying on the gifts of the Spirit, we will develop ministries that will inspire and equip us to care for others through the mission work of the synod, conferences, congregations, and specialized ministries. As members of the Eastern Synod, we will help one another to embrace our vocations as ministers of the Gospel.

Mission Priorities

1. We will practice Spirited Discipleship

We will encourage one another to be joyful in worship, diligent in exploring God's Word, passionate in bearing witness to our faith, generous in sharing the gifts we have received, and wise in working with all our sisters and brothers in Christ. In our life together, we will be open to the creative and loving ways that God's Spirit works in and through us as members of the Eastern Synod.



2. We will welcome Diversity

We will meet our neighbours and become more familiar with those living in our communities who may vary from us in age, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, and religious practices. We will foster a climate of welcome and hospitality within our synod, conferences and congregations. We will seek to reflect the diversity of Canadian society within our church, recognizing that others may challenge us with new ideas.



3. We will demonstrate Compassionate Justice

We will be mindful of the biblical principles of justice and compassion, striving to work with and for people who live on the margins of society. We will also seek to take better care of the earth, and play a leading role in preserving all that God has made.



4. We will establish a Focused Framework

We will develop effective and flexible structures which will be suited to the tasks to which the Gospel calls us. We will be challenged by on-going evaluation of our various ministries, mindful that God may lead us to end some of them and begin others. We will identify, call, mentor, and equip ordained and lay leaders to meet the challenges that are before us.



5. We will develop Effective Partnerships

We will strengthen our existing partnerships and develop new ones. This includes collaboration with congregations, conferences, other synods, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, as well as ecumenical, multi-faith, and community organizations. We will frequently ask ourselves, "Do we have to do this alone?"

