

Thoughts on Re-directing Mission Support:

This document came from the Western North Dakota Synod and we have asked permission to reshape it to represent the Southwestern Minnesota Synod.

Several clergy have reported congregational members who have suggested re-directing mission support as one way to protest the actions taken at the National Churchwide Assembly. We acknowledge that these are faithful members of congregations, who love their church very much. We would assume that they are making the suggestion as a way of making their voices heard or trying to register protest of the churchwide decisions. This would be one way for a congregation to make a statement.

What we also want people to know is that such an action may lead to **unintended consequences**. We want to share with people of Southwestern Minnesota some of those consequences.

What are the unintended consequences of redirecting mission support?

At the Synod Level, less mission support would impact:

- the ability for staff to be out supporting congregations. This is one of our priorities – building relationships within the synod. Your mission support helps fund salaries and covers expenses of travel so staff can be present in helping congregations dream about mission and ministry, work on calling pastors, check in on clergy, responding to the requests of church councils and much more.
- the pastoral care of students through funding to campus ministry. Over \$166,000 from the SW MN Synod budget goes to campus ministry of Minnesota. These funds pay the salaries of campus pastors as well as giving program support at Morris, Marshall, St. Cloud and Willmar. These ministries are already being hurt by tight budgets. We are not sure how they would survive if funding was decreased.
- the development of pastoral leaders in funding seminaries. \$118,000 of the SW MN Synod budget goes toward Luther Seminary. Cutting mission support will affect seminary education and the ability to train up new leaders, both clergy and lay ministers.
- the support for outreach and stewardship. Funding for two of the SW MN staff comes to work with congregation endowment committees and helping individuals make giving decisions based on their faith values. These staff positions represent over \$75,000 of mission support dollars that come back to our synod from mission support of the ELCA.
- the Synod Resource Center. Sara Johnson, the staff person in the Synod Resource Service Center is available to do research and send out resources that enhance

congregational mission. This is especially important to education programs like Sunday school, confirmation and Bible studies. But it also includes councils and committees, who on a weekly basis ask for resources to support their ministry.

At the Churchwide level:

-the current economic situation has led to a decrease in mission funds. Already this has led to the elimination of 23.5 positions within the ELCA. It has meant that the “Grace Matters” radio program was eliminated. It led to an across-the-board cut in financial support to new mission starts, plus a decrease in salaries at all the churchwide positions.

-it could hurt missionaries. It is a blessing that SW MN leads the ELCA in their direct support of missionaries. However this direct support is made possible by the administrative general mission support for the area of Global Missions. Congregational mission support helps provide the infrastructure that supports the work of missionaries in the field. Without the infrastructure missionaries would be brought home.

-it could hurt Lutheran Disaster Response. One of the reasons that 100% of special offerings for disasters (like a tornado or hurricane) goes directly to the disaster is because the infrastructure that runs LDR is covered through mission support. Salaries, computers, travel expenses are paid for by mission support. If the infrastructure is not funded disaster response will be affected.

-it could affect seminary education. Not only does the ELCA provide grants to our seminaries, they also provide the system of tracking candidates as they go through seminary, are approved for ordination and the process of assigning students to synods.

-it could affect camp ministry. The ELCA provides support for the Bible Camps. The churchwide staff helps with arranging for international youth / adults to come from all over the world to serve in our church camps. They also gather camp directors to grow in faith and learn together in providing this faith development opportunity. We know that attending Bible camp is the most common factor in persons who attend seminary.

This is not an exhaustive list. It is a list of ministries that may be affected by a decrease in giving.