



ELCA Future Directions 2025

Frequently Asked Questions

Introduction

This Q and A aims to provide the information needed to understand where the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is headed with ELCA Future Directions 2025. It is framed around questions we know are being asked by our synods, congregations, the churchwide organization, and agencies and institutions of this church. The answers to some of the questions are still being shaped and confirmed with the ELCA Church Council, Conference of Bishops and other partners. However, the churchwide Administrative Team wants to offer some shared understandings.

Questions

1

What has been decided? And what does ELCA Future Directions 2025 look like as an ongoing process for the ELCA?

- The ELCA Church Council adopted Future Directions 2025 in November on behalf of the whole church. Future Directions 2025 includes five goals and priorities for action. It also includes a shared purpose, vision and values statements.
- As an ongoing process, the Church Council and Conference of Bishops will make this their work in the coming years. Their agenda will be framed by the implementation and evaluation of the future directions. The Churchwide Organization's Operational Plan will be built from the future directions. The whole church is invited and expected to live into these directions.
- The Future Directions Table will continue to advise and assist the Church Council in this work for the next 2-3 years.
- We hope leaders across this church will continue to champion the goals and help us to live into the directions as one church with many interdependent and related parts.

2

Why did the Church Council identify 2025 as an end date?

- The date was chosen because the directions needed an end point – it represents the time span for three Churchwide Assemblies – 2019, 2022 and 2025.
- The time frame allows for a strategic and evolutionary implementation that better connects the ELCA around a common identity and shared goals over time.

3 What do the future directions mean for the ELCA? Who owns them and what are they meant to do?

- The directions came from a whole-church process to identify the longer-term aspirations and priorities of the ELCA. They express what this church has collectively said is important. We own these together. Regarding the oversight, the Church Council owns the directions on behalf of the whole church. The Conference of Bishops has affirmed them and so has the Administrative Team of the churchwide organization.
- The directions provide a framework for the shared leadership and ministry strategy for the church we believe God is calling the ELCA to be.
- They will empower leaders across this church to work together on strategic areas that the whole church, through Called Forward Together in Christ, identified to be important for the future.

4 How is Called Forward Together in Christ and ELCA Future Directions 2025 different from previous planning processes?

- This process and ongoing work has been agreed to by the Church Council, Conference of Bishops and the Administrative Team. Past processes have not had the collective and shared ownership of these three tables at the same time.
- Our three ELCA expressions (congregations, synods and the churchwide organization) will need to play a role in holding the goals and priorities front and center. Collectively, we also have a responsibility to continue to engage in dialogue and action to address the challenges this church faces and to shape contextually appropriate strategies.

5 As church together, how are we going to mobilize and align leadership, strategy, decisions and resources around the goals and priorities?

- It is our opportunity and challenge to change how the ELCA aligns leadership and resources in order to implement these directions. With the commitment of the three tables, the presiding bishop will convene conversations to develop a strategy for this work.

6 What do the strategic directions mean specifically for the churchwide organization staff? Are they expected to align their work with the goals and priority action areas?

- Yes, they are expected to align their work with the goals and priority action areas. The Church Council has directed them to do this and expects them to develop outcomes and metrics that allow them to measure progress against goals. In the future, the Church Council will focus on how the Churchwide Organization's Operational Plan contributes to the achievement of these outcomes and reflects the priorities in Future Directions 2025.
 - Much of churchwide organization's work is already aligned. However, the staff will need to look at what needs to be changed or adjusted to most effectively carry out the priority action areas with and on behalf of this church. They will need to be willing to re-evaluate both what is being done and how effectively they are doing it to fit with the intent of the directions and what might need to be redirected where necessary.
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7

How and why did congregational vitality and leadership development emerge as the two main foci?

- Congregational vitality and leadership emerged as foci for the next couple of years because they are foundations for the ELCA's future, and there is an urgent need to address these two areas in our current state as a church.
- You will see congregational vitality and leadership as action areas under almost all five goals.
- For real change and impact, these two areas require a sustained effort by this whole church; to achieve that, a strategy for mobilizing actions and committing resources is needed.
- The presiding bishop and Administrative Team first named these areas. Then the Conference of Bishops and Church Council also confirmed them as critical areas for this church's focus and their leadership in the immediate future.

8

Given the identification of these focus areas, are all five goals and priority action areas still important for this church?

- Yes, all the goals and priority action areas are important. We cannot do everything at the same time or at the same level of engagement. We hold all the goals and action areas in relation to each other.
- Between now and 2025, we may see the emphasis shift as we achieve progress on some of the fundamental challenges of today.