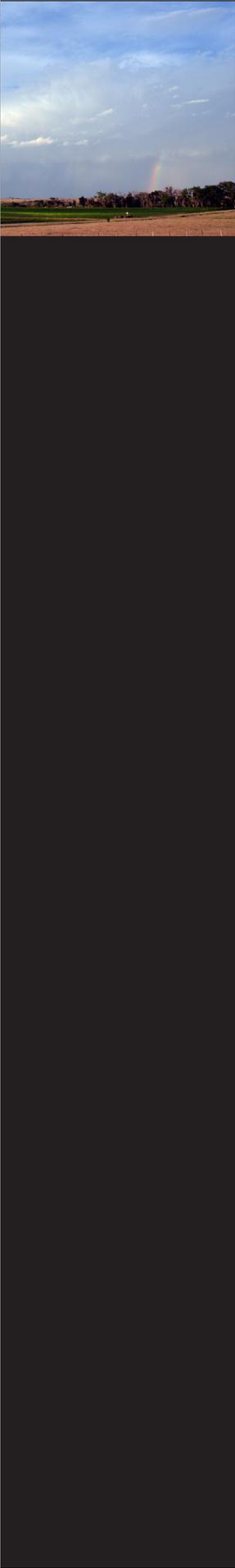
A landscape photograph of a rural field with a rainbow in the distance under a cloudy sky. The foreground is a dry, brownish field with a fence line. In the middle ground, there is a green field and a line of trees. A rainbow is visible in the distance, arching over the trees. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds.

# **NEBRASKA SYNOD STRATEGIC MISSION VISION PLAN 2015-2020**

## ***Executive Summary***



# Executive Summary

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In December 2013, the Synod Council determined to engage in a new strategic mission visioning process in order to chart the mission and ministry of the Synod over the next four to six years. The process of strategic visioning is different from simple long-range planning. The latter assumes little contextual change over a period of time; the former acknowledges that there will be many changes and course corrections, while holding a focus on the long-term vision.

The Nebraska Synod Strategic Mission Vision Plan is organized around three principal charges to us as the people of Christ together: to *Hope* (rooting our vision in the Good News of Jesus Christ), to *Connect* (joining ourselves to one another and to our mission as the Body of Christ) and to *Go* (actively pursuing the Great Commission). From these principal charges come the broad strategies and goals that follow.

## ***Strategy A—Identity and Purpose (Hope)***

To develop a four-year emphasis that engages the congregations of the Nebraska Synod to grow in their understanding of and commitment to what it means to be the Church as congregations, the Nebraska Synod, and the ELCA, through efforts organized into the following annual themes:

*Goal A-1: We Are Church*—Uniting the congregations and ministries of the Synod into a common understanding of what it means to be church, utilizing new metrics for measuring vitality and mission.

*Goal A-2: We Are Lutheran*—Renewing individuals’ and congregations’ identity as ELCA Lutherans, through shared study, gatherings and activities.

*Goal A-3: We Are Church Together*—Increasing partnership and investment in shared and cooperative ministries, and increasing opportunities and skills for engaging in challenging conversations and conflict resolution.

*Goal A-4: We Are Church for the Sake of the World*—Deepening congregations’ commitment to existing for the sake of others, and expanding resources for assessing and responding to needs in their communities.

## ***Strategy B—Calling and Connection (Connect)***

To strengthen connections between and beyond the congregations of the Synod through a deeper sense of call and vocation, through communication, through synod structures and relationships, and through ecumenical ties. Specific goals include:

*Goal B-1:* Revising the congregational call process, strengthening integration into new calls, providing resources to assist rostered leaders’ well-being, and continuing to support and enrich the candidacy process and “God’s IDEA.”

*Goal B-2:* Enhancing communications in and of the synod, including transition of the Director of Communications into a full-time position.

*Goal B-3:* Revitalizing synod clusters and leadership networks.

*Goal B-4:* Continuing to grow in awareness of and cooperation within ecumenical relationships.

# Executive Summary

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*Goal B-5:* Fostering new and renewed opportunities for conversation and cooperation among lay and rostered leaders.

*Goal B-6:* Facilitating the development of new Area Mission Strategies.

## ***Strategy C—Faith and Discipleship (Go)***

To assist congregations and individuals in deepening their faith and living out the fullness of discipleship through the following goals:

*Goal C-1:* Providing opportunities and resources for enriched individual and congregational faith formation.

*Goal C-2:* Revitalizing stewardship ministries in order to build a culture of generosity and excitement through resources and events for congregations and leaders, including the call of a Stewardship Director. Nebraska will join other synods in experimenting with and exploring new sources and means of support for ministries, and will call a Director of Development to coordinate and lead these efforts.

*Goal C-3:* Evangelizing, leading, training and exciting individuals and congregations so that they will reach out and witness, through resources and events, and through special emphases with young adults and with seniors/retirees. Calling a Synod Evangelist to provide coordination and leadership for these efforts.

## ***Recommendations***

1. It is recommended that the Synod Council endorse the 2015-2020 Strategic Mission Vision Plan, encouraging the synod's staff and leadership to implement all recommendations that require no further authorization.
2. It is further recommended that the Synod's staff and leadership work with the Executive Committee to formulate specific recommendations that require further authorizations for presentation to the Synod Council and when appropriate to the Assembly.
3. It is recommended that the Synod Council appoint a Strategic Mission Vision Review and Monitoring Team consisting initially of two persons from the Strategic Mission Vision Team and one or two persons from the Synod Council together with the Bishop. Further, it is recommended that this team monitor and report progress to the Synod Council. The Review and Monitoring Team is to provide as necessary an updated plan which will include revisions of existing strategies, goals and action plans and any new recommendations deemed appropriate due to changing conditions. Additionally, Strategic Mission Vision Plan Theme Coordinators will be appointed to work with appropriate parties to ensure communication, consistency and accountability among the many moving parts of the plan. Finally, an overall Strategic Mission Vision Plan Coordinator will be appointed to serve as the central person through which reporting and accountability will be coordinated.



# Executive Summary



## Investment Estimates

The initiatives of this vision will be funded primarily through grant monies made available by the Immanuel Vision Foundation, apart from the Synod’s regular budget. This will allow the initiatives to be evaluated throughout the time covered by this plan, and enable them to reach a level of sustainability without impacting the Synod’s ministries.

### Strategy A

Strategy A Working Group Travel (5 persons @ 3 trips to Carol Joy Holling Retreat Center) ..... \$ 2,520

Goal A-1.1: Congregational Indicators Work Group Meeting Expenses..... \$ 1,008

All other Strategy A items already in budget under other areas.

### Strategy B

Goal B-1.2: Spiritual Director Travel (20 congregations/year)..... \$ 1,680

*(congregations pay follow-up session travel and honorarium)*

Goal B-2.2: Full-time Communications Director ..... already in budget

All other Strategy A items already in budget under other areas.

### Strategy C

Goal C-1.1: Faith Formation Pilot Programs..... self-funded by participating congregations

Goal C-2.4: Full-time Stewardship Director (compensation, benefits, travel)..... \$ 75,000

Goal C-2.5: Full-time Development Director (compensation, benefits, travel) ..... \$ 95,000

Goal C-3: Full-time Synod Evangelist ..... converted from existing staff already in budget

Support Staff (1 - compensation and benefits) ..... \$ 50,000

### Total New Funding

First Year\* ..... \$ 225,208

Annually Ongoing (less congregational indicators expenses)..... \$ 224,200

\*First year funding assumes full staffing, which will not happen in the first year. However, this number provides an estimate of annual costs.