



Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

302-393 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 3H6 Canada. www.elcic.ca
Toll free: 1.888.786.6707, Phone: 204.984.9150, Fax: 204.984.9185

January 23, 2012

Dear Members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada:

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

This is the year that all five synods will be meeting in convention and will be considering next steps in the structural renewal process. Last summer the National Convention approved in principle the outline for structural renewal. Now we will be seeing specifics in terms of implications for synods and for congregations.

I have a confession to make to you. This process of restructuring began by being finance driven. There were concerns as we looked at the projections of declining membership, an increasingly aging church and decreasing financial resources that we were not going to be able to sustain our church's structure for much longer without change. But as we started the renewal process, the Holy Spirit took control, and it has ended up being driven by mission.

As we have asked, how can we be a church *In Mission for Others*, we realized that the majority of the ministry of our church happens at the congregational level. The proposed changes create a structure to encourage and support mission at the congregational and area levels. It provides an opportunity for a new way of working together to reach out in witness and service to our local communities.

Will there be financial savings? Yes there will—by having a reduced governance structure including fewer synods, fewer councils and committees, fewer offices, etc, there will be cost savings. But that money will be used to invest in supporting congregations and areas in ministry. We believe that by saving money to invest in mission we will expand our capacity for mission and outreach across the church.

But there's more! Structural renewal, even if it's Spirit-led and mission-driven will not make a difference in our church unless it goes hand in hand with spiritual renewal. The call to deeper discipleship as we pray, read, worship, study, serve, give and tell has to be answered alongside the call to structural renewal. These two strands must be interwoven if we are to grow as a church *In Mission for Others*.

In the next while you will be seeing further exciting announcements about the upcoming proposals for structural renewal that are coming to your synod convention. Please watch for them, read them, talk about them, and pray for our church and for the upcoming synod conventions.

God bless you all as we commit ourselves to renewal!

Yours in Christ,

The Rev. Susan C. Johnson
National Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada