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## Other Documents:

# Report on Initiatives for a New Century

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### AN ONGOING EVALUATION OF THE INITIATIVES FOR A NEW CENTURY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

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Department for Research and Evaluation  
May 14, 2001

*"In short, these initiatives are not a one-size-fits-all national program, a sleek churchwide 'silver bullet.' The specific activities described here are just a beginning, a preliminary list of things we can do together to become a stronger people of God. Unless these activities are understood as a beginning, the seven initiatives will never achieve their full potential. It is my dream that individuals, congregations, synods, churchwide units, and our Lutheran agencies, ministries, and institutions will not only participate in the activities described above, but will also bring these initiatives to life in their own context, using their own gifts and insights, launching additional activities that reflect the hopes and the needs of their communities" (Presiding Bishop H. George Anderson, Churchwide Assembly Minutes, 1997, page 549).*

The "Initiatives for a New Century" are a list of seven strategic activities designed to focus this church on preparing for a new century. The list of seven activities include deepening our worship life, teaching the faith, witnessing to God's action in the world, strengthening one another in mission, helping the children, connecting with youth and young adults, and developing leaders. Now, we are at a point of taking stock. What have we done together? Are we better prepared for the future?

#### BACKGROUND

##### ***The Inquiry and the Development of the Initiatives***

In the fall of 1993, the Office of the Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) proposed a churchwide "Inquiry" that would focus on the future of the churchwide organization. The ELCA Church Council's recommendation was to broaden the focus of the effort—to begin the process by engaging congregations in reflecting on their futures and the future of the Church.

In the spring of 1994 an Inquiry Advisory Committee met for the first time to assist the Office of the Bishop in

planning for the Inquiry.<sup>1</sup> The advisory committee called for conversation throughout this church—a dialogue. This "dialogue" was intended to engage members of congregations, the bishops and staffs of the synods, and the staff of the churchwide organization in a discussion about the future. The advisory committee called upon the former Presiding Bishop Herbert W. Chilstrom to issue a call for prayer and reflection. In March 1995 Bishop Chilstrom wrote, "This time of prayer will undergird the conversations about the future we will be holding throughout the ELCA during the Pentecost season as part of the Inquiry process—conversations in which people will be gathering in groups of lay and clergy, conversations within congregations, conversations with persons from all parts of our church system."<sup>2</sup>

These conversations took place. Throughout the summer of 1995, eight events were held<sup>3</sup> (see Table 1). These events included both "dialogue" meetings and "future search" conferences. The dialogue meetings brought together lay people and/or clergy to discuss issues related to the future of the Church. The agenda for these meetings was open and allowed participants to determine topics for discussion. The future search conferences brought together representatives from every part of this church to think about the past and the present, and to imagine the future of the ELCA.

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1 The committee included: Pr. H. George Anderson (chair), president, Luther College, Decorah, Iowa; Bp. Paul J. Blom, Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod, Houston, Texas; Ms. Kay Conrad, Lutheran Family Services in the Carolinas, Winston-Salem, N.C.; Mr. Charles Y. Glock, University of California, Berkeley, retired, Sand Point, Idaho; Pr. Laura L. Klick, Grace Lutheran Church, Allentown, Pa.; Ms. Kathy J. Magnus, ELCA vice president, Denver, Colo.; Pr. Gerald W. Nelson, Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, Naperville, Ill.; Mr. Athornia Steele, Capital University, Columbus, Ohio; and Pr. David L. Tiede, president, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn. Staff support for the project included: Mr. Kenneth W. Inskeep, director of the Department for Research and Evaluation; Ms. Kathryn Sime, research assistant for the Inquiry; Pr. Robert N. Bacher, executive for administration; and Ms. Lita Brusick Johnson, executive assistant to the presiding bishop. Mr. Anthony Harris of the Lyceum Group in Minneapolis, Minn., also gave his services to the project, and Aid Association for Lutherans, Appleton, Wis., helped fund the project.

2 "Call for Prayer and Reflection on the Future," Herbert W. Chilstrom, March 14, 1995.

3 The ninth event, in Bismarck, N.D., was not held until the winter of 1996.

Clergy Dialogue Conference	Columbus, Ohio
Future Search Conference	Sequin, Texas
Future Search Conference	Rock Island, Ill.
Clergy Dialogue Conference	Allentown, Pa.
Future Search Conference	Minneapolis, Minn.
Lay and Clergy Dialogue Conference	Charlotte, N.C.
Clergy Dialogue Conference	Los Angeles, Calif.
Lay and Clergy Dialogue Conference	Portland, Ore.
Clergy and Associates in Ministry Dialogue Conference	Bismarck, N.D.

The dialogue meetings were intentionally unstructured, but they always emphasized peoples' hopes and dreams for the future. These concerns consistently made their way to the forefront: a desire for more support of the work of clergy in the ELCA, for more creative and effective approaches to mission, for more diversity, for the involvement of more youth and young adults, and for the effective use of technology as a means for communication and community building.

At the future search conferences, participants were asked to develop "possibility maps." In terms of identity, for example, one group of participants explored a future that included more racial/ethnic and gender diversity, more variety in worship, and more cross-cultural exchanges. Another group argued for giving worship the highest priority as the most important and shared identity-shaping experience in the Church. In terms of mission, one group focused on the importance of teaching evangelistic skills while another suggested that more attention be given to integrating stewardship, worship, fellowship, and education. In another setting, participants called for local initiatives that emphasized variety, risk-taking, and creativity while the role of the wider Church was cast in terms of listening, supporting, motivating, empowering, and calling to accountability.

By the end of the dialogue and future search conferences, four consistent themes had emerged:

1. **Identity.** The conference participants expressed concern about maintaining a strong Lutheran identity, while at the same time being open to change and diversity. This concern often took the form of a question: What about being a Lutheran was unique and had to be firmly grasped, and what could be left behind for the sake of mission?
2. **Mission.** The conference participants expressed their belief that mission was first and foremost a local enterprise, but they also wished to maintain their connection, rooted in tradition, to do work that was national and global in scope.

3. **Leadership.** The conference participants expressed concern about leadership education in this church—both seminary education for clergy and equipping and empowering lay leaders. Again, this concern took the form of a question: How can we best educate clergy in seminaries so that they receive both the theological and practical education necessary for parish ministry? How can the gifts of lay persons be recognized and made available to this church?
4. **Relationships.** The conference participants expressed a desire for strong, stable, and faithful relationships across this whole church, hoping for an environment of trust where growth and risk-taking were both possible and encouraged.

By the 1995 Churchwide Assembly, the Inquiry Advisory Committee had completed its work, and its chair, H. George Anderson, was elected the new presiding bishop. Between the 1995 Churchwide Assembly and the 1997 Churchwide Assembly, Presiding Bishop Anderson continued to travel throughout this church. He visited the synods and met with clergy and lay persons. He continued listening. He sought the advice of synodical bishops and the ELCA Church Council. He engaged the boards and the advisory committees of the churchwide units, and then, based on the work of the Inquiry and his own understanding, Presiding Bishop Anderson set out a first draft of the "Initiatives." The draft was reviewed again. By the 1997 Churchwide Assembly, there were seven Initiatives focusing on three common areas of need:

**Discipleship**—the need to "continue in Christ's Word" (John 8:31) throughout all of life. We know that in its members this church has gifts, resources, and commitment in abundance. What is needed is direction, encouragement, and certain skills or tools that can encourage life-long growth in faithfulness, in witness and in service.

**Leadership**—the acknowledgment that a church with strong clergy and lay leadership will be a church that is strong in mission. We know that our church has many persons with the gifts for leadership—those described in 2 Timothy 2:2 as "faithful people who will be able to teach others." Some of them are already serving as leaders. The job before us is to identify them, to learn from their experiences, and to help them equip themselves and others to be even more effective in leadership.

**Partnership**—the acknowledgment that no part of the Church stands alone, that we need each other if we are to be faithful to the mission God has entrusted to us. We have a great need to *listen* to each other, to talk with each other about what is at the core of our faith and our hope. And we need to learn from each other. The biblical image of a body with many members (Romans 12) envisions a flow of action that is neither "top-down" nor "bottom-up." It is truly *among* the parts. Individuals and congregations can work

with and help one another. The churchwide organization and synods can assist in that communication, filling in wherever needed. All parts of the Church can constantly learn from one another.

Presiding Bishop Anderson noted:

*The opportunities are limitless. We must select those critical areas where action now will make the most difference for the future. Here are seven initiatives that will focus our existing programs and seize the new opportunities that God has given us. These are not the only important areas where our church is in ministry. But I believe these are the critical ones that warrant our special attention between now and the year 2001. The purpose of these initiatives is to strengthen the whole ministry of our church in preparation for the challenges of the 21st century (Churchwide Assembly Minutes, 1997, page 542).*

#### **THE ASSEMBLY ACTION: CA97.05.19**

*Yes-913; No-5*

**WHEREAS, in 1993 this church began an Inquiry process to understand current trends and realities and to examine the future mission of this church; and**

**WHEREAS, discussions from the Inquiry process have led, in this biennium, to the development of realistic, focused, mission-oriented initiatives following significant listening and conversation throughout this church; and**

**WHEREAS, we now prepare for mission in a new century; and**

**WHEREAS, Presiding Bishop H. George Anderson, in his report to the 1997 Churchwide Assembly, calls the initiatives a “churchwide call to action”; therefore, be it**

**RESOLVED, that the 1997 Churchwide Assembly affirm the “Initiatives for a New Century: A Call to Commitment”; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, that the 1997 Churchwide Assembly encourage the individuals, congregations, synods, churchwide organization, colleges, universities, seminaries, agencies, and institutions of this church to bring these initiatives to life; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, that the Office of the Presiding Bishop oversee and coordinate the implementation of these initiatives.**

#### ***The Context of the Initiatives and the Initiative Process***

During the Inquiry, people not only expressed their hopes and dreams for the future of the ELCA, but they also made frequent comments on the possibility of any new churchwide program. For the most part, they opposed the idea, and it was in this context that Presiding Bishop Anderson noted that the Initiatives were not intended to be a “one-size-fits-all” national program or a “sleek churchwide silver bullet.” Instead, the Initiatives were a framework to be given form and content by individuals, congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization—each in “their own context, using their own gifts and insights, launching additional activities that reflect the hopes and the needs of their communities.” The Initiatives were not intended to be a churchwide program. Instead, as Presiding Bishop Anderson had noted, they were a set of things this church could do together.

At the churchwide expression, teams were organized for each of the Initiatives. These teams included churchwide staff

alongside other members of this church who were asked, because of their interest or expertise, to serve on the teams. The churchwide teams and all the other persons in this church who have taken up the Initiatives have had only a short time to do their work and an even shorter time to see effects.

#### **INITIATIVE BY INITIATIVE<sup>4</sup>**

##### **1. Deepen Our Worship Life**

- a. *We will seek every opportunity to talk with each other about the ways we encounter the living God in worship. We will talk in our congregations, in synods and across synodical boundaries, in campus ministries and other worshipping communities, in seminaries, and in groups where persons have deep differences in culture and worship style. We will discuss why we worship and how we worship. We will reflect on basic questions of purpose relating to preaching, hospitality, spiritual formation and other elements. We will explore the diversity that arises from culture, context, tradition and perspective. We will learn from each other.*
- b. *We will strengthen skills that enhance worship—and will be open to sharing our gifts with others.*
- c. *We will link congregations noted for lively and inviting worship with those that want to discover new depth in worship, using both established methods (meetings and videos) and new technologies (video conferencing).*
- d. *We will develop language- and culture-specific resources for worship, in a variety of styles that are welcoming.*
- e. *We will stimulate creativity in music and the visual and performing arts, and develop new ways of using art and the media.*
- f. *We will develop an appreciation for worship forms and music from a wide variety of cultures within the global Christian community.*

As with all of the Initiatives, Deepen Our Worship Life (DOWL) was ambitious. It called for a churchwide dialogue on worship—in congregations, synods, campus ministries, seminaries, and in groups where people had deep differences of culture and worship style. It called for strengthening skills that enhance worship, linking congregations together to enhance worship, developing new language- and culture-specific resources, stimulating creativity and developing an appreciation for diversity.

The DOWL team put in place a strategy that involved resources designed to assist congregations and others in

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<sup>4</sup> The italicized text at the beginning of each of the following sections is the official text of the Initiatives as they were presented to the 1997 Churchwide Assembly (see *Reports and Records: Assembly Minutes*, 1997, pages 552-558).

talking about worship.<sup>5</sup> The resources included: *YOUth CAN: Worship Leadership in Camps and Congregations* (1998); *God is Here: Video Reflections on Worship in the ELCA with Study Guide* (1999); and *A Guide for Study and Discussion of The Use of the Means of Grace* (1999).<sup>6</sup> The team also sponsored Worship 2000 Jubilee in July of 2000.

Much of the Inquiry conversation on worship was directly related to the place of worship in forming and maintaining a Lutheran identity. For many years, a member of a Lutheran congregation in one part of the country could attend worship miles from home and yet be “at home” because worship in the vast majority of Lutheran congregations was based on a single resource—*Lutheran Book of Worship*. But, in the 1990s, well publicized Lutheran congregations were “experimenting” with worship.<sup>7</sup> Presiding Bishop Anderson (*The Lutheran*, May 1997, page 53) noted:

*Last August I asked the readers of The Lutheran for help. I requested your ideas on how the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America can respond to human need and bring people to faith. Nearly 200 letters came in, mostly from individuals but also from Sunday school classes, forums, and other groups.... Many respondents emphasized the need to get “back to basics” in bringing people to faith. Those basics were often described as greater biblical literacy and more familiarity with the Book of Concord, especially the Augsburg Confession and the Small Catechism.... Worship also is a “basic” for Lutherans. The majority called for a return to “traditional liturgical forms.” Others acknowledged that evangelism to different groups of people might require using new music, liturgies or worship styles, but they did not want traditional Lutheran worship and music totally replaced. Some, however, agreed with a writer seeking greater variety: “the Bible lists many ways of praising the Lord; Lutherans seem to ignore most of them.”*

Edgar R. Trexler, in an editorial in *The Lutheran* (July 1997, page 58) wrote, “Worship is a battleground between members who want traditional worship and those who prefer it contemporary.... Some worship wars are about music, others about language. Some congregations offer a ‘menu’ of worship styles.” And one year later Marcia Erickson Bates

(*The Lutheran*, July 1998, page 12) wrote: “There’s a controversy going on in many congregations. It’s not about politics or theology but worship—traditional vs. contemporary.”

One significant aspect of the evaluation of DOWL is the extent to which the Initiative was successful in negotiating the debate on unity or diversity in worship. But, it is impossible to know if the debate was “settled.” What is possible to say is that the resources produced by DOWL attempted to settle the matter by defining the parameters of the debate—what is foundational and what is a matter of choice. This approach was set out in *The Use of the Means of Grace: A Statement on the Practice of Word and Sacrament* (1997).<sup>8</sup> For example, the document noted: “The gift of Word and Sacrament is from God. This statement on sacramental practices seeks to encourage unity among us in the administration of the means of grace and to foster common understanding and practice. It does not seek to impose uniformity.”<sup>9</sup> Diversity of practice was accepted, even encouraged, as long as “we are united in one common center: Jesus Christ proclaimed in Word and Sacrament amidst participating assemblies of singing, serving, and praying people.”<sup>10</sup> While the document offered fairly traditional guidance on the content of these elements, it did not rule out variation as long as the key elements—those associated with the rite of Holy Communion—existed. These elements included Gathering (Greeting and the Prayer of the Day), Word (First Reading, Gospel, Sermon, Hymn of the Day, the Prayers), Meal (Presentation of the Gifts, Great Thanksgiving, Lord’s Prayer, Communion) and Sending (Blessing). Also implicit was the position that the predominant type of worship in ELCA congregations would be the rite of Holy Communion.

Each of the primary resources produced for DOWL took this point of view. In *YOUth CAN: Worship Leadership in Camps and Congregations*, the authors observed: “Many people discuss leadership and musical styles without a careful look at the foundation and framing of worship. However, today, more than ever, it’s important that worship planners explore the basics of worship before discussing other details. This is true for those who prepare worship, but especially when the setting for worship becomes more ‘non-traditional.’”<sup>11</sup> In “God is Here: Video Reflections on Worship” the video camera recorded worship in congregations “in city, suburb, and country to capture the

5 The team included: Pr. Paul R. Nelson, Division for Congregational Ministries, Chicago, Ill.; Bp. Marcus J. Miller, Northeastern Ohio Synod, Akron, Ohio; Pr. Thomas H. Schattauer, Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa; Pr. Susan Briebl, Holden Village, Chelan, Wash.; Ms. Norma Aamodt Nelson, Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, Minneapolis, Minn.; Pr. Joseph A. Donnell II, chaplain of Gettysburg College, Gettysburg, Pa.; Pr. Richard A. Webb, Division for Congregational Ministries, Chicago, Ill.; and Mr. Robert D. Hawkins, Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, S.C.

6 Also produced with the assistance of Initiative funding were Mandarin translations of *The Use of the Means of Grace* and “Service of the Word” from the *Lutheran Book of Worship*. Because of difficulties with the translations, these resources have not yet been widely distributed.

7 See “Entertainment Evangelism.” *The Lutheran*, May 1990, page 17.

8 This document was adopted for “guidance and practice” by the ELCA Churchwide Assembly on August 19, 1997 [CA97.05.27].

9 *The Use of the Means of Grace: A Statement on the Practice of Word and Sacrament*, 1997, page 9.

10 *ibid.*

11 *YOUth CAN: Worship Leadership in Camps and Congregations*, 1998, page 6.

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diversity of worship practices around the country.”<sup>12</sup> While this diversity is explored, it is well within the parameters set out by the *Use of the Means of Grace*.

The team also sponsored Worship 2000 Jubilee in July of 2000. The conference included a host of seminars exploring variety in worship, but its focus was clearly on the importance of gathering, word, meal, and sending. The opening and closing liturgies were “carefully” built on this ecumenical *ordo* (pattern). Then, the event went on to say: “This basic shape is coupled with texts that support the various elements of the *ordo*, and assist the conference in embracing diverse cultural forms and music.”<sup>13</sup>

### **Team Member Evaluations**

DOWL team members who returned evaluations rated the effectiveness of the Initiative as moderately effective. They reported that the most effective aspects were: 1) seeking every opportunity to talk with congregations about the ways the church encountered the living God in worship, and 2) developing language- and culture- specific resources for worship in a variety of styles that were welcoming. One of the team members commented that the team’s strength was suggesting new ways to teach about worship. Another noted that the strength of the Initiative was that it produced several new resources.

### **Did the Deepen Our Worship Life Initiative Make a Difference?**

Has the ELCA settled the debate over worship and in so doing become more prepared for the future? If so, has DOWL been part of the solution? It is too soon to tell. All that can be said with certainty is that the debate over worship, if it exists, is receiving less attention, at least if *The Lutheran* is our guide. In 1995, *The Lutheran* published 16 general articles on worship with as many as seven focusing on the worship debate including “A Liturgy by Any Other Name” (January 1995, page 9) and “What’s Happening in Worship?” (March 1995, page 38.) In 1998, *The Lutheran* published 15 general articles on worship with a focus on worship in the July issue. Several of these articles made reference in one way or another to the worship debate (“Who’s at the Center?” July 1998, page 7; “12 Good Questions,” July 1998, page 7; “Worship and the Burning Bush,” July 1998, page 14.) In 2000, there were eight general articles on worship, and none focused explicitly on controversies related to worship.

Second, DOWL encouraged the rite of Holy Communion as the predominant service in the ELCA, but this trend was occurring well before the DOWL Initiative.

In 1989, 17 percent of ELCA congregations reported celebrating Holy Communion weekly, but by 1995 it increased to 24 percent of congregations and by 1998 it increased to 29.<sup>14</sup>

Third, DOWL encouraged the discussion of worship at the congregational level. To this end, a variety of activities were undertaken, including the Worship 2000 Jubilee in July of 2000. Three hundred seventy-nine ELCA congregations were represented at the event.

In 2001 a questionnaire was mailed to the congregations<sup>15</sup> that had indicated that they had undertaken activities that were “directly in response to the seven churchwide Initiatives to Prepare for a New Century.” Respondents were asked what was specifically done in their congregations (*The Congregational Survey on the Initiatives*, January 2001). Of those congregations, 41 percent responded. Of these respondents, 29 percent focused on deepening worship life. Based on the annual report forms and this survey work with congregations (and taking into account those congregations that attended the Worship 2000 Jubilee), a conservative estimate is that about 700 congregations or about seven percent of all ELCA congregations took up the DOWL Initiative.

In terms of resources, based on to date figures from the Augsburg Fortress Distribution Service, 1,671 copies of *God is Here: Video Reflections on Worship in the ELCA* have been ordered since December 1999. Since May 1999, 677 copies of “A Guide for Study and Discussion of *The Use of the Means of Grace*” have been ordered, and 573 copies of *YOUTH CAN: Worship Leadership in Camps and Congregations* have been ordered since November 1998.

The DOWL Initiative Team was allocated \$160,000, and it spent \$160,000.

## **2. Teach the Faith**

- a. We will participate in an ELCA-wide “Call to Discipleship,” linked to the year 2000 (with appropriate liturgical rites within the cycle of the church year).
- b. We will ask our most creative congregations and their leaders, our teaching theologians, our bishops, and others to design this call and to help our church move toward a model of life-long growth in discipleship.
- c. We will develop a one- to two-year program where individuals will publicly commit to learning the faith. This school of discipleship will involve a wide range of resources and teaching opportunities, including family video devotional sessions and worship resources.
- d. We will develop or share congregationally developed resources and curricula:

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12 “God is Here: Video Reflections on Worship,” 1999, page 4.

13 *Lifting Up Jesus Christ, Yesterday, Today, and Forever*, Worship 2000 Jubilee, 2000, page 3.

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14 Source: Annual Congregational Reports.

15 Source: Annual Congregations Reports.

1. for teaching persons with no previous knowledge of the Christian faith;
  2. for teaching our adult members, so that they are invited and equipped to “live and witness in the power of the Word”; and
  3. for communities where language- and culture-specific resources are needed.
- e. We will learn about our faith and our Lutheran understanding of Scripture by exploring both our differences and our similarities with other faith traditions. From the perspective of the Eighth Commandment we will ask, “What does it mean to put the best construction on another’s faith experience?”

The Teach the Faith (TTF) Initiative also took a particular point of view. The TTF Initiative point of view was set out in the wording of the Initiative itself: “We will participate in an ELCA-wide ‘Call to Discipleship,’ linked to the year 2000.”<sup>16</sup> In short, the major emphasis of the TTF Initiative was “a call to discipleship,” and, in turn, the call to discipleship was built on identifying, teaching, and living seven “faith practices.” As the authors of the *Living Faith Congregational Planning Guide* (2000, page A-5) put it, “While most Lutheran congregations put a strong emphasis on teaching and preaching, we sometimes soften our emphasis on the doing of faith—the practices of faith.” The faith practices included prayer, study, worship, inviting, encouraging, serving, and giving (*Living Faith Congregational Planning Guide*, 2000, page A-3).

The call to discipleship asked ELCA congregations to join other congregations in emphasizing discipleship between September 2000 and August 2001. The TTF Initiative team created the *Living Faith Congregational Planning Guide* (2000) to assist them. The planning guide was described as “a one-stop, tool box of ideas, planning helps, resource suggestions, and reproducible studies and materials a congregation can use to help facilitate their planning and experience of the Call.... The *Planning Guide* is the primary resource congregations will receive to help them engage this Initiative” (*Call to Discipleship Q and A’s*, April 2000). One copy of the *Planning Guide* was mailed directly to all ELCA congregations, synod and regional offices, ELCA resource centers, staff members and resource specialists of Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, seminary professors of Christian education, the ELCA Church Council, the synodical evangelism network, the synodical Christian education network, and deployed staff for the Division for Outreach.

## Team Member Evaluations

TTF team members returning evaluations rated the effectiveness of the Initiative highly—reporting the most effective aspects were 1) getting the most creative congregations, theologians, bishops, and others to design the *Call to Discipleship*, and 2) developing or sharing congregationally developed resources and curricula for teaching adult members. The team members believe that the strength of the TTF included providing for the creation of good resources with a focus on basics. The concepts and materials were presented in practical ways and made available in Spanish. They also were, according to the team members, adaptable for a variety of settings.

## Did the Teach the Faith Initiative Make a Difference?

Again, it is too soon to tell. The Initiative is in process, but one aspect of the Initiative was to lay the ground work for an ongoing evaluation. In January 2001, the TTF Initiative, in cooperation with the Division for Congregational Ministries and the Department for Research and Evaluation of the churchwide organization, commissioned a telephone survey of 600 members of 40 ELCA congregations. These congregations were selected at random and members were called at random. One of the significant goals of the “Faith Practices Survey” (FPS) was to set a baseline for evaluating the TTF Initiative. However, it is evident that people who responded to the telephone inquiry were *very active* members of their congregations when compared to General Social Survey (GSS) data on *ELCA Lutherans*. GSS data are available on prayer, worship attendance, and giving.<sup>17</sup> The GSS data include all those people who were interviewed between 1986 and 1996, and who indicated they were members of the ELCA or one of its predecessor church bodies.

- **Prayer**—on the FPS, 81 percent said they say grace before meals, 94 percent reported praying or meditating privately in the last week. On the GSS, 52 percent indicated they pray once a day or more, and 78 percent reported praying once a week or more;
- **Worship**—on the FPS, 31 percent said they attended worship every week, and 42 percent said they attended almost every week. On the GSS, 27 percent said they attended nearly every week or more, and 38 percent indicated they attended two or three times a month or more;

16 The team included: Pr. M. Wyvetta Bullock, Division for Congregational Ministries, Chicago, Ill.; Bp. Paul J. Blom, Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod, Houston, Texas; Ms. Diane J. Hymans, Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, Ohio; Ms. Becky Groethe, Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, Minneapolis, Minn.; Pr. David Poling-Goldenne, Division for Congregational Ministries, Chicago, Illinois; Pr. Norene A. Smith, Bayshore Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, Wis.; and Pr. Paul E. Lutz, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Old Saybrook, Conn.

17 The General Social Survey (GSS) is an almost annual “omnibus,” personal interview survey of U.S. households conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC). The first survey was conducted in 1972. Since then more than 35,000 respondents have answered over 2,500 different questions. The GSS tries to follow the highest survey standards in design, sampling, interviewing, processing, and documentation. Items are designed by leading specialists in their field and then pretested, full-probability sampling is used, a high response rate is obtained, and many data quality checks from validation to verification are employed.

- **Giving**—on the FPS, 100 percent report contributing money to their congregation in the last year, and 84 percent indicated that they had contributed money to other charitable causes or religious groups besides the Church. While the percent contributing is very high, the amount contributed, according to the GSS, ranked ELCA Lutherans (at about 1.5 percent of income) near the bottom of the major denominational groups;<sup>18</sup>
- **Study**—on the FPS, 48 percent said they study the Bible on their own, 34 percent indicated they have attended an adult forum or Sunday school class in the last month, and 22 percent have attended a Bible study group on a day other than Sunday;
- **Inviting**—46 percent said they have told someone that they get a lot out of worship and invited them to attend, and 73 percent said they have had a conversation or discussion with someone about their spiritual life;
- **Encouraging**—88 percent reported they have gone out of their way to thank someone who did something very significant for them;
- **Serving**—83 percent said they volunteered time at their church or in some other charitable activity.

On April 29, 2001, people attending worship services in 400 congregations completed questionnaires on their congregations and their own faith practices as part of the U.S. Congregational Life Study.<sup>19</sup> This research will give us additional baseline information. This collection of baseline data upon which to base future evaluations is an important contribution of the TTF Initiative.

Second, the Teach the Faith Initiative, based on reports from synodical assemblies in 1999, was highlighted by 22 synods (the TTF Initiative and the Help the Children (HTC) Initiative received more synod assembly attention than any of the other Initiatives). Synods that highlighted TTF during their synodical assemblies include Sierra Pacific, Grand Canyon, Rocky Mountain, Northwest Synod of Wisconsin, Northeastern Minnesota, Southwestern Minnesota, Nebraska, Central States, Arkansas-Oklahoma, Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana, Southwestern Texas, Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast, Northern Illinois, Southeastern Iowa, Northwestern Ohio, Northeastern Ohio, Southern Ohio, New England, Upper Susquehanna, Delaware-Maryland, Virginia, and South Carolina.

Third, because the Call to Discipleship was designed for the time period from September 2000 to August 2001, and because the *Living Faith Congregational Planning Guide* was mailed in April 2000, it is impossible to know, based on

congregational annual reports from 1998 and 1999, how many congregations participated. About 500 congregations had already begun TTF activities they considered to be part of the Initiative in 1999.<sup>20</sup> We also know that between September 2000 and March 2001, 1,516 *Living Faith Congregational Planning Guides* were ordered through the Augsburg Fortress distribution service.

Fourth, there has been considerable TTF activity on the TTF Web site which was the most accessed of the Initiative related sites (see [www.elca.org/init/teachthefait/index.html](http://www.elca.org/init/teachthefait/index.html)). Between November 30, 2000, and March 28, 2001, [www.elca.org/init/teachthefait](http://www.elca.org/init/teachthefait) was the 27th most-requested ELCA site with 10,624 requests. Also, more Adobe Acrobat PDF files were downloaded from the TTF Web site than any other type of files or from any other place on the ELCA Web site.<sup>21</sup> Downloading PDF files is a frequent occurrence at the ELCA site, with a total of 122,545 downloads during this time period. The TTF Initiative accounted for 66,876 or 54.6 percent of all these PDF downloads (see Table 2). Although it is impossible to know the number of different congregations that downloaded files, a conservative estimate would be several thousand. In short, the TTF Initiative appears to be the initiative with the highest level of congregational engagement.

The Teach the Faith Initiative was allocated \$300,000 and \$299,000 was spent.

Web address:	Number of Downloads	Percent of Total
<a href="http://www.elca.org/init/teachthefait/assessmenttool.pdf">www.elca.org/init/teachthefait/assessmenttool.pdf</a>	18,370	15.0%
<a href="http://www.elca.org/init/teachthefait/leadernotes.pdf">leadernotes.pdf</a>	10,076	8.2%
<a href="http://www.elca.org/init/teachthefait/followers.pdf">followers.pdf</a>	9,388	7.7%
<a href="http://www.elca.org/init/teachthefait/livingexamples.pdf">livingexamples.pdf</a>	8,175	6.7%
<a href="http://www.elca.org/init/teachthefait/disciples.pdf">disciples.pdf</a>	7,293	6.0%
<a href="http://www.elca.org/init/teachthefait/theinvited.pdf">theinvited.pdf</a>	5,236	4.3%
<a href="http://www.elca.org/init/teachthefait/faithpractices.pdf">faithpractices.pdf</a>	1,658	1.4%
<a href="http://www.elca.org/init/teachthefait/wheel.pdf">wheel.pdf</a>	1,354	1.1%
<a href="http://www.elca.org/init/teachthefait/productcatalog.pdf">productcatalog.pdf</a>	1,226	1.0%
<a href="http://www.elca.org/init/teachthefait/worshipresource.pdf">worshipresource.pdf</a>	1,055	0.9%
<a href="http://www.elca.org/init/teachthefait/learners.pdf">learners.pdf</a>	1,044	0.9%
<a href="http://www.elca.org/init/teachthefait/youthguide.pdf">youthguide.pdf</a>	1,034	0.8%
<a href="http://www.elca.org/init/teachthefait/biblestudyintrodo.pdf">biblestudyintrodo.pdf</a>	967	0.8%
<b>Total for Teach the Faith</b>	<b>66,876</b>	<b>54.6%</b>
<b>Total PDF downloads</b>	<b>122,545</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

<sup>20</sup> This estimate is based on *The Congregational Survey on the Initiatives*, January 2001.

<sup>21</sup> Adobe Acrobat® allows publishers to copy their work to an electronic format that is easy to download and print using the Adobe Acrobat Reader®. The reader is distributed free of charge.

<sup>18</sup> See *Money Matters: Personal Giving in American Churches*. Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1996, page 12.

<sup>19</sup> See [www.uscongregations.org/uscong/iclweb.htm](http://www.uscongregations.org/uscong/iclweb.htm).

### 3. Witness to God's Action in the World: Part I, Evangelism

- a. We will strengthen those skills that help congregations "turn inside out" in witness and service.
  1. We will link congregations that have specific gifts and experiences with those that want to deepen their commitment to effective witness and service.
  2. We will use creatively the tools of the new technology. By the end of 1998 our church will have a strong Internet presence—in evangelism—that will complement and support the work of congregations, campus ministries, and other worshiping communities.
  3. By 1999 we will pilot a model that can be used in all nine regions of the ELCA to help congregations that are ready for transformation to mission/outreach to make that change.

#### The Mid-Sized Congregations Transformation Project

The Witness to God's Action in the World Initiative was divided into two parts. The first explicitly embraced an evangelistic focus.<sup>22</sup> A major portion of the Witness-Evangelism Initiative was the "Mid-Sized Congregations Transformation Project."<sup>23</sup> The project was designed to focus on congregations with worship attendance of 100-300 persons, which in 1999 included 41 percent of all ELCA congregations and 48 percent of all those who worship on a typical Sunday. The project design involved a "launch" event, and congregations were expected to participate in cluster teams designed to provide encouragement and support. The Division for Congregational Ministries (DCM) managed the project, which was designed, in cooperation with DCM, primarily by pastors of growing mid-sized congregations. Pastors also served as the primary presenters at the launch events (workshops set over two days). The workshops provided 10 "handles" that were useful in setting goals for growth, which included multiplying hospitality ministry, strengthening community outreach, grounding growth in prayerful planning, expanding and diversifying worship, creating additional lay-led ministries, and so on. Congregations also were expected to bring a minimum of three lay persons to the launch events. The project began in 1998 with seven synods. The program was offered by as many as 15 synods in October 2000.

#### Team Member Evaluations

<sup>22</sup> The team included: Bp. Ronald B. Warren, Southeastern Synod, Atlanta, Ga.; Pr. Richard A. Magnus, Division for Outreach, Chicago, Ill.; and Pr. Marta Poling-Goldenne, Division for Congregational Ministries, Chicago, Ill.

<sup>23</sup> There were three other projects associated with this Initiative. Both projects are yet to be evaluated and include the *Transforming Ministry Project* produced by the Small Town and Rural Ministry Team of the Division for Outreach and the *Tools for a New Generation* CD-ROM, and the *Man 2 Man* cassette produced by Lutheran Men in Mission to assist congregations in growing their ministries with men.

Team members returning evaluations rated the effectiveness of the Witness-Evangelism Initiative highly. They argued that the most effective aspects of the Initiative were 1) strengthening the skills that help congregations "turn inside out" in witness and service; and 2) developing a mission/outreach model for congregations to use.

#### Did the Witness-Evangelism, Mid-Sized Congregations Transformation Project Make a Difference?

First, data on change in average worship attendance of congregations involved with the Mid-Sized project are available for 29 congregations in the Central States Synod and 19 congregations in the Southern Ohio Synod. All these congregations participated in the pilot project in 1998. An initial review of the attendance figures of the these congregations showed increases in average worship attendance in 1998—over and above those in the ELCA as a whole and those of the congregations in these synods that were not in the project (see Table 3). The pilot in the Southern Ohio Synod had the strongest impact. Project congregations in the Southern Ohio Synod grew by 4.1 percent in 1998, compared to a loss of 1.4 percent for congregations in the synod that were not in the project.

Average Attendance (Congregations with 100 to 300 in Average Worship)	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	% Change 1997-1998	% Change 1998-1999
ELCA (4,386 congregations with 100 to 300 members)	167.7	168.2	169.1	169.7	169.5	0.35%	-0.12%
Central States Synod 29 congregations (100 to 300) in the 1998 Project	153.4	153.6	157.4	159.8	160.3	1.5%	0.3%
Central States Synod 57 congregations (100 to 300) NOT in the 1998 Project	157.4	159.9	160.1	160.1	162.5	0.0%	1.5%
Southern Ohio Synod 19 congregations (100 to 300) in the 1998 Project	159.0	158.5	161.7	168.3	171.0	4.1%	1.6%
Southern Ohio Synod 78 congregations (100 to 300) NOT in the 1998 Project	170.1	168.5	169.8	167.5	165.5	-1.4%	-1.2%

Other research on the growth of congregations and the impact of interventions designed to produce growth has shown that growth often occurs as a result of the

intervention, but that it is difficult to sustain.<sup>24</sup> This is a possibility once again, with the growth rates for both sets of project congregations dropping in 1999, but it is simply too soon to tell.

Second, the Mid-Sized Congregation Project is being taken up by a significant number of synods (15-23 percent). This means that the synods—or at least groups of persons within synods—are convinced that there is a need for work with these congregations and that the project holds considerable potential.

The Mid-Sized Congregation Project was allocated \$38,000, and it spent \$38,000.

### **The Sharing Faith Web Site**

In addition to the Mid-Sized Congregation Project, the Web site ([www.sharingfaith.org](http://www.sharingfaith.org)) was launched, in part, with Witness–Evangelism Initiative funding. As with all Web-based efforts, evaluating a site by asking random samples of people who have been to the site is impossible because people come and go without identifying themselves. Between February 1999 and March 2001, the site received an average of 3,100 “hits” per month, but it is difficult to determine the extent to which the page is achieving an evangelistic intention. Perhaps because the site also was designed to serve the public media campaign launched by the ELCA (The Identity Project) in the same time frame as the Initiatives, it is a mixture of Bible studies, faith stories, and practical information about the ELCA. Based on usage logs, at least 80 percent of accesses came directly to the site without referral from another site, which means they were coming from the outside instead of through the ELCA main page or its related links. About five percent of access was through the following search chain of [www.Yahoo.com](http://www.Yahoo.com): Society and Culture | Religion and Spirituality | Faiths and Practices | Christianity | Denominations and Sects | Evangelical Lutheran Church | Sharing Faith. If the key words “why believe” are entered using the different search engines, [www.sharingfaith.org](http://www.sharingfaith.org) is listed as the first site on AltaVista and is the third site on HotBot. On the other hand, [www.sharingfaith.org](http://www.sharingfaith.org) is not among the top twenty sites listed by other popular search engines such as Excite, Lycos, Google, Netscape, or Yahoo. It is not unusual for sites by The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod ([www.lcms.org/belief.asp](http://www.lcms.org/belief.asp)) or by the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod ([www.wels.net/sab/twb/eng\\_home.html](http://www.wels.net/sab/twb/eng_home.html)) to be listed before any ELCA site using these search engines.

While relatively few accesses to the site come through other sites, the top seven search keywords are presented for September 2000 to February 2001 (see Table 4). During that period, people were looking primarily for youth Bible

studies, and the site does offer access to Bible studies, even though there was no clearly delineated Bible study area. The Bible studies are in the section called “Words to Live By,” which includes links to the “Bible Says” portion of the ELCA main-page; to “Faith Lens,” which is a weekly Web page Bible study from ELCA Youth Ministries; and to “Devo’Zine for teens,” which is an interactive site for teens developed by the Upper Room Ministries in Nashville, Tennessee.

**Table 4: Top 7 Search Keywords by Access Count**

	Feb '01	Jan '01	Dec '00	Nov '00	Oct '00	Sep '00	Total
youth Bible studies	90	103	39	86	106	48	472
Bible studies for children	33	56	15	37	13	14	168
faith	27	31	16	27	36	28	165
Bible questions	18	0	19	20	10	8	75
sharing	15	9	12	9	9	11	65
children's church	0	0	0	9	13	19	41
volunteer opportunities	11	0	8	0	10	0	29

The Sharing Faith Web Site project was allocated \$20,000, and it spent \$20,000.

### **3. Witness to God’s Action in the World: Part II, Moral Deliberation and Public Witness**

b. *We will encourage congregations to model life in community by assisting them:*

1. *to address and deliberate on pressing social and ethical questions in a spirit of civility, drawing upon Scripture, our theological tradition, contemporary knowledge, and our varying experiences; and*
2. *in their cooperative efforts with civic and private agencies for community renewal through economic development, housing rehabilitation, jobs, and business development.*

#### **Moral Deliberation**

The second part of the Witness Initiative focused on moral deliberation and public witness, which also consisted of two parts.<sup>25</sup> The first was a focus on moral deliberation. Several activities were undertaken in support of this focus, including the creation of a congregational deliberation guide and moral deliberation training. As a precursor to the development of the moral deliberation guide, a consultation was held in Orlando, Florida, on November 22-23, 1998, with people from organizations that specialize in facilitating faith-based discussion processes. The consultation was attended by 17 people, including representatives from the Florida-Bahamas Synod and the Central States Synod, the Inter-Religious Council of Central New York, the Lutheran Office for Governmental Affairs, Lutheran Advocacy Ministry of

24 *An Evaluation of the 1991 Evangelism Strategy of the ELCA*, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2000. Available from the Department for Research and Evaluation of the ELCA, upon request.

25 The team included: Pr. Charles S. Miller, Division for Church in Society; Pr. Karen S. Parker, Huntington Beach, Calif.; and Bp. Paul R. Swanson, Oregon Synod, Portland, Ore.

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Oregon, Lutheran Office for Public Policy–California, Common Ground Network for Life and Choice, Church Innovations Institute, and the Center for New Community. In 1999, *Talking Together as Christians About Tough Social Issues* was published. It was designed to assist congregations in undertaking faith-based deliberations on tough social issues, and was included in the November–December, 1999, *Action Packet*. Copies of the resource were distributed through the Augsburg Fortress Distribution Service and also could be downloaded directly from [www.elca.org/dcs/talkingtogether.html](http://www.elca.org/dcs/talkingtogether.html). The number of copies that have been downloaded is unknown, but since November 1999, a total of 5,192 copies of the resource have been ordered through the distribution service.

A second consultation was held in Newark, New Jersey, in May 2000. It included 11 people: three congregational clergy, five lay persons representing different congregations, one representative from the New Jersey Synod, and two staff members of the Division for Church in Society. This consultation focused on the possibility of developing a multicultural resource for moral deliberation, but no resource has yet been created.

In addition to the congregational deliberation guide, a training event on moral deliberation was held in Atchison, Kan., in October 2000. Fifty-five people attended, including people from 10 congregations, three multicultural outreach ministries, seven synods, two social ministry organizations, and one state public policy council. This event was designed as a pilot and several significant findings were noted: 1) the event was difficult to “market,” but direct mailings seemed to work best, especially if they were to target groups with some predisposed reason to be interested in moral deliberation; 2) there was some success in using synod staff to help identify the most likely congregations; 3) personal phone contact works best in getting persons to participate in the training events; 4) moral deliberation processes are most effective when led by ministry teams, which means the cost of training for congregations goes up proportionately to the number of people (and more is better) attending training events. “Perhaps most significantly, we learned that there is interest in this kind of training when people know it is available and can see how it might help their ministry. The major challenge is crossing a ministry’s threshold of awareness, something which it appears we were at least partly successful in doing” (*Memo*, December 2000).

Finally, three additional planned aspects of the Initiative have not taken place or have partially taken place. One of several planned videos on moral deliberation in congregations has been completed. This video is not yet available to congregations. Also, the plan to encourage and support conversations about ethical or social issues of mutual interest using interactive video and the Internet has not yet been pursued.

## **Community Renewal**

The community renewal aspect of the Initiative gave small grants to three different agencies to enhance their ability to do community renewal work. These agencies included the Colton Community Center, Colton, Ore.; the Pico Union Family Resource Center, Los Angeles, Calif.; and the La Sagrada Familia Parish, Chicago, Ill. The Colton Community Center provides a day camp, free legal consultations, tutoring program, and access to free medical services like flu-shots. The Pico Union Family Resource Center provides basic community social and health care services. The La Sagrada Familia parish serves immigrants by providing social services, income tax services, computer training, and English–as–a–Second–Language training. Reports from each of the agencies highlight new work made possible through the grants and an appreciation for the funding. Each of these agencies appears to have already been adept at community renewal activities, and the Initiative grants allowed them to do more.

## **Team Member Evaluations**

The team members returning evaluations rated the effectiveness of the Witness Initiative–*Moral Deliberation and Public Witness* as moderately effective. Team members reported that the Initiative’s strengths were the resources that were developed, but their impression was the resources were not widely used.

## **Did the Witness–Moral Deliberation and Public Witness Initiative Make a Difference?**

First, there appears to be considerable congregational interest in the resource *Talking Together as Christians About Tough Social Issues*, based on the number of copies ordered through the distribution service. The availability of this resource for congregational use is a significant contribution. At the same time, the ordering of a resource does not mean it is used. The comments about the difficulty in engaging congregations set out the territory—“there is interest...when people can see how it might help their ministry. The major challenge is crossing a ministry’s threshold of awareness....” This is the problem with all resources and church programs, but making the case for *helping* a ministry may be most difficult when it comes to tough social issues.

Second, the community renewal grants also appear to have been well appreciated by the agencies that received them, but this is financially intensive, and therefore limited, work.

The Witness Initiative–Moral Deliberation and Public Witness projects were allocated \$125,000, and spent \$86,000.

## **4. Strengthen One Another in Mission, Part I: Asset Mapping**

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- a. *We will design a process and methods to assess the resources and talents that the baptized bring to the mission and ministry of the Church.*

The Strengthen One Another in Mission also was divided into two parts. The first was a pilot project on “Asset Mapping” (SOAM-AM) and its possible use in congregations.<sup>26</sup> Asset mapping was developed as a method for approaching community development. It is an attempt to refocus from techniques that emphasize a community’s needs, deficiencies, and problems to “beginning with a clear commitment to discovering a community’s capacities and assets” (*Building Communities from the Inside Out*, 1997, page 1). The philosophy behind taking this alternative asset-based approach is that communities only develop when people in the community are committed to “investing themselves and their resources in the effort” and that “the prospect for outside help is bleak” (*Building Communities from the Inside Out*, 1997, page 5). As the authors (1997, page 6) put it:

*The key to neighborhood regeneration, then, is to locate all of the available local assets, to begin connecting them with one another in ways that multiply their power and effectiveness, and to begin harnessing those local institutions that are not yet available for local development purposes. This entire process begins with the construction of a new “map.” Once this guide to capacities has replaced the old one containing only needs and deficiencies, the regenerating community can begin to assemble its strengths into new combinations, new structures of opportunities, new sources of income and control, and new possibilities for production.*

For the pilot project, seven congregations were recruited in four locations. The congregations included the yoked parish of St. John’s Lutheran Church in Farmersburg, Iowa, and First Lutheran Church of MacGregor, Iowa; Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Seattle, Wash.; Pentecostal Lutheran Church, Divine Word Lutheran Church, and Florist Avenue Lutheran Church, all in Milwaukee; and Living Waters Lutheran Church in Lino Lakes, Minn. These congregations were recruited to represent a mix of church and community dynamics. Each congregation selected a group of five to ten lay people. These people were visited on site (in the fall of 2000) by the project director. The project director worked with these lay groups in teaching them about asset mapping and its use in congregations. The training exercises were based on the use of community asset mapping as it is presented in *Building Communities from the Inside Out* (1997).

Each congregation organized its own asset mapping process. Members of the congregations identified

congregational and individual assets, drew links between these assets, and used the asset maps to generate strategies aimed at solving specific challenges. In February 2001, the project director (*Memo*, 2001) noted the following observations:

1. The largest immediate impact was new energy. Asset mapping opened new possibilities, which are “engaging and even exciting” the members. “Some are struggling to turn that energy into action. Others are taking off in ways they never imagined. Every congregation is getting ‘unstuck.’”
2. The biggest potential is significant change. Members are looking at themselves differently. “They are losing preconceptions about things like service, church versus community, and money, and thinking instead about their potential to achieve their mission through the release of their gifts.”
3. Several congregations have started new projects such as after-school initiatives, church council leadership, an inter-generational women’s group, and a building expansion.
4. The biggest challenge is translating renewed energy into actual projects.

In March 2001 a follow-up evaluation event took place in Chicago. Representatives from each of the seven congregations shared their congregational asset mapping experiences with the group. The common themes found in these congregational experiences included:

1. **Community Building.** The asset mapping experiences strengthened relationships among congregational members. The meetings and exercises were opportunities for people to get to know each other, network, and link common interests.
2. **Appreciation.** The asset mapping experiences gave people the opportunity to share their strengths, ideas, hobbies, etc., with other congregational members. Members appreciated these opportunities.
3. **Discovery.** The asset mapping experiences identified new assets that the congregations did not previously realize they had. These discoveries re-energized groups and identified new leadership within the congregations.

### **Team Member Evaluations**

SOAM team members returning evaluations rated the effectiveness of the Initiative as ineffective, though one team member reported moderate effectiveness in designing a process to assess the resources and talents that the baptized bring to the mission and ministry of the Church.

One team member indicated that the most successful aspect of the initiative was that it legitimized the exploration and development of “asset-based planning” in congregations.

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<sup>26</sup> The team included: Ms. Christine H. Grumm, San Francisco, Calif.; Ms. Sandra Holloway, Division for Global Mission, Chicago, Ill.; Pr. Glenn H. Schoonover, Nebraska Synod, Omaha, Neb.; Mr. Robert Sitze, Division for Congregational Ministries, Chicago, Ill.; and Mr. Luther Snow, Chicago, Ill.

The Strengthen One Another in Mission Initiative—Asset Mapping project was allocated \$50,000 and received another \$4,200 in support from AAL. The Initiative spent \$47,000.

**4. Strengthen One Another in Mission, Part II: Networking**

*b. We will create and strengthen networks linking congregations, synods, institutions, agencies, the churchwide organization, and our ecumenical and global partners.*

- 1. We will use the new technologies to link our congregations and agencies and will encourage all congregations to be connected by computer by the year 2000; we will ask the youth of our church to help make this vision become a reality.*
- 2. We will expand global and domestic people-to-people mission opportunities (through mission partners, global mission, and other means).*
- 3. We will strengthen the networks by which financial resources are linked with mission needs.*

The second portion of the Strengthen One Another in Mission—Networking (SOAM-N) Initiative was wide-ranging. It focused on new technologies, expanding “people-to-people mission” opportunities, and improving the means by which mission needs were linked to financial resources. It appears that only the “electronic” networking portion of the Initiative was addressed.<sup>27</sup>

**Did the Strengthen One Another in Mission—Networking Initiative Make a Difference?**

First, the use of a computer and access to the Internet is widespread in the larger society. According to a tracking survey conducted by the *Pew Internet Project: Internet Tracking Report* (www.pewinternet.org, February 2000), by the end of 2000, 56 percent of the adult population had access to the Internet. African Americans were least likely to have access while persons between the ages of 30-49 were most likely. For purposes of comparison, we would expect similar levels of access among ELCA members. No information is available for lay persons, but for the 12,021 active and on-leave, full-time, and part-time clergy on the roster of this church, 6,255 (52 percent) report e-mail addresses (*Roster Leadership Files*, Office of the Secretary, ELCA). In fact, in every category, the figures for the clergy are quite close to those of the general U.S. population (see Table 5). This

means that for clergy at least, the ELCA is neither ahead nor behind the larger society in Internet access.

	U.S. Population, Adults (Internet access)	ELCA Active and On-Leave Clergy (E-mail address)
All Adults/Active, On-Leave Clergy	56%	52%
Men	58	53
Women	54	49
Whites	57	53
African Americans	43	39
Latinos	47	37
30-49	65	56
50-64	51	51
65 and older	15	31

Second, ELCA members do have access to more information about the Church than ever before. The search engine available on the ELCA Web site searches not only www.elca.org, but also www.sharingfaith.org, www.loga.org, and the Web sites of ELCA colleges, seminaries, *The Lutheran*, campus ministries, synods, camps, social ministry organizations, and other sites that have been registered with this church. This method of linking together sites via the search engine provides members with considerable power.

Third, the access to ELCA resources has never been greater. Many of this church’s resources can be downloaded directly, as has been noted in relation to the TTF Initiative.

Fourth, there has been sustained growth in ELCA Web site traffic, which now is about 8,390 visitor sessions per day. Another indicator, however, of the role of the site is the number of times the site is referenced by others. The domain “elca.org” is ranked 1,945 out of 1,087,660 domains tracked in the WebsMostLinked.com database. Comparable rankings are: 3,675 for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (lcms.org); 7,331 for the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (wels.net); 2,862 for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (pcusa.org); and 6,493 for the United Church of Christ (ucc.org.)

The Strengthen One Another in Mission Initiative - Electric Networking project was allocated \$50,000, and spent \$48,000.

**5. Help the Children**

*a. We will call on every congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to declare itself to be a “safe haven” for children and youth by the end of 1998.*

- 1. We will ask these 11,000 “safe havens” to build upon their assets and resources, within the context of their local communities, as they provide support and nurture to children and their families/care givers.*

<sup>27</sup> The team included: Mr. Paul Edison-Swift, Department for Communication, Chicago, Ill.; Mr. Kenneth F. Aicher, Florida-Bahamas Synod, Tampa, Fla.; Mr. Charles Ruthroff, Sierra Pacific Synod, Oakland, Calif.; Ms. Glennady Sculley, Saint Paul Area Synod, St. Paul, Minn.; and Ms. LaRue Unglaube, Department for Information Technology, Chicago, Ill.

2. We will establish an ELCA “Safe Haven Network” and use both church media and existing networks to share stories and models from congregations.
  3. We will encourage partnership in this effort with Lutheran colleges and social ministry organizations.
  4. We will expand by at least 50 per year our network of preschools and day schools, which often serve as “islands of hope.”
- b. We will create an ELCA Children’s Council and, where appropriate, synodical Children’s Councils, to promote the well-being of children and to provide a clear and unified voice for children.
- c. We will redouble our efforts to aid children, youth and young adults at risk from racism, hunger, violence and poverty, both at home and throughout the world.
1. We will strengthen the ELCA-wide strategy relating to women and children living in poverty (an emphasis adopted by the 1993 Churchwide Assembly for the decade of the 1990s).
  2. We will advocate with the government for public measures that support the well-being of children.
  3. We will advocate for and support our church’s efforts to meet the basic needs of children through Lutheran social ministry organizations, as they provide adoption, counseling, and caring services for children, and through the ELCA World Hunger Program, which carries our concerns for children throughout the world.

The Help the Children Initiative (HCI) placed most of its energy into the Safe Haven for Children Project.<sup>28</sup> As a part of the project, a written resource and a Web site ([www.elca.org/init/safehaven](http://www.elca.org/init/safehaven)) were created to encourage congregations to become safe havens. These resources also set out the steps for becoming a Safe Haven. These steps or “keys” included: 1) making “a public congregational resolution to become a welcoming place for children”; 2) implementing an intentional educational process to increase members’ collective understanding of the issues confronting children; 3) developing partnerships with child-focused organizations in the community “to help embody the commitment and test the understanding of the congregation;” and 4) to share the story of the congregation to help “foster a dialogue with congregations across the nation” (*Safe Haven for Children: Hope for Congregations and Communities*

Resource Folder, 1999, page 9). The *Safe Haven for Children: Hope for Congregations and Communities Resource Folder* also made the case for developing or strengthening early childhood education as a Safe Haven activity, for discussing and working to address causes of poverty, of developing an advocacy plan for children, to institute a “Parish Protection Program” (a program for recognizing and minimizing potential for child abuse) and engaging in at least two inter-generational Bible studies.

### **Team Member Evaluations**

HCI team members returning evaluations rated the effectiveness of the Initiative as moderately effective, reporting the most effective aspect of the Initiative was calling on every congregation of the ELCA to declare itself a safe haven. Team members reported that Initiative strengths included producing effective materials and creating awareness.

### **Did the Help the Children Initiative Make a Difference?**

Action related to the Safe Haven project appears to be extensive. The Augsburg Fortress Distribution Service stocked 38,630 *Safe Haven for Children: Hope for Congregations and Communities* (1999) resources. As of March 26, 2001, 28,507 had been ordered. In other words, the *Safe Haven for Children: Hope for Congregations and Communities* (1999) was the Initiative’s most widely-distributed resource.

One of the ideas of the Safe Haven project was to share the experiences of congregations and others in establishing a safe haven, but that aspect of the project has not taken shape (except for a short list of congregational stories at [www.elca.org/init/safehaven/](http://www.elca.org/init/safehaven/)). There also is no place for a congregation to register as a Safe Haven, and as a result, it is difficult to know exactly how many congregations actually became Safe Haven congregations. Based on the annual report forms and this survey work with congregations, a conservative estimate is that about 400 congregations or about four percent of all ELCA congregations took up the HCI Initiative in a serious way, but given the number of resources ordered through the Augsburg Fortress Distribution Service, it would be reasonable to believe that many more congregations consider themselves Safe Havens.

Finally, the HCI also became a focus of considerable synodical assembly attention. Based on reports from synod assemblies in 1999, 21 synods highlighted HCI. And HCI became a modest part of the wider advocacy plan for the ELCA. It is referenced in the Introduction of the plan and with regard to advocacy related to hunger, women and children living in poverty, gun control, and child care (see [www.elca.org/dcs/advocacyplan/adplan.html](http://www.elca.org/dcs/advocacyplan/adplan.html) “A Comprehensive Plan for ELCA Churchwide Public Policy and Private Sector Advocacy 1999-2000”).

28 The team included: Ms. Joanne Negstad, Lutheran Services in America, St. Paul, Minn.; Ms. Kay Bengston, Lutheran Office for Governmental Affairs, Washington, D.C.; Ms. Donna Braband, Division for Higher Education and Schools, Chicago, Ill.; Ms. Miriam Campbell, Children and Family Ministries, Chicago, Ill.; Ms. Lori Claudio, Division for Congregational Ministries, Chicago, Ill.; Bp. Mark S. Hanson, Saint Paul Area Synod, St. Paul, Minn.; Ms. Loretta Horton, Division for Congregational Ministries, Chicago, Ill.; Ms. Vicki Johnson, Office of the Presiding Bishop, Chicago, Ill.; Ms. Barbara A. Myers, Lower Susquehanna Synod, Harrisburg, Pa.; Mr. John Scibilia, Division for Higher Education and Schools, Hicksville, N.Y.; Ms. Myrna J. Sheie, Office of the Presiding Bishop, Chicago, Ill.; Ms. Shirley Teig, Plymouth, Minn.; and Ms. Key Tellekson, W. St. Paul, Minn.

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The Help the Children Initiative was allocated \$100,000. It received another \$100,000 from AAL. The Initiative spent \$159,000.

## **6. Connect with Youth and Young Adults**

- a. *We will create greater synergy among our existing assets for youth and young adults.*
  1. *We will call a “summit meeting” in 1998 of youth/young adults, representatives from our youth-related programs, and other experts on “Generation X/Post-Modern” youth in order to map out a comprehensive strategy of congregational ministry in the post-confirmation years. Special attention will be given to reaching youth who are currently “underserved” by the Church.*
  2. *We will provide means for congregations with youth and young adult ministry, as well as our Lutheran colleges and campus ministries, to share their gifts with congregations seeking to enhance their connection with youth and young adults.*
- b. *We will develop and provide ready access to challenging ministry and service activities for youth and young adults, including:*
  1. *“summer service teams” of youth, perhaps in partnership with ELCA outdoor ministries;*
  2. *a churchwide “clearinghouse” for summer and full year church service internships in synods, social ministry organizations, schools, congregations, the churchwide offices, and related organizations (e.g., Bread for the World, Lutheran Volunteer Corps);*
  3. *a youth and young adult volunteer opportunity system using the World Wide Web;*
  4. *a periodical (on- or off-line) for and by young adults about service opportunities;*
  5. *invitations to the youth and young adults of our church to develop programs for the whole church (e.g., creating a healthier planet).*
- c. *We will provide special assistance to new ministries that have a primary focus on youth and young adults—especially those at risk from racism, sexism, hunger, violence, drugs, and poverty, including those who are in prison.*

In February 1999 the Connect with Youth and Young Adults Initiative (CYYA) team organized a youth summit in Atlanta, Ga.<sup>29</sup> The summit brought together nearly 1,000 people from 10 different ELCA ministries. These ministries work with youth and young adults, including the council of synod LYO presidents, the ELCA youth ministry network,

ELCA youth ministries/gathering team, Lutheran campus ministries, ELCA outdoor ministries, Lutheran colleges and universities, ELCA schools, ELCA seminaries, leadership from the churchwide and synodical offices, and leadership from ELCA congregations. The summit was designed as a forum for the exchange of information and to celebrate and promote youth and family ministries in the ELCA. The summit included keynote speeches by Presiding Bishop Anderson and Dr. Peter Benson of the Search Institute, Minneapolis, Minn. The Summit also included workshops and networking activities.

### **Team Member Evaluations**

CYYA team members returning evaluations rated the effectiveness of the Initiative as moderately effective. They report that the most effective aspect of the Initiative was the Summit.

### **Did the Connect with Youth and Young Adults Initiative Make a Difference?**

With regard to the Summit, connections were made that appear to be useful. For example, the ELCA youth ministries/gathering team now is more directly linked with the ELCA youth ministry network, a grass-roots organization that nurtures ELCA youth directors. Additionally, the ELCA youth ministries/gathering team is more directly linked with primary stakeholders among those who serve youth and adults, including ELCA camps, colleges and universities, seminaries, and para-church structures that serve ELCA congregations.

A second focus of the CYYA Initiative was the use of the Internet as a means for connecting with youth and young adults. Soulfuel—a Web site for young people—was conceived as a key component of the Initiative, but the site was never operational.

The Connect with Youth and Young Adults Initiative was allocated \$100,000 and it received \$21,000 in additional support from Lutheran Brotherhood. The Initiative spent \$100,000.

## **7. Develop Leaders for the Next Century**

- a. *We will take every opportunity to encourage and support pastors and lay leaders in their service in the Church and in their ministry in daily life.*
  1. *We will make life-long learning an expectation for all leaders in mission.*
  2. *We will continue to explore the use of electronic networking to provide resources and opportunities to exchange ideas.*
- b. *We will seek to understand what leadership will require in the 21st century and identify and develop leaders for the future who have the necessary gifts.*

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<sup>29</sup> The team included: Ms. Desiree Quintana, Martinez, Calif.; Ms. Brenda Auterman, Minneapolis, Minn.; Pr. Kelly Chatman, Division for Congregational Ministries, Chicago, Ill.; Mr. Jonathan Reitz, Tulsa, Okla.; and Ms. Louise Thoreson, Lutheran Brotherhood, Minneapolis, Minn.

1. *Beginning in 1998, we will design a leadership development pilot project that could include the following elements:*
  - a) *We will identify and gather persons—lay and clergy—who are currently exercising faithful and creative leadership in the Church and in daily vocations, and ask them to reflect on leadership qualities: what gifts leaders will need in the new century.*
  - b) *Potential leaders could be identified by synods, using these findings and the synods' own experience. These emerging leaders could be invited to participate in a multi-year process of servant leadership development, through distance learning, small group work, and immersion sessions focusing on Biblical studies, spiritual formation, global awareness, and learning through service.*
2. *We will develop strategies for identifying, supporting and preparing leaders in ethnic-specific communities and strategies for enhancing the ability of Church leaders to minister in an increasingly multicultural context for ministry by 1999.*
- c. *We will provide guidance, educational opportunities, and financial support for those who are preparing to be leaders in mission. In the coming biennium, we will launch the Fund for Leaders in Mission to provide the financial base for this endeavor.*

The Develop Leaders for the Next Century Initiative (DLNC) consisted of two inter-related parts.<sup>30</sup> The first was a conference using an “open space” approach called “What Makes Good Leaders Tick?” The conference, of about 40 people, was held February 19-21, 1999. Those people who attended represented a wide range of ELCA members. Based on findings of the conference, the DLNC team chose to use Initiative funding for grants to encourage leadership development in the ELCA by the use of certain techniques, including mentoring, networking, and immersion. In practice, the proposal often suggested the use of some combination of these techniques.

Fifty-one DLNC grants were awarded. The smallest grant was for \$700 and the largest for \$5,000. A total of \$132,072 was awarded. Grants were awarded in 1999 and 2000. In 1999 the average grant amount was approximately \$1,700 per project; in 2000, the average grant amount was approximately \$4,300 per project. In 1999, over 100 proposals were not funded; in 2000, 26 proposals were not

funded. At least 1, 012 people directly participated in programs funded by these grants. Numbers of participants ranged from programs for fewer than five to programs for 100 or 200 participants.

Nineteen of the projects that received a grant involved some aspect of mentoring. Sixteen of the projects were networking projects, including projects for electronically networking groups like parish nurses and police chaplains. Sixteen of the projects were immersion projects where people go into a setting very different from their own to learn about themselves and people who are different from themselves.

Thirty-four of the grants funded new programs, while 14 funded expanded programs. Eight of the grants were awarded for smaller amounts than what had been requested, while 14 of the proposals were completely funded through these grants.

### **Team Member Evaluations**

DLNC team members returning evaluations rated the effectiveness of the Initiative highly. They believe that the Initiative was highly effective at identifying and gathering persons who are currently exercising faithful and creative leadership to discuss what gifts leaders will need in the new century. The team viewed one of its greatest contributions as identifying three new and effective ways of developing leaders—through mentoring, networking, and immersion projects.

### **Did the Develop Leaders for the Next Century Initiative Make a Difference?**

For the grant projects where there was sufficient information to make a determination, it is clear that the project evaluators believed most of the projects were successful. Only 10 percent were reported to be unsuccessful. These “failures” were primarily attributed to recruiting and scheduling problems that prevented the project from accomplishing its intentions.

Many of the project evaluations discussed benefits such as increased participant self-esteem and confidence, raising the level of awareness of various issues among participants, and strengthening faith and relationships with faith communities. Although most of the projects produced beneficial results for participants and were determined to be successful by project evaluators, approximately 50 percent of the projects did not appear to fulfill the criteria laid out by the DLNC team: that mentoring projects allow participants to learn from experienced leaders in an experiential or relational setting as opposed to a classroom setting; that networking projects teach participants to find existing resources and establish networks to be used in all aspects of their lives; and that immersion projects allow participants to learn by participating in the life of a culture or organization.

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<sup>30</sup> The team included: Bp. Steven L. Ullestad, Northeastern Iowa Synod, Waverly, Iowa; Pr. Terry Baeder, Tinley Park, Ill.; Pr. Richard Bruesehoff, Division for Ministry, Chicago, Ill.; Ms. Joanne Chadwick, Commission for Women, Chicago, Ill.; Mr. Anthony Koppula, Chicago, Ill.; Pr. Kathie Bender Schwich, Office of the Presiding Bishop, Chicago, Ill.; Mr. Mark Staples, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, Pa.; and Pr. Gordon J. Straw, Chicago, Ill.

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Often the specific grant criteria were not met because the projects did not go beyond providing a learning experience to actually creating mentoring relationships, establishing networks, or conducting immersion experiences. Additionally, the criteria for immersion projects did not appear to be well understood. Some immersion project proposals did not, in fact, set out to provide immersion experiences, but rather were more similar to service projects in which participants went to a certain area, performed a service, and left again.

Also, there was no long-term follow-up to these programs to determine if mentoring relationships and networks that were established remained in place beyond the duration of these grants. It seems that programs specifically designated for youth (as opposed to specifically designated for campus students or adults) had a slightly higher success rate for meeting program criteria in both 1999 and 2000. In 2000, both mentoring and networking programs appeared slightly more successful at meeting program criteria than they were in 1999, but immersion programs were less successful at meeting program criteria than in 1999. Conversely, in both 1999 and 2000, it did not appear to make a difference to the success rate of meeting program criteria whether the program was new or expanded, or whether the program was fully funded through the grant.

The Develop Leaders for a New Century Initiative was allocated \$100,000. The Initiative received an additional \$62,000 from Lutheran Brotherhood. The Initiative spent \$150,000.

## **A SUMMARY OF SYNODICAL AND CONGREGATIONAL INVOLVEMENT**

We do not know as much about what occurred in the synods and congregations across this church as we do about the work of the Initiative teams, but we can draw some conclusions. Based on congregational report forms, approximately 25 percent of congregations indicate they responded to the Initiatives in some way. It is reasonable to believe, based on the number of resources ordered or downloaded with regard to the Teach the Faith Initiative and the Help the Children Initiative, that even more congregations actually were involved. Certainly, these two Initiatives had the highest level of congregational involvement. Deepen Our Worship Life also had a strong showing, along with the Witness–Evangelism Initiative.

Participation varied dramatically among synods. For example, 41 percent of the Greater Milwaukee Synod congregations reported adopting an Initiative some time in 1998 or 1999, followed by the South Carolina Synod with 14.5 percent of the congregations. In 15 synods, 10 percent or more of the congregations said they took up an Initiative. In four synods it was less than three percent of the congregations, and in two synods, it was less than one percent.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

In general, much more may have been accomplished, but it is difficult to see how, given the scope of the Initiatives and the current means for getting things done in this church. The adoption and success of any emphases or programs in the Church is largely dependent upon goodwill. The pastors, staff, and volunteers of congregations work within a demanding context and they often report being inundated with programs and resources for congregations. Each resource provider promotes its resource as *the* answer, and congregational folk are faced with difficult choices. At the synodical level, bishops also are faced with a host of competing demands. Staff time for program is at a premium. At the churchwide level, the vision of a presiding bishop is set alongside ongoing work of this church. The influence of a presiding bishop is substantial, but from the point of view of a churchwide unit, there is the long run of unit plans with boards to satisfy and constitutional provisions to fulfill. Presiding Bishop Anderson spent considerable time listening and talking about the Initiatives in an attempt to build support and goodwill.

The topic areas of the Initiatives were selected only after considerable discussion throughout the ELCA—with pastors, lay persons, synod bishops, and the Church Council, and at the Churchwide Assembly. Even with this effort, the call to participate in the Initiatives was taken up by about one-fourth of the congregations. This shows how difficult it is to lead a church as large and as diverse as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in any particular direction.

The success of a churchwide emphasis also is dependent upon skillful implementation. In the case of the Initiatives, the obstacles were significant. The participants in the Inquiry events called for direction and assistance in each Initiative area, but they also made it clear they were uninterested in a churchwide program. This led to the Initiative strategy—to provide a menu of opportunities and a variety of means for participation—to make it appealing and relatively easy for congregations and synods to plug in and to adapt the Initiatives as they saw fit. This also led to a broad scope of activities.

The Initiative teams were encouraged to be creative, and, as a result, new ideas emerged, new resources were created, and new models for learning were developed. At the same time, the broadness of the scope of the Initiatives and the desire for creativity brought with it a new and daunting challenge. How would it be possible to link new ideas to the established ways of “being” a church? The Initiatives struggled to find a way in every setting—congregations, synods, agencies and institutions, and the churchwide organization.

The Initiatives that appear to have had the most impact are those that found the most direct link. In part, this was the programmatic work aimed at congregations that fit well with the needs of congregations and the “ongoing” work of

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the Division for Congregational Ministries—worship, education, and evangelism. These were large-scale efforts, particularly in education. The Call to Discipleship of the Teach the Faith Initiative was implemented with an extensive congregational planning guide that was mailed to all congregations. The Mid-sized Congregations Transformation Project also was tied to the “regular” work of the Division for Congregational Ministries. This project appears to have been picked up widely by synods. In other words, the success of the Initiatives was directly tied to whether or not the project could find a way to fit. Most significantly this meant staff—staff in churchwide units—to provide for support and continuity in addition to what could be provided by an *ad hoc* committee.

The possibility or opportunity for a direct link was not enough. The Connect with Youth and Young Adults Initiative, which held a youth summit, is an example. The Initiative never realized its full potential because it went beyond the scope of what was possible for those involved in youth ministry as a part of Division for Congregational Ministries.

The lack of a direct link does not mean that other Initiatives were without some success. The level of impact of Initiatives like the Safe Haven for Children project of the Help the Children Initiative is simply more difficult to document—also, in part, because it is not directly tied to the regular work of this church. A significant resource was developed calling congregations and communities to become safe havens, but a hoped-for network of congregations has not yet been established. The *ad hoc* committee was not in the position readily to set up or maintain such a network. Likewise, the *ad hoc* committee that took up Asset Mapping, which was part of the Strengthen One Another in Mission Initiative, struggled to bring action to their ideas. Eventually, the team hired a person to facilitate a pilot project.

The Initiatives were a strong effort, even a bold effort. The need was well researched and the plan was well thought out—searching for a way to lead without using the traditional means. The Initiatives were an attempt to write a new chapter, not only with regard to what they accomplished but with regard to how they were accomplished. At the same time, the Initiatives could not write exactly as they pleased. They depended on goodwill—on acceptance and support. And, perhaps most importantly, they found themselves dependent upon established means of doing the work of this church. In the end, these established means supplied both the power and the limits for the success of the Initiatives.