

**Respondent 21**

1. The ELCA needs to recommit to the mandate of Christ: Make disciples of all nations, baptize in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teach all Christ has commanded. The ELCA will accomplish this by redirecting churchwide resources to focus on this great commission. With solid teaching undergirding the life of lay people, we empower them speak out on public issues.
2. A realignment of synods will offer better use of mission support resources.
3. Every synod will have an elected representative on Church Council. Bishops will exercise their role as keepers of the faith and will start by admonishing congregations to use the Triune name for God in worship.
4. Let's stop wasting money on social statements that have little meaning but are used to express a viewpoint that is not commonly shared among Lutherans. Future social statements and full communion relationships will be finalized only after a majority of congregations that vote to ratify the decisions.
5. Listen and affirm the ideas offered.

## **Respondent 22**

1. We as are all Christians are called to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ. Maybe we need to focus inward as much as outward. What I mean is I wonder how many in the ELCA really get what it means live as though we love God with heart, mind, and soul, and neighbor as self. Or, what it looks like to live doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with God. When we begin to live like that in our communities people will notice.
2. Starting from the bottom, I think the historical look of a congregation may need to look different. The permanent building may be a relic of the past. Smaller house churches with perhaps a monthly gathering of several in a rented space might provide more fluidity in the community and resources for mission. We may need to have fewer, larger synods with staff not located in the same office but geographically deployed. Churchwide will need to do the work that only Churchwide can do and assist in resources for the “front lines.”
3. I still believe our bottom up and trust in the Spirit’s guidance is best. Ongoing theological conversation/dialogue is critical to that process. Whenever decisions are made accountability must flow both directions.
4. See above on decision-making. As more and more program responsibility is moved from churchwide to synods it’s not right to expect the same percentage of gifts to flow from synod to churchwide.
5. If there is a more viable model for our church structure that would facilitate our God’s mission for the ELCA. I sure hope the Task Force is enlightened by the Spirit!

### **Respondent 23**

1. Propagate itself through new members, evangelism, social ministry, especially linked to Lutheran theology and church mission. "Feed the hungry". Strong confirmation development. Christian education programs. Theological education. Encourage lay theology. Mission development. Be a moral Lutheran presence in the world.
2. Synods are good units. Church members and congregations relate to the local synod structure more readily than the churchwide organization. Some synods are too large - divide them up. There needs to be a consolidation of smaller congregations that are not viable. Some seminaries probably need to be closed.
3. (and 4.) Who does make the decisions? There is a Church Council and a Synod Council and a congregational council - these groups make some of the same decisions that overlap. Congregations need more say in how to spend their money and in the amount of apportionment that is expected. The local synod should make decisions in how money is spent for local mission development. The process of making decisions needs to be streamlined. For example, Lutheran World Relief is important and does good work. Why then do we have a Hunger Appeal and are asked to contribute to both? Synods have been expected to pick up more of the cost of mission development, campus ministry, and support for seminaries. They should have more control of the money. They have to be able to cover the needs of their own geographic areas.
5. The LIFT Task Force has worked for over a year on a vision. We should trust their work. The Task Force should be able to help the church restructure itself to be more efficient economically yet mindful of the needs of the whole ELCA in changing times.
6. The possibility that emphasizes partnerships is what I see for the future.

## Respondent 24

1. The mission objectives of the ELCA congregations and synods should be to seek and engage God's call to be a part of what God is doing in the world. What might God be calling us to in our specific contexts and as we join all together? It is to first ask what God is doing in the world and then structure the organization to live into and live out that mission in the world.
2. I think that the ELCA should structure itself through networks of like ministries. I like the Directors of Evangelical Outreach who are working in each synod. They can tailor their ministry to their particular contexts while still working to reach out on behalf of the whole ELCA. A lean-mean national organization needs to exist to keep identity and to relate ecumenically and globally. Synods of some sort - we have too many right now - are needed to help with conflict resolution, connecting networks, and mobility work. They also may be clearinghouses for information about the greater church and mutual ministries that are a part of that region like social ministries, camps, etc.
3. I think that the parts of the church should relate to each other through networks. Synods and churchwide should identify "best practices" congregations who can become teaching churches for one another and resources for one another. National and synod should also find para-church groups who are already doing good ministry, connect seminaries with congregations more directly for teaching, etc.
4. To take up/down votes on controversial issues is not helpful. To say that we agree to disagree or rather that we are a community of diverse opinions called together by God for mission is more helpful. God uses us in our diversity. WE spend a lot of time and money fighting with one another and it is not helpful on any level of the church. We are doing powerful ministry in our local contexts and globally. Funding should be divided proportionately to do ministry. National church should have funding to do what it was originally called to do - support seminaries, global mission, and some new congregations. Synod needs support to do mobility and conflict resolution and to resource new starts and churches with ideas that can be shared with others. Money pools for projects that will reach out. Let congregations/grass roots groups be creative with what they want to do and apply for funds. National desks in programmatic areas are not real helpful because one person cannot get out across the church.
5. Truly take a fresh look at how the church might be structured to do the mission that God is calling us to do which is to be about proclaiming that the kingdom of God has come near. It is not to look at how the "same old same old" might be done. The original survey was disappointing in that it was asking how and who should be doing the things that we have been doing. Everything should be on the table.
6. I would like to see a network of mission and ministry done through ELCA congregations. As far as churchwide, I think the ELCA should sell the office building in Chicago, review "lifetime" church bureaucrats who I think have lost touch with congregations, and build teams of leaders who are deployed throughout the church. Perhaps these people are housed or are shared staff with congregations. A presiding bishop's and secretary's office could be housed at a seminary or college of the church. Equipping meetings of the teams of leaders could also meet at a college or seminary for sharing and learning. As far as Synods: 65 Synods are too many Synods. We could use a balance between today's synods and regions. Synods should look for best practice congregations who could be teachers in a networks. Who is doing great rural ministry? What and how can they share? Who is doing great youth and family ministry? What and how can they share? Etc. Synods need to be well-equipped

to handle conflict in congregations, work with mobility, and communicate what the greater church is doing. They are to be bridge building organizations between congregations and resources, congregations and the greater church, congregation to congregation.

Congregations need to have permission and be let loose for ministry. What might God be calling each congregation in its context? What might congregations need to do the ministry to what they are called? What does each congregation have to share with another? Social statements are probably necessary because we have to be a church that engages the issues of the day. But we need a better process than the one we have because our engagement turns into fights among the various threads of Lutheranism and our witness to others is compromised. How do we talk about issues without the winners and losers of an up/down vote. If we are taking seriously that we are a church of multiple viewpoints on any issue how is that lived out?

## **Respondent 25**

1. The mission of the ELCA should be to broadly and enthusiastically share the message of God's love and grace into the world and to support all the expression of the Christian faith as they collectively attempt to fulfill their God given mission.
2. The ELCA needs a churchwide organization that is dedicated to the proclamation of the mission of the whole Christian Church and that churchwide organization's primary purpose should be to support and coordinate missional activities carried out by missionaries, mission developers, pastors, and lay members in all the ways that the Spirit guides them to fulfill their give mission. The Churchwide structure should include no more than four ELCA seminaries dedicated to preparing pastors and lay leaders to become missionaries, mission developers, pastors, professors, teachers, and congregational leaders. The ELCA needs no more than 15 universities or colleges dedicated to the academic preparation of ELCA members for missional service in the world through vocation. The ELCA needs no more than 15 Synods to assist congregations in the fulfillment of the mission not limited to but especially during times of congregational conflict and times of transition as congregations seek new pastors or attempt to reshape or reposition the location and direction of their missional efforts. The ELCA needs a diverse and much larger congregational presence in every mission field where there are a significant number of persons who do not understand or believe in the importance and salvation that comes through God's love and grace.
3. The congregations are the heart of the ELCA and the Spirit moving through the congregations and the members of each congregation as they fulfill their mission is the focus of all the other parts of the ELCA. Synods support congregations and members present in a limited but larger geographical area than currently provided for by the ELCA. The Churchwide unit supports congregations and their members by offering resources that are not available at the individual congregational level. Such resources might include resource publication, all forms but predominately electronic publication and distribution, theological research and review of social issues, financial resource development, pension and benefit programs for all church workers, and serve as the ecumenical representative to a wide range of Christian organizations including LWF, LWR, LIRS, and equivalent organizations present around the world within the Christian community. The churchwide organization role shall be to support congregations and their members in their Spirit-guided missional activities and not to direct or limit such activities. The churchwide organization, the synods, the seminaries, universities and colleges shall continue to be guided by the inspiration of the contemporary and accurate translations of the Holy Bible with a particular emphasis towards grace and the minimalization of Christian legalism.
4. Congregations submit priorities and proposed decisions to their annual synod assemblies for ratification. Those priorities and decisions that receive more than a 60 percent supportive vote are forwarded to the churchwide assembly for consideration and ratification. Priorities and decisions receiving a minimum of 60 percent affirmative ratification will become the basis for distribution of the resources and financial tithes received from every congregation. Tithes shall be required from every ELCA congregation and tithing principles shall be the guide for all ELCA members in support of the whole denominational missional activity.
5. Turn the ELCA upside down to become a bottom up and congregational driven organization directed towards cooperative and supportive fulfillment of the mission to proclaim God's love into the world and to help people to believe in Jesus Christ and the Savior of the whole world.

6. The ELCA calls together a re-constituting assembly to revise the ELCA Constitution to provide for a change in direction to be supportive of congregations and their members in a broader proclamation of the Gospel of God's love and grace.

## Respondent 26

1. The overall mission should be the proclamation of the gospel: the making of disciples and the teaching of the gospel. For congregations that should manifest itself in more extensive evangelism and care for the neighbor and less “committee work.” Congregations and their lay and clergy leadership need to spend more time outside their four walls than inside. For instance, committees rule most of our churches but their work is not inspiring to people outside or even other church members. Neither do committees do as good a job of spreading the church. Administrative tasks of the congregation, i.e. care of the building, decisions about distributions of the funds, etc. should be left to the staff and church leadership. The ministry of the church should be done by the members of the church through small group prayer/study/service/pastoral care meetings of church members/friends. These kinds of meetings have the potential to naturally morph into other ministry with the neighbor including local ecumenical relationships, global mission opportunities, campus ministries etc. Synods should focus on helping congregations resource their ministry as outlined above care for their congregation’s rostered leaders, understand their relationship and responsibilities based on the constitution, and help to network congregations within their synod and with synods in the ELCA. They should focus less of their time on “crisis” management. Often these situations are not true crises. Not that they should not be given attention, but they get way more attention than they are due at the expense of the healthy places. More time should be spend on exciting, healthy congregations with potential in growing towards that on-going health and potential. Churchwide should focus on some administrative task, i.e. the Office of the Secretary functions, overall candidacy standards which need to be changed and the bar needs to be higher, high level ecumenical relationships, and chaplaincy ministry. Synods and the CWO should focus less on sex and more on mission. As long as congregations leave according to the standards set in the constitution which is rightly a pretty high bar then we should bless that, stop worrying about it, and wish them well...even if they don’t wish us well. Those who want to stay should be helped to find new congregations. But we should not dwell on this and from the vantage point of many it feels like we are dwelling on this! Let’s get on with it and get busy! We’ve got good news to share!!! Seminaries should be financially independent with an ELCA affiliation. They will be linked to the ELCA through the candidacy process anyway but they need more independence to thrive or die. Advocacy should continue, though I am not sure in what form. It is important but has gained a bad reputation among large portions of congregants and this is unfortunate for those working in advocacy.
2. A VERY slimmed down churchwide structure, enhanced synods, and beefed up congregations. No Regions.
3. I like the ELCA’s emphasis on attempted incorporation of all voices and the fact it strives for consensus. However, I don’t think this works anymore. Our polity is set up for a community of people who devote so much of themselves to it that they know enough to make important decisions and care deeply about the issues. This is sadly not the world we live in. Currently it feels like we operate in a consensus driven system in which the people in the pews think that a few in Chicago are running the show, but the pew sitters don’t know who the “people in Chicago” are. Some of this is probably true. Some of this is because pew sitters don’t understand the polity and the power they could have in it if they would take the time. The reality is they are not going to take the time. We live in a time where people are looking for

leadership. As a result, I think that more power needs to be placed in the hands of fewer people. These people should be elected and have specific job descriptions and they should be held accountable for their work, i.e. voted out if people don't like their leadership. This will give us the opportunity to put leaders, i.e. bishops, council presidents, etc. in a position to really lead - carry out a vision . . . close congregations, start new ones, get the people in place their synod needs . . . whatever the vision in that place may be. Right now it feels as if we have no vision and no leadership. That needs to change. That said, I think that the CWO and synodical leadership should be accountable to the congregations. All of our energy should be focused on resourcing the congregations and their people. I think that everyone should be accountable to the constitution, which in light of this will need to be rewritten. I think that if there are going to be "consultations" which the CWO currently has with synods/regions the consultations should be reversed. Congregations should be consulting with synods and the CWO. Currently "mutual partnership" feels more like the CWO coming in and telling synods and then the synods tell the congregations the way things are going to be. This is obviously not mutual partnership and I think we should stop calling it that. The relationships should be reversed.

4. I have already suggested above the way that some decisions should be made. At a synodical and congregation level we should continue with the democratic model of councils but the councils should be smaller and the presidents should have more power. RE: Money sharing 10 percent of congregation mission support to synods, 10 to 15 percent of synodical mission support to churchwide. Note I suggested a VERY slimmed down CWO. This will mean, of course, that synods and congregations will have to pick up more responsibilities, but we already are. Compare the initial intentions of the ELCA regarding seminaries, mission starts, campus ministry, education, etc. to their current funding levels. Synods and congregations are already picking up these responsibilities while being asked to continue 55 percent to the ELCA. But for what? What is that 55 percent supporting? Certainly not what it was intended to support at the ELCA's founding. This slimmed down model will allow synods to do more of the kind of work outlined above. Congregations will also be able to send more money directly to the organizations they are already supporting, i.e. seminaries, LWR, local charities, etc. It will also allow the CWO to focus more of its attention on a few things and let other organizations focus on doing what they do well, i.e. LWR, LDR, seminaries, etc. As I suggested above, seminaries should be cut loose to thrive or die.
5. Listen to people it considers "outsiders." Don't just ask anonymously for feedback but go out find and talk to people who disagree with the internal dynamics of the ELCA. LISTEN to them and incorporate their feedback! A lot of them love the Church. LISTEN to young people who DON'T go to church! They have good stuff to say! LIFT should not just produce a report. It should produce a strategy and plan the ELCA can follow and which will be updated on a regular basis. Strategies are living documents. What makes sense now may need to be tweaked or changed in a year. That's ok. This means that some people will need to be assigned full-time to this strategy in the future which could be an administrative task of the CWO. The strategy draws a roadmap for the ELCA and its congregations to thrive in light of 21st century realities. It should help transform congregations from entities set up for the 1950s. . . focused on buildings, committees, and assuming people will come because that's "what you do" to congregations which thrive on outreach and relevance to the neighbor whose not in them. In the end LIFT should make real change! Don't be afraid to make

some people mad with your change! Don't just move the deck chairs around on the ship! Go out and get a new ship that will better spread the gospel on these new seas!

6. The premise of possibility one and two are just moving the deck chairs around on the ship. Possibility 3 offers the option of a new ship. This would be similar to what I suggested in the mission objectives section. Focus on beefing up congregations and helping them thrive. Synods can be the main resource to help this happen. Therefore 7 to 10 percent of congregation's mission support could go to synods and they should be free to give the rest elsewhere. . .both to Lutheran organizations, but to local non-Lutheran charities as well. Synods could then send 10 to 15 percent of mission support to Churchwide which would ultimately focus on more administrative aspects of the Church which congregation and to some extent synods cannot do on their levels, i.e. high level ecumenical relationships, LWF relationships, chaplaincy, revised advocacy, etc. Cut loose the social ministry functions and let our excellent Lutheran organizations focus on them. Simply send them support from all expressions of the ELCA. Cut loose the seminaries and colleges though they are already pretty loose and let them thrive or die. Push down the people-focused ministry of the church to the congregations and somewhat to synods and let the CWO focus on the necessary and essential ministry of administration. The CWA should meet no more than every four years. The CWO council could be smaller so they could not just rubber stamp what comes to them but engage in real visioning and have real deliberations. They should not always have representatives from each synod but rotate the synodical representation. People who aren't of Northern European descent and 18 to 30 year olds should be incorporated, not to fill quotas but because we in the congregations and the synods to some extent have taken the time to go outside our "old white walls", gotten to know them, listened to them, shared the gospel with them, and engaged them in the lives of our communities. I know the "quotas" are well-intentioned but they are not working and are often seen as patronizing. Instead listening to people in these groups, getting to know them, building relationships with them, and making them part of our communities where we change them and more importantly, **THEY CHANGE US**. This will be much harder and much more important than filling quotas. This is why the mission objective of getting outside our walls, listening to those outside our walls, and then sharing the gospel with them is so very important!

**Respondent 27**

1. Eradicate a devastating social environmental and medical occurrences.
2. Creating stronger and more effective ties among the entities - even having elements co-located.
3. Use of metrics and accountability.
4. Equitable distribution.
5. Continued to communicate efforts throughout the organization.

**Respondent 28**

1. To serve the least, the last and the lost, to be the fulfillment of what Jesus called us to be in Matthew 25.
2. All of the above, but perhaps with a greater sense of interdependence than we have experienced in the past.
3. Relationships. It's all about relationships. Do we know each other well enough to trust the leadership offered? Have we listened well before we propose new programs, directions, possibilities for service and outreach?
4. Building coalitions of people in affinity groups that share sensibilities and hopes for this church's ministry. "If you build it, they will come with their money too, I think."
5. Opening the door to empowering people who typically don't have a voice to be heard - those to whom we seek to be in ministry
6. Consolidate dwindling resources available for ministry. Yoke nearby parishes into cooperative ministries that seek to be centers for worship and service to the communities where they have been planted. For instance, selling one of the two properties or at least leasing out one of the properties and bring the two congregations into one worshiping congregation. What a witness to Ephesians 4 to the larger community!

## Respondent 29

1. Jesus calls us to love one another to love our neighbors as ourselves. He calls us to service to care for those who are rejected by society and the world. He calls us to service of the poor, widows, orphans, the lame, the sick, the dying, the imprisoned, the one lost sheep. I believe overall, the goal is Justice through Love with service to those who don't know the love of Christ. I believe that should be our main mission in Christ's church. Objectives: to share the love of Christ with the world, to minister to those in need, to work tirelessly for justice, to walk humbly with our God, to embrace diversity, to welcome difference, to integrate ourselves into the world.
2. Structural Components: Churchwide - to provide resources for congregations to learn and grow to meet all of the objectives above as happened with the Journeying Together Faithfully series and materials. Guidance and Invitation to Grow providing the leadership and resources for congregations. I wonder if it's possible for churchwide to utilize a systems-centered TM -like approach to organizational development in which the three levels of governance are nested into one another. See Yvonne Agazarian's work on System Development [www.systemscentered.com](http://www.systemscentered.com). Synod level: to do away with the negativity, entitlement restriction encumbrances to growth. To move past the committee approach doing things the way they've always been done. To welcome new ideas, new people, change. To become change agents rather than stumbling blocks to change. To welcome diversity, for those in leadership roles to listen to feedback, to value feedback, to cherish differences of all kinds. To build on the energy of the youth, to have a suggestion box at synod council, to have evaluations for each program, i.e. feedback of driving and restraining forces, towards a meeting goal for each meeting, to look past the prestige of position. To become servants and change facilitators. To boldly walk into the unknown or to at least tolerate not knowing rather than pushing for how things have always been done in the past. To listen. To value questions. Congregations: to be required/strongly encouraged to participate in a series such as Journeying Together Faithfully where as many members as possible experience how differences can be welcomed, celebrated, and integrated into the church. To foster growth in faith, spiritual fulfillment, service, justice. To get out of the comfortable zone of their small contexts and to open their boundaries to at least consider through role play how it feels to be on the outside looking in, how to lower the barriers each congregation cocoons itself in to avoid difference and change.
3. We're all in this together, with a mission to share Christ's love with the world, to be instruments of God. I agree that the current structure, congregations to the synod, synod to churchwide is a good one. I believe each congregation should support the synod and synod money should be shared with churchwide. Mutual accountability in the best sense of the word is sharing new ideas and implementing new ways of working and thinking, finding ways to relieve stress. Find commonalities, join around differences, integrate all. With gentleness, and with a servant's attitude, challenge the status quo.
4. Money has become a weapon against change in some circumstances. In my synod congregations withhold money from churchwide because they don't agree with the decisions of the 2009 Assembly. Congregations threaten and do leave taking their money with them. Jesus said: Give away all that you have and follow me. Financial means is a gift of God to be used for God's work not to be used as a stick to punish those working for justice and integration.

5. I hope the LIFT Task Force will accomplish what the Journeying Together Faithfully Task Force accomplished. To provide a means for all members of the ELCA to have the experience of exchanging roles with one another through a similar format so that we can all get together and grow - pastors, bishops, vice-presidents, synod staff, and congregations. Thanks be to God for each of you!
6. A church of mission, justice, service and love to the world with shared decision-making in a climate of welcome, love, value for change. A Martin Luther like overall of the Lutheran church. What would be the treatises now that would be nailed to the church door in Wittenberg? Food for thought! Thank you for asking for input. May God bless and keep us as we join together to bring Christ's love into a hurting, lonely, hungry, broken, and hopeful world. Amen.

**Respondent 30**

If the ELCA is to have a “useable future” that is, a future that is vital, dynamic and growing, it will have to undergo a paradigmatic transformation. We need a new kind of pastoral leadership, leaders who are capable of leading in a servant way. It seems that for the most part, we are turning out pastors who basically see their job as worship leader and masters of ceremony. The ELCA has a lot of its eggs in the “worship basket”, i.e. clergy who are clerically garbed with the right robes and colors, the right traditions, enough celebrations of the Lord’s Supper, and appropriate classical sacred music. . .God will be pleased and we will prosper. Not only is that not the solution. . .it is the problem. Business as usual in the ELCA will continue to have a declining future. There is no way that in our present form we will have broad appeal to outsiders and particularly to GenX and GenY. When those who were born before 1950 are gone the ELCA will have dwindled to a small group. The ELCA would do well to take a close look at those ELCA congregations that are vital, dynamic, and growing and do everything possible to affirm them, learn from them, and promote them to the other 80 to 90 percent that are not.

