

REDISCOVER MACEDONIA

A spirit of gratitude and generosity



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

ELCA Macedonia Project 2011 – 2013

Overview for Congregational Workshops I and II

We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia; for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part (2 Corinthians 8:1-2).

Have you rediscovered the spirit of gratitude and generosity present in the early Christians from Macedonia? While poor and experiencing a severe ordeal of affliction, these faithful people showed a spirit of gratitude and generosity. It is this spirit the Apostle Paul lifts up to the people of Corinth, a community of believers who struggled with their faith and to follow Jesus' commandments. It is this spirit of the Macedonians that we wish to share and grow within all communities of faith.

Perhaps the best place to begin this undertaking is the last verse of the previous chapter:

I rejoice, because I have complete confidence in you (2 Corinthians 7:16).

Paul expresses his confidence in the people of Corinth to achieve the undertakings placed before them. Paul goes on to use the spirit of the people in Macedonia as an example of how this can be done, even during difficult times. Thus Paul begins with joy and confidence in the body of Christ, and develops a ministry of stewardship that presents a way to make a common confession of faith. It is the stirring spirit of these verses that we strive to rediscover today. We reflect God's confidence in us and are more complete when this spirit of gratitude and generosity become a public confession through our faith. And, it is by God's grace that we are able to do so.

Workshop goals, outcomes and capacities

The ELCA Macedonia Project is a significant approach and resource by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to live into the spirit of the Macedonians by developing the perspectives, practices and skills relevant today. This approach and related resources focus on several specific goals, and the development of "common capacities" initially identified by leaders in synods and congregations. These goals and capacities lead to the formation of specific workshop outcomes.

The goals are to:

1. Connect giving with discipleship and faith practices;
2. Develop a culture of generosity;
3. Develop an awareness and understanding of where giving goes;
4. Develop a plan to grow giving in the congregation; and
5. Develop a plan to grow Mission Support in the congregation.

The common capacities are to:

1. Equip leaders to be stronger steward leaders;

2. Embrace one-on-one conversations about one's stewardship journey and tithing as a way to grow in faith;
3. Guide leaders in making a "relational ask" for participation in and support of God's work; and
4. Explore new ways of expressing gratitude and generosity using current technology.

The resources to achieve the above goals and capacities are made available to ELCA synods participating in the Macedonia Project, and will be made available to other synods and organizations in the near future.

The following learning design is created for use with the ELCA Macedonia Project and is to be used with leaders in congregations. There is a Workshop I Learning Design and a Workshop II Learning Design. Each workshop is three hours long. These workshops would typically be eight weeks apart. The first workshop focuses primarily on introducing the theme, biblical foundation, equipping leaders and preparing for the second workshop. The second workshop focuses on one-on-one conversations, making a "relational ask" and new ways of expressing gratitude and generosity using current technology.

Through these two workshops there are specific measurable outcomes set for the participating congregations. These include:

1. Completion of a pre- and post-Macedonia benchmark survey to measure attitudes, practices and skills related to the workshop goals;
2. Several leaders are trained to conduct one-on-one conversations;
3. Several leaders are trained to conduct a relational ask;
4. Realize an increase in regular household giving dollars or percentage to the congregation; and
5. Realize an increase in Mission Support dollars from the congregation to the synod.

Workshop design overview

As outlined above, there are specific objectives for this two-part workshop series. While the workshops are usually conducted within an eight-week period, there is work to be completed between the two workshops and continued after the second workshop. The measurement of the congregational outcomes will occur 18 to 24 months after the second workshop. However specific measuring points or mileposts will be set along the way.

Who: All congregations are welcome to participate. Each congregation is encouraged to bring a team of four to six leaders, including at least one rostered leader from the congregation. Diversity is encouraged for each team by including a mix of ages, culture, education, ethnicity and gender. It is recommended to have one person from the congregation council.

Why: The reasons for a congregation to participate in this workshop series are many:

1. Households and congregations experience difficulty in talking more openly about money and financial issues;
2. People are uncertain why they should give and what a tithe is;

3. Leaders are uncertain how to ask others in the congregation to make a financial commitment;
4. People are unclear where the money in the offering plate goes; or/and
5. Congregations are uncertain how to re-shape and measure positive changes in their culture.

The benefits for a congregation are also many:

1. Strengthen discipleship and faith practices;
2. Create a spirit of gratitude and generosity within the congregation's culture;
3. Engage in one-on-one conversations about faith, giving and tithing;
4. Build a case for supporting ministry in and beyond the local community;
5. Identify and train new leaders; and
6. Grow regular giving.

When: Congregations can participate in a workshop series any time of the year. The content will encourage the growth of year-round stewardship practices. Most often the first workshop is between March and August with a second workshop about eight weeks later.

Where: A location central to the participating congregations is usually best. Meeting space to accommodate up to five people from each congregation is appropriate. This would usually be table-seating for at least 30 people. Additional space will be necessary for dyad and triad conversations. Basic supplies and materials would include: an easel with paper and markers, projection screen, laptop computer, projector and a black or white dry-erase board, adequate lighting (and capacity to darken for video and PowerPoint presentations) and comfortable temperature control.

Workshop I Pre-work (1 hour)

1. Read Stewardship 101 at www.elca.org/macedonia or as provided.
2. Review your Congregational Trend Report.

(If you do not have the report, go to www.elca.org, then click Find a Congregation in the upper right, enter your congregation's ZIP code, click on your congregation and go to Find Your Report near the bottom of the right column)

- a. What positive trends do you see?
- b. What events caused significant changes?
- c. Where do you see opportunities for stewardship growth?

Workshop I Outline (3 hours)

Welcome and Introductions
Opening Devotion and Prayer

Opening Activity and Plenary Sharing
Introduction of Rediscover Macedonia
Overview for Congregational Workshops I and II
Scanning the Macedonia Menu
Macedonia Bible Studies
Equipping Steward Leaders
Competencies of a Well-formed Steward
Building a Case for Ministry
Talking about Money
Plenary Sharing and Next Steps
Learnings and Personal Stewardship Practices
Preparing for a Relational Ask
Developing a Congregational Stewardship Work Plan
Planning 2 x 2 x 2
Closing Prayer and Sending

Workshop II Pre-Work (? Hours)

1. Personal stewardship
 - a. Write your personal stewardship goal.
 - b. Make a case using personal stewardship personal principles.
 - c. State your personal ministry goals.
2. Congregational stewardship
 - a. Identify ten reasons to tithe to God's work in and through your congregation.
 - b. List congregational activities for the next 12 months on the initial draft of your Congregational Stewardship Ministry Plan.
 - c. Identify people in your congregation to make a Relational Ask.

Workshop II Outline (3 hours)

Opening Activity
Opening Devotion and Prayer
Progress Reports and Plenary Debriefing
Resources for Strengthening Your Work Plan
Rediscover Macedonia Survey
Biblical Stewardship: Our Duty and Delight
Try-A-Tithe Sunday
Engaging in One-on-One Conversations
Writing a Personal Money Autobiography
Writing a Congregational Money Autobiography
Making a Relational Ask
Updating the Congregational Stewardship Work Plan
Plenary Sharing and Future Macedonia Activities
Closing Prayer and Sending