Connecting to Grow in Ministry

Stewardship of Our Congregations

BACKGROUND:

District leadership has encouraged and resourced the Stewardship Committee to develop a way of preserving and growing our Lutheran presence in communities District-wide. The future shared ministry concept includes tailoring Synod and other programs to provide for stewardship of our small congregations.

PURPOSE:

- To provide a proof of concept that demonstrates through words and actions that we are ALL in this together when it comes to making disciples for Jesus Christ.

- To make a firm statement that a Lutheran presence in a community is important to us ALL, whether it's connecting / revitalizing current congregations or making a new church plant.

OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE:

- Design, develop, and test a Prototype Shared Ministry Model to connect small congregations across a range of demographics (i.e. rural, city, metro areas).

- Limit the effort so as not to exceed 12 months and $3,000 non-material cost (i.e. travel, conferences, etc.).

- Hardware, software, and other costs associated with internet connection capability are not included.

METHOD:

- Explore all available resources within the Synod, District, and congregations.

- Learn from ongoing, related efforts like: Synod's RSTM and Re:Vitality programs, District's Outreach Workshops, and congregational networking efforts.

- Make maximum use of all the gifts God provides (time, talent, treasure, and testimony).

- Preliminary research suggests a high payoff solution such as identifying a cluster of three or more congregations where a pastor leads worship from wherever he is preaching (host congregation), and the service is streamed to the others (satellite congregations), where it is projected onto a large screen.

- Participants including congregations, several District committees, and the Board of Directors will all have a role in developing and implementing this "Culture of Partnership" strategy.
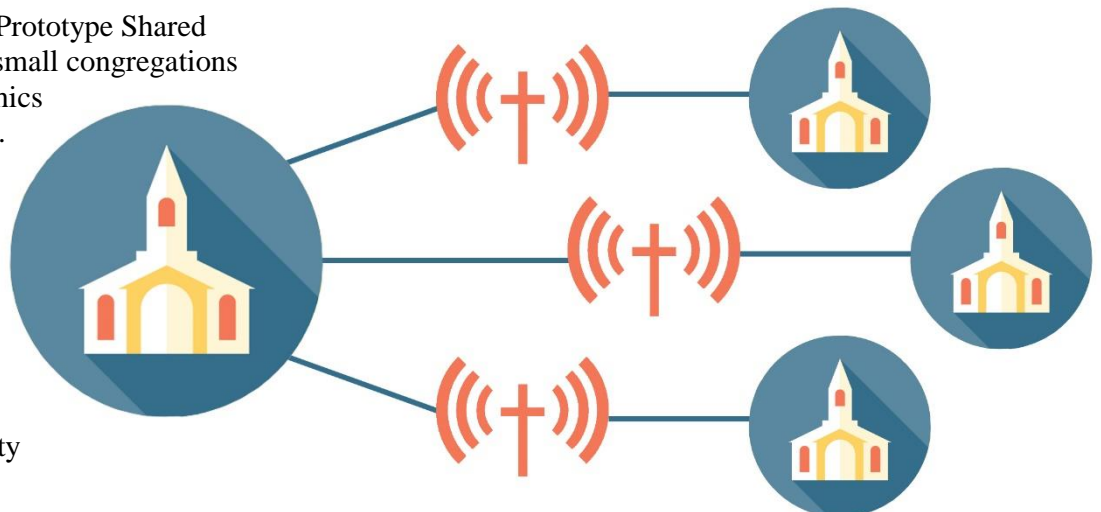
PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES:

- **Congregational Identity -** Objective is to connect, not consolidate. Includes: demographics information such as size, location, pastor or vacant, self-sustaining, fully-functioning ministry process, survival or service, connect and / or revitalize, community presence, etc.

- **Worship Culture -** Key to connecting with like congregations. Includes: communion practice, liturgy practice, style of worship, ministry context, or approach to ministry.

- **Partnership Desire -** Willingness to partner and participate with other congregations. Includes: Synod and District relationship, sharing with other congregations, sharing in community projects, exchange pastors for special events, etc.

- **Use of Technology -** Comfortable with interactions that are not first person. Includes: digital support during worship services, hearing assistance devices, pre-recorded worship liturgy or hymns, recorded sermon playback, web page resources.

COMMON TERMS:

- Clusters consisting of host and satellite congregations with compatible ministry context.

- Connected multi-point parishes, never consolidated or combined.

- Congregations self-describe or self-identify as growing, stable, declining (not just looking inward).

- Worship service liturgies will be self-identified broadly as being of a worship style that is traditional (Divine Service), blended, or contemporary.

- Components of congregational ministry will include: Word and Sacrament ministry (worship service, sermon, communion); education (Bible study, confirmation); pastoral care; outreach; mercy ministry; and administration.

Managing all of life and life's resources for God's purposes, freely and joyfully.

Southern District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

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