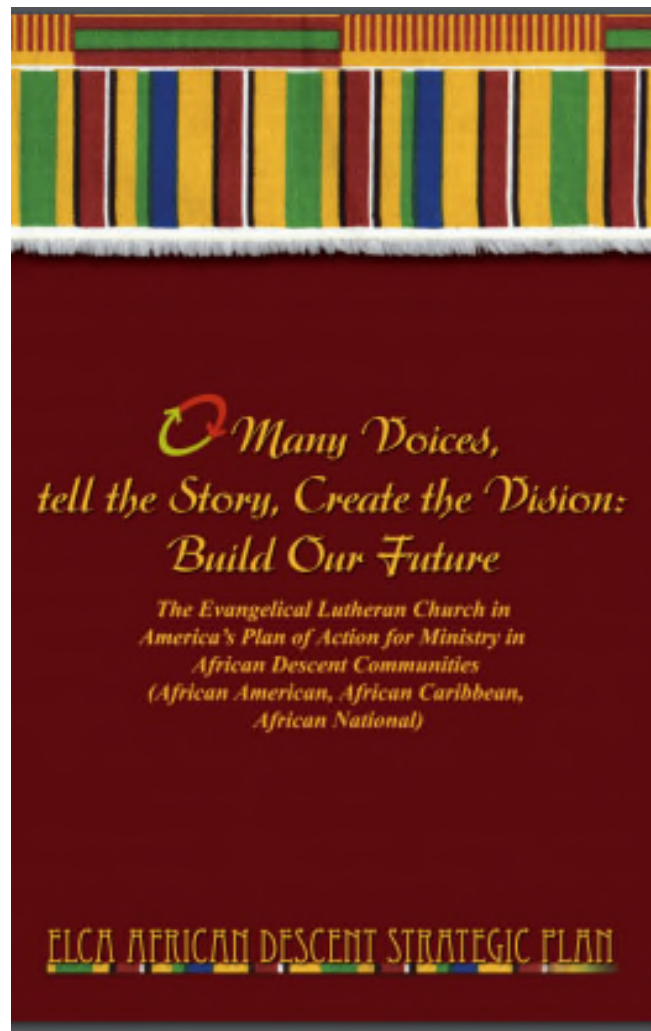


ELCA African Descent Strategy Implementation Plan 2020/2025



ELCA African Descent Strategy Update: 2020/2025

Setting a Vision

*I know the purpose I have for you...
to give you a future filled with hope.*
--Jeremiah 29:11

The *ELCA African Descent Strategic Plan* approved by Churchwide Assembly action in 2005 continues to be a solid assessment and overarching plan for mission and ministry with and among people of African ancestry in the ELCA. The key mission opportunity areas remain primarily unchanged. The aim of this strategic plan continues to be to serve as an overarching living document “intended to stir imagination and ministry initiatives beyond what is presented on its pages.”


Critical evaluation of the 2005 strategic plan has revealed the need for more careful and consistent monitoring of progress, or lack thereof, toward stated goals and objectives. An intent of this update of the 2005 plan is to address and align with the *ELCA Future Directions 2025* focus of Congregational Vitality and Leadership while attending to the unique dynamics of mission and ministry with and among people of African descent.

The fuller implementation of this strategy calls for three critical manners of relational attentiveness with people of African descent in congregations, synods, and churchwide expressions of the ELCA.

- **Engagement** – Identifying and building relationship with persons of African descent within ELCA
- **Involvement** - Inviting persons of African descent into meaningful initiatives
- **Investment** – Employing the gifts and resources of persons of African descent for fruitful return

An estimated 196 congregations in the ELCA report having 30 percent or more active participants of African descent. This number represents an underengaged, underinvolved wealth of gifts and human resource that, if fully invested in meaningful ministry, will undoubtedly bear tremendous fruit to the glory of God and beneficial to the growth and wellbeing of the whole church.

The Vision still ushers us toward Vitality earmarked by visionary pastoral leadership, contextually reflective worship, evangelical witness, discipleship and faith formation, stewardship in daily life, social justice, unity and diversity.



The years before us, 2020 to 2025, will call for intentional regional, national, and international gatherings of people of African descent within the ELCA mindful of the United Nation's three main foci for a Decade for People of African Descent: Recognition, Justice, and Development. The health and vitality of people of African descent within the ELCA is critical to the future growth of this segment of the ELCA and will in turn contribute to the life and vitality of call and capacity to be church together, church for the sake of the world.

Background

In 2015, the African Descent Strategy Team ("ADST") began a multi-year evaluation of the *ELCA African Descent Strategic Plan*. The objective of the evaluation was to determine status of the goals outlined in the strategy, relevance for the current context, and direction setting for the future.

The ADST engaged ELCA Research and Evaluation in gathering quantitative and qualitative research, including obtaining feedback from congregations serving people of African descent on what they are experiencing in their faith communities.

In this document, the state of ELCA Lutherans of African descent will be explored and direction will be shared regarding engaging faith communities serving people of African descent going forward.

Mission Context

In 2017, there were 35,384 ELCA active participants of African descent, a twenty-six percent decline from seven years prior. While there was a decline among all people of African descent combined, there was a significant increase of active participants who are African National/African Caribbean. The African National/African Caribbean population increased by 85 percent from 4,881 in 2010 to 9,020 in 2017. Over the same time period, African American active participants declined by 64 percent.

There are 143 ELCA congregations that report having at least 30 percent of their active participants who are African American/Black, 43 congregations with at least 30 percent of active participants who are African National/African Caribbean, and 10 congregations reporting having at least 30 percent African American/Black and 30 percent African National/African Caribbean active participants.

Goals Evaluation

The African Descent Strategy outlines eight strategy areas. Following is an assessment of the state of the strategy goals.

Visionary Pastoral Leadership

Goal: By 2015, add a minimum of 100 visionary pastoral leaders prepared or preparing to serve African descent congregations.

The goal of adding 100 leaders of African Descent by 2015 was not achieved. The number of active¹ rostered leaders and seminarians of African descent remained flat between 2004 and 2014, increasing by one from 251 in 2004 to 252 in 2014.

Rostered leaders of African descent are disproportionately older than the ELCA average. The average age for African descent male leaders is 56 years old, compared to 54 for the ELCA overall. The average age for African decent female leaders is 58 years old, compared to 52 for the ELCA overall.

Of the congregations with 10 percent or more people of African descent, 33 percent or 168 congregations, were without a called pastor in 2015, compared to 30 percent of all ELCA congregations that were without a called pastor. Many of these congregations are located in high areas of poverty, in an inner-city, urban context, impacted by significant population and economic shifts.


Worship

Goals: 1) To increase the number of African descent congregations in which there is freedom for contextualized worship. 2) To increase the number of musicians available to support worship in the Black idiom. 3) To increase the number of worship resources ethnically specific to various cultures of African descent peoples.

In 2014, there were 26 Synodically Authorized Worshipping Communities and Congregations Under Development with at least 10 percent people of African descent. The majority serve African Nationals.

The average worship attendance in congregations serving people of African descent declined over the 10-year period between 2004 and 2014. In 2014, the average worship attendance in congregations with at least 10 percent people of African descent was 68 people, down from 92

¹ "Active" includes rostered leaders who were either in a call or on leave from call at the end of the year noted. These figures do not include anyone who left the roster through retirement, removal, resignation, disability, or death.



in 2004. When compared to other ELCA congregations with fewer than 150 average worship attendance, the African descent attendance is slightly above average.

When asked about the ways individuals with gifts for being a musician are being trained in congregations, about half of the congregations serving people of African descent train individuals with gifts and interest for being a musician and about half do not – most say they do so in an informal way.

When asked about resources used for worship, about one-third of congregations report using *This Far by Faith*, a Lutheran African American resource, for worship.

Witness

Goal: Using strategies that focus on the spiritual needs of people of African descent, congregations will be provided assistance and training to promote measurable and consistent growth.

Fifty-seven percent of congregations report having a formal or informal way of helping members tell their stories in order to invite others into relationship with Jesus. Twenty-one percent of members report providing education on telling faith stories in a very intentional way, while another thirty-six percent report educating in an informal way.

More than half of congregations offer no hospitality training. Among the forty-seven percent of congregations that do offer training, only 20 percent offer hospitality training in a very intentional way.

Discipleship


Goal: To make discipleship a priority over membership

Seventy-two percent of congregations offer some kind of discipleship program/education. Half do so in an intentional way. Sixty percent of congregations use small groups as a discipleship tool.

Congregations are identifying the gifts of members and engaging them in ministry in the congregation and community.

Stewardship

Goal: To demonstrate sustained growth in stewardship of time, talent, and treasure through intentional planning, education, and understanding of the need to be in full partnership with this church and with their community.



Regular and designated giving is down for congregations serving people of African descent over the ten-year period from 2004 to 2014. Though African descent giving declined, it is still above average for the ELCA average giving per person.

When asked about teaching tithing, sixty-three percent of congregations of African descent report they do so, most in an informal way.

Family Ministries

Goal: To support and nurture leaders of all ages.

Eighty-four percent of congregations report opportunities for inclusion of youth and young adults, 53 percent say youth and young adults are included in a very intentional way. However, less than half of congregations say they offer leadership development or mentoring in an informal or intentional way.

Social Justice

Goal: To speak God's Word forthrightly to those systems that continually drive life out of God's people.

Among the ways the African Descent Strategy engaged social justice, one way was partnering with Lutheran social ministry organizations. Sixty-six percent of congregations report partnering with a Lutheran social ministry organization.

Unity and Diversity

Goal: To create a strategic team of leaders of the various communities to develop cohesive programs that will create openings or recognized churchwide leadership, not tokenism.

The majority of rostered leaders of African descent – 73 percent – are in calls in congregations. This is lower than the percent of leaders of European descent who are in congregational calls – 80 percent. There are disproportionately more leaders of African descent in calls with the Churchwide organization. There are lower percentages in synodical, chaplain, or social service calls.

Ministry Alignment to Fulfill Strategy Goals

The ELCA African Descent Strategy is lived out through the work of the ELCA African Descent Desk, which is supported by the African Descent Strategy Team. To create better alignment, the areas of the African Descent Strategy and the work of African Strategy Team will be aligned to focus on three ministry areas:

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- Congregational Vitality
 - Leadership
 - Justice

In addition to improving the alignment of the strategy with the work of the African Descent Strategy Team, the strategy evaluation also considered the alignment of the strategy with the direction of the ELCA as outlined in the *ELCA Strategic Directions 2025* and found the directions to be complementary.

In recognition that the African Descent Strategy is one for the whole church, the 2020/2025 goals that follow include encouraged actions for mission partners across the church to collaborate to bring these goals to fruition.

African Descent Strategy: 2020/2025 Goals

Congregational Vitality

Essential to vital ministry are healthy congregations that serve as welcoming centers for ministry that:

- Are Christ-centered
- Make disciples who are a critical part of the community
- Use music and liturgy in our native tongues and cultural expressions
- Preach with power
- Retell and share faith stories
- Reach the needs of the people
- Seek justice
- Are rooted in the community through serving
- Are beggars showing other beggars where to find food
- Practice sacrificial generosity
- Embody God's presence in a 24-7 way of being very holistic
- Transcends from moving within the building edifice

Affirming the guidance of the ELCA Future Directions, the African Descent community will “aspire to have congregations whose faith shines in their relationships with God, each other and their community. Vital congregations experience heightened worship, prayer, study of scripture, and sharing of testimony as they discern the presence and will of God in their midst.”

Strengthen Capacity of Congregations

To enhance the vitality of African descent ministry, goals have been set to strengthen and increase the capacity of African descent congregations and develop new congregations in strategic areas.

2020 Goal: Ensure accurate record-keeping to monitor the current status and progress of African descent congregations.

Develop new African descent congregations in strategic locations across the country where there is a ripe opportunity for mission engagement and not currently in an African descent ELCA presence.

2025 Goal: At least 50 percent of African descent congregation will have an established mission plan that focuses on the aforementioned attributes of vital ministry, rooted in Christ and community, with a focus on worship, evangelism, generosity, and justice.

Create a financial plan to support the mission plan of congregations and creating new revenue streams so the congregation can have financial sustainability, increase mission support, and form new partnerships.

Congregations, synods, and churchwide units are encouraged to:

Coordinate with Research and Development and the Congregational Vitality Team to submit and obtain accurate updates on the progress of mission in African descent congregations.


Identify strategic locations ripe for new African descent ministry.

Work with each African descent congregation to develop and implement a mission plan.

Partner to creatively identify sources of financial support and ways of achieving financial sustainability.

Sharing Stories and Gifts for Mission

African Descent communities have always been generous. They are steeped in the core belief of communal wealth. Family structures and even relationships with neighbors exemplify the notion of this shared economy. The lack of monetary wealth does not diminish the commitment to ensure all needs are met for each community member. Likewise, mission is not abandoned in African Descent congregations because of resource challenges. As well, a need to fund the mission in community is not a source of shame but an embraced and celebrated



reality. This communal living is done out of a love for Jesus and therefore out of a love for each other. Putting the community at the center is counter to the Eurocentric culture which promotes individual success. This mirrors the way African descent communities experience God. There is a sense of ownership and belonging that drives commitment and engagement in the mission of the church.

2020 Goal: Review the ELCA African Descent stewardship tool “Stories to Tell and Gifts to Share” to ensure its cultural and contextual relevance to African descent congregations serving in present-day contexts. Reintroduce “Stories to Tell and Gifts to Share” and other tools to African descent congregations, including contemporary methods of electronic giving.

2025 Goal: Increase the number of African descent congregations utilizing the “Stories to Tell and Gifts to Share” to develop an intentional practice of mission support.

Congregations, synods, and churchwide units are encouraged to:

Review existing ELCA stewardship resources and implement new strategies for stewardship to grow the gifts for ministry.

Leverage Partnerships for Enhanced Mission

Vibrant ministries have formed through ELCA congregations partnering with ecumenical partners. Starting conversations to yolk or partner will give communities of faith an opportunity to realign resources to support the mission plan.

2020 Goal: Initiate sharing of best practices for partnership at the Congregational Vitality Training

2025 Goal: Increase the awareness of and number of African descent communities of faith partnering with other communities of faith in the ELCA or with ecumenical partners and report best practices to the African Descent Ministry Desk.

Congregations, synods, and churchwide units are encouraged to:

Build relationships with local ecumenical partners.

Engage in joint ministry together on community initiatives to explore the possibilities for partnership.

Collect, share, and celebrate stories of successful ministry partnerships.



The African Descent Lutheran Association is encouraged to:

Build stronger ecumenical relationships, particularly with ELCA partners and Historically Black denominations.

Leadership

Essential to vital ministry is the active participation of engaging, well-trained leaders. To that end, goals have been set around engaging and forming rostered and lay ministers of African descent.

We are a church dedicated to ministries that value, engage, and affirm children, youth, and young adults as an integral part of this church, now and for the future. (*Called Forward Together in Christ ELCA Future Directions, 7*)

Identify, Invite, and Invest

To increase the number of Visionary Vitality Leaders, both lay and rostered ministers, a focus will be centered on identifying, inviting, and investing in African descent leaders who are willing, ready, and able to serve in the African descent community.

This initiative will help to begin the process of increasing the number of leaders and fulfill the ELCA's recommitment with the African Descent Lutheran Lives Matter resolution passed at the African Descent Lutheran Association Assembly and the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly.

Additionally, this initiative will focus on identifying, inviting, and investing in African descent leaders who have completed their Ph.D. and those individuals who are willing to begin the process of pursuing a Ph.D., encouraging them to serve in the seven ELCA seminaries.

There are currently only two African descent seminary faculty members on ELCA campuses, and one of them will be retiring in the next two years. However, we do have several African descent faculty members on other seminary and college campuses. We need African descent faculty members to be mentors, advisors, and role models for those pursuing leadership in the ELCA.

Intentional efforts will be engaged to Identify, Invite, and Invest in youth and young adult leaders through the continued development of programs like: Shekinah Multicultural Camp, SIMBA, SIMSA, Elijah's Call, Bishops Schools, Leadership Lab, new members classes, First Call Theological Education, internships, including Horizon, Ministry in Context/Teaching Parish, Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) sites, and Thrivent Fellows.

2020 Goal: Add 75 lay and rostered leaders to the number of Visionary Vitality Leaders. This goal includes both congregation and seminary leaders, with the goal of adding at least one or two Ph.D. candidates.

Congregations, synods, churchwide units, seminaries, and the African Descent Lutheran Association are encouraged to:

Engage in intentional recruitment and development of lay and rostered leaders.

Partner with our ecumenical Full Communion partners, including exploring a deeper relationship with the historically Black Church, to allow opportunities for shared leadership resources between partner denominations.

Proclaiming the POWER II

As a follow-up to *Proclaiming the POWER*, an event that was transformational for the African descent community almost 20 years ago, regional events will be held that equip rostered ministers and lay leaders in every congregation. Efforts will be made to hold these events in conjunction with a Black Ministerium and/or Rostered Leader Gathering or as a pre- or post-event of an ADLA Assembly.

2020 Goal: Two *Proclaiming the POWER II* regional gatherings will be held with the purpose of equipping Vitality Leaders and Congregations. These will be the first of eight regional events, held over four years – two events per year.


2025 Goal: A resource of best practices, a curriculum for re-tooling pastors and congregations to serve the Church of tomorrow, and a curriculum for new and established Vitality Congregations will be developed by 2025.

Congregations, synods, churchwide units, and the African Descent Lutheran Association are encouraged to:

Collaborate to efficiently and effectively implement *Proclaiming the Power II*, identifying best practices along the way to develop and refine the curriculum for forming African descent leaders.

Coaching

To ensure all African descent rostered ministers have access to a coach, an effort is needed to train a group of lay and rostered leaders available for to serve as coaches, ensuring a diverse group including men and women, young and mature. This is particularly important since a coach is required for all Mission Developers. Coaching support will help enable leaders to be



accompanied as congregations are developing to reach their full growth potential; and, at the same time, assist coaches to matriculate through various levels of International Coaching Federation (ICF) standards and levels. There will also be specialty areas for coaching, including stewardship and discipleship.

2020 Goal: Identify, invite, and invest in 10-15 leaders of African descent interested in coach training.

Congregations, synods, churchwide units are encouraged to:

Identify rostered and lay leaders of African descent with gifts for coaching and recommend them for training.

Once trained, utilize trained coaches to support congregations that can benefit from the relationship.

Identify and secure resources to help fund training fees and stipends for coaches.

Part II Mission Developer/Vitality Training

To equip developers in their baptismal vocation in the mission of the Church fully engaging the communities they serve, a track will be developed for Mission Developers of African descent and Vitality Training for African descent ministries with a focus on knowledge, best practices, and expertise to create congregations of vitality.

2025 Goal: Implement a Part II Mission Developer and Vitality Congregation training tracks to resource and train African descent developers and congregations.

Congregations, synods, and churchwide units are encouraged to:

Identify congregations and register congregations serving people of African descent to participate in the training.

Lutheran Theological Center in Atlanta (LTCA)

LTCA continues to be a place where we are more fully engaging, investing, and developing new opportunities for leadership development and where our ecumenical partners and others are curating and creating models of congregational health and vitality.

2025 Goal: Continue to grow, support, and expand the scope of the work of LTCA, as a lay training school of the Southeastern Synod of the ELCA, in a partnership which reengages the seminaries, especially those nearest

**Lenoir-Rhyne (Lutheran Southern Seminary), and the
Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) in Atlanta.**

Congregations, synods, seminaries, and churchwide units are encouraged to:

Identify and direct students to LTCA for culturally relevant education.

Identify and direct scholarship dollars that will ensure full investment in financially supporting – lay leaders, TEEM candidates, M.Div., D.Min. and Ph.D. candidates.

Gathering of ELCA Seminarians and Candidates of Color

A gathering will be developed to help individuals preparing for leadership in the ELCA connect with African descent lay and rostered ministers who will serve as mentors and who will be able to guide leaders in adaptive leadership, including opportunities to continually be equipped to learn and serve with integrity the unique polity of the ELCA.

2025 Goal: Establish ongoing gatherings of Lutheran Seminarians, Faculty, and Candidates of Color, which would include mentoring. The first gathering will be held by 2025.

Congregations, synods, seminaries, and churchwide units are encouraged to:

Identify and encourage seminarians, faculty, and candidates to participate in these gatherings.

Recommend to the African Descent Desk rostered leaders who would make good mentors for seminarians/candidates.

Justice

African descent Lutheran congregations have inherited a grand social ethical tradition from both the historic Black church and the Lutheran church. From the Black church, people of African descent inherited an understanding that the Christian faith must be concerned about the body and soul of all members of its context. From the Lutheran church, people of African descent inherited a strong social ministry network. Both traditions embrace their mission to be a public church that serves and speaks on behalf of the “least of these” (Matthew 25). The prophetic and priestly dimensions of ministry in African descent communities require Lutherans of African descent around the globe to be attentive to their context. Issues such as HIV/AIDS, homelessness, poverty, social justice in the judicial process, economic equality, educational opportunity, and health care accessibility converge on African descent Lutheran congregations in many ways. People of African descent need to be empowered in all arenas in the fight for justice.

HIV/AIDS and Health

Because African descent communities face a higher proportion of new HIV/AIDS cases and a higher percentage of people living with HIV/AIDS in the U.S., while accounting for only 13 percent of the population, the church has a responsibility to advocate, educate, and participate in ways to reduce the stigma and spread of HIV/AIDS.

2020 Goal: Engage at least 30 percent of African descent congregations in HIV/AIDS education, awareness, and advocacy.

Congregations, synods, and churchwide units are encouraged to:

Encourage congregations to attend and/participate in Black HIV/AIDS awareness events and initiatives.

Request scholarship support for People of African descent to attend and participate in the national and international HIV conferences; and build network.

2025 Goal: Continue HIV/AIDS education and advocacy and also explore health concerns that affect black communities (diabetes, HBP, high cholesterol, strokes, mental health, gun violence)

Congregations, synods, and churchwide units are encouraged to:

Continue HIV/AIDS education and advocacy and also explore the underlining racial and economic root causes of the social determinants of health that disproportionately affect black communities.

Develop leadership training program around health disparities, seek grant funding and partnerships for community-based initiatives;

The African Descent Lutheran Association is encouraged to:

Lift up and educate about the social determinants of health.

Advocacy/Ecumenical Advocacy Days

The role of public policy and practices have systematically disempowered and disenfranchised People of African Descent both domestically and globally for over 400 years. To ensure the concerns of the African descent community are fairly represented, we call upon the ELCA's advocacy office to prioritize issues and increase mobilization for African descent communities.

2020 Goal: Build relationship with the ELCA Advocacy office

Congregations, synods, and churchwide units are encouraged to:

Increase by 50 percent each year the total number of ELCA participants of African descent at Ecumenical Advocacy Days.

The African Descent Desk will invite the ELCA Advocacy office into quarterly consultation to share mutual interest concerns regarding policy priorities.

The African Descent Lutheran Association is encouraged to:

Distribute advocacy newsletters and actions, along with the African Descent Desk.

Churchwide unit responsible for ELCA Advocacy is encouraged to:

Do intentional outreach to the ADST, ADLA and African Descent Ministries.

Engage the UN Decade of people of African descent

2025 Goal: Create and implement advocacy mentoring programs with leaders who have already been cultivated in advocacy work to “pass down the torch.”

Congregations, synods, and churchwide units are encouraged to:

African Descent Ministries, through gatherings like Elisha’s Call, will invite advocacy staff to provide workshops, presentations, and trainings.

Intentionally recruit interns of color, and hunger fellows to serve in advocacy offices.

Invite leadership of ADLA & ADST to attend the Congressional Black Caucus annual 3-day event.

Criminal Justice

The United States has continued the practice of mass incarceration, a practice that especially impacts communities of African descent. In 2013, this church committed to offer hospitality, accompany, and advocate on behalf of those whose lives are caught up in or committed in service to the criminal justice system.

2020 Goal: Recommit to and resource the priorities of the “Hearing the Cries” social statement.

Congregations, synods, and churchwide units are encouraged to:

Identify congregations that have an interest in prison and recovery ministry.

Encourage congregations to seek out partners, organizations, and networks working with prison ministry and to broadly share these resources.

Encourage congregations to utilize existing prison congregation resources of the ELCA and ecumenical partners.

Seek financial support for prison and recovery ministry.

2025 Goal: Increase the number of synods participating in prison ministry by 25 percent each year.

Congregations, synods, and churchwide units are encouraged to:

Increase congregational involvement in prison and recovery ministry.

Immigration and Refugee (African, Afro-Caribbean and Arab/Middle Eastern)

Members of the African descent community have been targeted for deportations, threatened with the separation of families, and more. These communities have looked to this church to aid them and found that they are not represented in the church's strategy on immigration.

2020 Goal: Reframe the narrative on immigration to be more inclusive, in collaboration with the international policy staff (Global Mission, African National Steering Committee, LIRS and ethnic specific associations), and advocate for and resource the full inclusion and acclamation into communities.

Congregations, synods, and churchwide units are encouraged to:

Call for the Churchwide Organization to expand or duplicate the AMMPARO strategy to include migrants/refugees of African National, African Caribbean, and Arab/Middle Eastern descent.

2025 Goal: Collaborate with LIRS to connect immigrants and refugees from African nations with African descent Lutherans.

Increase the number of worshipping communities for re-settled populations.

Congregations, synods, and churchwide units are encouraged to:

Work with LIRS to establish a database to connect immigrants and refugees from African, Caribbean, and Arab-descent African communities with congregations.

Summary of African Descent Strategy Goals: 2020

Congregational Vitality

- Ensure accurate record-keeping to monitor the current status and progress of African descent congregations.
- Develop new African descent congregations in strategic locations across the country where there is a ripe opportunity for mission engagement and not currently in an African descent ELCA presence.
- Review the ELCA African Descent stewardship tool “Stories to Tell and Gifts to Share” to ensure its cultural and contextual relevance to African descent congregations serving in present-day contexts. Reintroduce “Stories to Tell and Gifts to Share” and other tools to African descent congregations, including contemporary methods of electronic giving.
- Initiate sharing of best practices for partnership at the Congregational Vitality Training

Leadership

- Add 75 lay and rostered leaders to the number of Visionary Vitality Leaders. This goal includes both congregation and seminary leaders, with the goal of adding at least one or two Ph.D. candidates.
- Two Proclaiming the POWER II regional gatherings will be held with the purpose of equipping Vitality Leaders and Congregations. These will be the first of eight regional events, held over four years – two events per year.
- Identify, invite, and invest in 10-15 leaders of African descent interested in coach training.

Justice

- Engage at least 30 percent of African descent congregations in HIV/AIDS education, awareness, and advocacy.
- Build relationship with the ELCA Advocacy office.
- Recommit to and resource the priorities of the “Hearing the Cries” social statement.
- Reframe the narrative on immigration to be more inclusive, in collaboration with the international policy staff (Global Mission, African National Steering Committee, LIRS and ethnic specific associations), and advocate for and resource the full inclusion and acclamation into communities.

Summary of African Descent Strategy Goals: 2025

Congregational Vitality

- At least 50 percent of African descent congregation will have an established mission plan that focuses on the aforementioned attributes of vital ministry, rooted in Christ and community, with a focus on worship, evangelism, generosity, and justice.
- Create a financial plan to support the mission plan of congregations and creating new revenue streams so the congregation can have financial sustainability, increase mission support, and form new partnerships.
- Increase the number of African descent congregations utilizing the “Stories to Tell and Gifts to Share” to develop an intentional practice of mission support.
- Increase the awareness of and number of African descent communities of faith partnering with other communities of faith in the ELCA or with ecumenical partners and report best practices to the African Descent Ministry Desk.

Leadership

- A resource of best practices, a curriculum for re-tooling pastors and congregations to serve the Church of tomorrow, and a curriculum for new and established Vitality Congregations will be developed by 2025.
- Implement a Part II Mission Developer and Vitality Congregation training tracks to resource and train African descent developers and congregations.
- Continue to grow, support, and expand the scope of the work of LTCA, as a lay training school of the Southeastern Synod of the ELCA, in a partnership which reengages the seminaries, especially those nearest Lenoir-Rhyne (Lutheran Southern Seminary), and the Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) in Atlanta.
- Establish ongoing gatherings of Lutheran Seminarians, Faculty, and Candidates of Color, which would include mentoring. The first gathering will be held by 2025.

Justice

- Continue HIV/AIDS education and advocacy and also explore health concerns that affect black communities (diabetes, HBP, high cholesterol, strokes, mental health, gun violence)
- Create and implement advocacy mentoring programs with leaders who have already been cultivated in advocacy work to “pass down the torch.”
- Increase the number of synods participating in prison ministry by 25 percent each year.
- Collaborate with LIRS to connect immigrants and refugees from African nations with African descent Lutherans.
- Increase the number of worshipping communities for re-settled populations.