



New Jersey Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
God's work. Our hands.

# STEWARDSHIP SPARKLERS

2010 WINTER EDITION



**Strengthens Faith  
Enacts Justice  
Sustains the Planet**

## Setting a Goal for Mission Support in Your Congregation

The Mission Support response process is a way to intentionally and prayerfully consider how your congregation will support the work that we do as the New Jersey Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Each year Mission Support responses are gathered and recorded around the first of the year. Please consider carefully how you will be a part of this work.

### Why do we share Mission Support?

Your congregation is part of The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Our mission, in New Jersey, the nation, and around the world, is strengthened through the Mission Support. Our Mission Support sharing is vital if we are to be a church that makes a difference in the world.

### Why do we fill in this intent form?

The faith practice of Christian stewardship has to do with what we give of what we have, what we do with what we keep, and what we plan for what we leave. The setting of Mission Support goals and recording that intent gives local congregations the opportunity to be intentional about financially supporting their church. It provides time to reflect and set targets for Mission Support giving. Please **SHARE YOUR 2010 MISSION SUPPORT INTENT ON LINE AT:**

<http://spreadsheets.google.com/a/njsynod.org/viewform?key=0ArxJfJHPbz5dcDY0VWIFMWF2NnNTUHA1N1J3NzA1YXc&hl=en>

## **What happens if we do not reach our Mission Support intent?**

Whatever your gift, it is received with thanks by the New Jersey Synod. Your local congregation can amend their recorded intent goals at any time through out the year. Simply contact the Stewardship Specialist to make appropriate changes or to ask for assistance in meeting your intended goals.

## **What are reasonable expectations for Mission Support?**

Our statistics tell us that Mission Support gifts in the New Jersey Synod approximate 6% of all unrestricted income in our congregations. Some congregations give a much higher percentage and some give a much lower one. The whole church needs to work at reversing this trend. In the New Jersey Synod, sharing 10% of total unrestricted income is the minimum benchmark for which we strive.

## **How do congregations determine their Mission Support response?**

In many congregations, the congregation council prepares a preliminary budget which is agreed on at a congregation meeting. Advocates for Mission Support can be involved with this task of crafting and influencing the mission document/spending plan.

## **What is a helpful process for determining our Mission Support response?**

- Look at the five year trend in your congregation's commitment to Mission Support. Is this all we can be doing?
- What proportion (percentage) of our total unrestricted income (this includes rental and investment income) goes to Mission Support.
- List ways in which our congregation benefits from the ministries supported by Mission Support.
- List ways in which others benefit from ministries supported by Mission Support.
- What are the benefits of a unified fund like the Mission Support?

Have the whole congregation be part of the process and approve the decision at the annual meeting, or assign the work to a task group with a variety of people from the stewardship and outreach committees, and the congregation council. This group may then present its recommendations to the whole congregation.

## **How have some congregations increased their Mission Support?**

By educating, setting goals, and creatively persevering. The congregation staff, local church leaders, the newsletter editor-everyone-must believe in the goal and use their platforms to encourage generous and faithful support. Many members are not familiar with the scope of work enabled by Mission Support and the New Jersey Synod. Stewardship education, creative sharing of Mission Support information, perseverance, the New Jersey Synod Website [www.njsynod.org](http://www.njsynod.org) are important ways to increase awareness, generosity, and commitment.

## **In Worship**

The following suggestions are for use in your worship services, your congregation council meetings, or wherever your congregation decides on its response to the New Jersey Synod through Mission Support.



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## **Prayer to begin deliberations about your congregation's Mission Support intent.**

God of renewing grace,  
You know us better than we know ourselves.  
We ask your forgiveness for our reluctance to recognize  
the needs of those beyond the circle of those we know.  
Our compassion is often driven by today's announced urgency,  
but its loyalty is short-lived.  
Our giving of self and money is sometimes spurred  
by emotion and slickness of appeal rather than by a thoughtful response  
to others' long-term needs.  
We are constrained by our budgets and careful calculations,  
and seldom know the joy of giving which overflows from a generous heart.  
Free us from the prison of our fears.  
Fan within us the spark of generosity that yearns to flame.  
Fuel our faithfulness so our actions may be guided by Christ's great love.  
In his name we pray. Amen.

—*from "Building Temples," a service of worship by Art Anderson*

## **Hymn Suggestions**

The following are suggestions from *Lutheran Worship* that may be used whenever Mission Support is a part of the service (e.g. after a *Minute for Mission*).

- #574 "*Here I Am, Lord*"
- #580 "*How Clear Is Our Vocation, Lord*"
- #547 "*Sent Forth by God's Blessing*"
- #576 "*We All are One in Mission*"

## **Prayers of Dedication**

Here is a prayer that may be used after your congregation has decided on its Mission Support response.

Gracious God,  
With these gifts we declare our intention to be partners with you  
in the ministry of Jesus Christ  
through our Mission Support  
during the coming year.  
These gifts represent our faithful intention,  
our deep love and gratitude for all the blessings  
by which you continue to fill our days.  
Accept our offerings for the work of your church  
here at home and throughout the world.  
We ask it in the name of Jesus,  
your best gift, and for the world our best hope. Amen.

—*from Maritime Conference United Church in Canada*