



*Many Voices,
tell the Story, Create the Vision:
Build Our Future*

*The Evangelical Lutheran Church in
America's Plan of Action for Ministry in
African Descent Communities
(African American, African Caribbean,
African National)*

ELCA AFRICAN DESCENT STRATEGIC PLAN



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Plan of Action for Ministry in African Descent
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Approved by the 2005 Churchwide Assembly
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Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America

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PREFACE

The African American, African Caribbean, and African national communities of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) are gifted and culturally diverse. In this document this diverse group in North America and the Caribbean is referred to as “people of African descent” or “the Black people.” Throughout this strategy, various units of the churchwide organization are identified as partners in this journey. Wherever these partners are identified, the phrase “or their successor(s)” should be understood.

People of African descent represent 13 percent of the total population of the United States of America. Currently within the ELCA there are 54,189 members of African descent. This represents one percent of the ELCA's total membership.¹

This strategy represents a partial dimension of what God does in and through the African descent community in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. It provides a framework and sets directions for the vision of this community as it continues its faith journey.

This strategy continues a long history of contributions to Lutheranism from people of African descent.

¹ELCA Department for Research and Evaluation statistics, August 2003.

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Many faithful leaders and elders have gone before, and there have been many partners along the journey. The Steering Team wishes to thank The Rev. Dr. Wyvetta Bullock, Ms. Valora Starr Butler, and Ms. Charlotte Williams for “standing in the gap” (in 2002) and keeping the community’s “eyes on the prize.”

Thanks to all who have prayed, dreamed, and dared to act with and on behalf of the Lutherans of African Descent.

Thanks be to God!

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A Theology for a People of African Descent in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

*“God is our refuge and strength, a very present
help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1).*

The Christian theological foundations of people of African descent in Lutheranism are rooted in a holistic understanding of God. This faith perspective, etched in the cross of Jesus Christ and the lives, sufferings, blood, and hopes of ancestors and others, is shaped by a way of being in the world. Moreover, this faith perspective expresses itself through communal and personal interactions on the continent of Africa and with the Western world.

Christian faith asserts that there is one God, known as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as expressed in the historic ecumenical creeds. Therefore, people of African descent, led by the Holy Spirit, prayerfully, joyously, and openly make confession of and to the Triune God. Guided by the principles of unity and diversity, people of African descent stand with the global Lutheran communion in its confession that Jesus Christ is Lord of all.

This confession and experience of the Triune God reveals the primacy of the authority of God’s Word. “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God” (John 1:1). God’s Word is a universal Word for all people in all places and for all time.

God’s Word is also particular as witnessed in the diversity of God’s creation. “And the Word became flesh and lived among us...” (John 1:14). God’s Word speaks to the particular situation of people of African descent.

The basic message, God’s justifying grace embodied in the person of Jesus Christ, proclaimed with power and carried out in daily ministry among people of African descent, is embedded in the particularities of African peoples. Thus, culture is a repository of deeply held beliefs about the Triune God. Through song, sermon, proverbs, the arts, morality, liturgies, and pastoral care, people of African descent testify to God’s justifying act of liberation in and through the person of Jesus Christ. These become gifts that people of African descent offer the global church.

Yet people of African descent know that sin hampers the practice of God's Word in both church and world. The proclamation and practice of a fundamental belief in human dignity and life is constantly tarnished through experiences of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of discrimination. For example, the African American church emerged in response to racism and as an affirmation of God-given dignity and worth because people of African descent were systemically denied full participation in every aspect of life, including religion.

At the same time, the experience of racism has had a deleterious effect on people of African descent. In many ways, people of African descent continue to suffer from internalized oppression. We have been so preoccupied with loving our white neighbors and others that we have failed to love ourselves as God loves us. We have internalized the insidious nature of racism and now contribute to our own oppression. We have believed the distortion of God's image in us; namely, that we are to become European in our expression of Lutheran theology and ethics. God's law reveals how we have embraced that distortion in thought, word, and deed, even though the Gospel tells us that we are God's people created in the image of God and that, through baptism, we are made God's daughters and sons forever. Consequently, God's prophetic Word and mission have suffered.

People of African descent lay claim to the Lutheran tradition. African peoples who are Lutherans in the United States, the Caribbean, South America, Africa, and elsewhere gain strength and inspiration, through the Holy Spirit, to voice the religious, theological, and ethical traditions of African peoples. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, the life of faith is embodied by living as grace-filled people. People of African descent are called by the Gospel of Jesus Christ to place hope and trust in God who hears the cries of the people.

As witnesses to God's justifying grace, people of African descent are called to mission as proclaimed by Jesus in his first sermon (Luke 4). The promise of salvation is proclaimed in several directions. It is proclaimed toward African people suffering from a loss of hope because of situations of pain and struggle. The promise of salvation enables us to transcend the imposed distortion of God's image (Galatians 3:28). God's promise is also proclaimed beyond

the African American community in our partnership with the global communities and their pain, struggles, and work for justice and transformation.

The God that Lutherans of African descent worship and serve is a God whose attributes are love, justice, wisdom, and power. The people of African descent stand on the witness of ancestors who affirmed that the Triune God is both strength and comfort. The faith of African peoples drives us to move beyond all idols and believe that God in Jesus Christ is our strength.

This strategy promotes health and healing for people of African descent, for others, and for God's world. The various mission goals in this strategy challenge people of African descent within Lutheranism to live out, in a variety of ways and through various callings, the will of God, which promotes justice, healing, and human dignity for all.

INTRODUCTION

“Write the vision: make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it” (Habakkuk 2:2).

In November 1666, Lutheran witness to the Gospel among people of African descent began on the island of St. Thomas, in what is now the U.S. Virgin Islands. On April 13, 1669, a Black man was baptized at a Lutheran congregation in New York. This baptism began the recorded journey of the African descent community in the Lutheran church in North America. Near the end of the 20th century and in the early years of the 21th, a series of listening models and participative events produced various documents that described Black ministry in the Lutheran church. In 1994 a major ecumenical consultation and dialogue on evangelism and church growth in the African American context revealed the “tablets” for a vision and direction for Black ministry in the ELCA. To further write the vision, in 1996 the “Proclaiming the Power” event gathered 500 lay members and clergy, representing 130 Black congregations, at Howard University in Washington, D.C. In 2000, 700 congregational leaders from throughout this church met in regional events to strategize and refine the vision. “Proclaiming the Power 2000: Building Congregations and Leadership through Christ-Centered Community Consensus” documents the results of those regional events. “African descent” became the consensus for wording to acknowledge people of African descent within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. This terminology is meant to represent the connection of the North American continent to its roots in the African diaspora.

In September 2003, the ELCA African Descent Strategic Planning Process Steering Team came to consensus as to its mission statement: “Many Voices, Tell the Story, Create the Vision: Build Our Future.” Team members designed a focus-group process in order to hear the many voices of the African descent communities, as best time and treasury would allow. Focus groups were held in Brooklyn, N.Y.; St. Croix, St. Thomas, St. John, U.S. Virgin Islands; Milwaukee, Wis.; East Cleveland, Ohio; Los Angeles, Calif.;

Philadelphia, Pa.; Baltimore, Md.; St. Louis, Mo.; Atlanta, Ga; Chicago, Ill.; Detroit, Mich.; and Miami, Fla.

It is now time to make clear the vision, write it plainly, and share it with the 241 congregations with at least 20 percent persons of African descent in membership, as well as with the whole ELCA.

The Vision

People of African descent congregations in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are Christ-centered communities in ministry, sharing gifts, empowered by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the power, love, and presence of Jesus Christ. This vision calls us to live out God's call in and through visionary pastoral leadership, worship, witness, discipleship, stewardship, family ministries, social justice, and unity and diversity. These areas of ministry work together in an integrated, holistic approach to our call of building the body of Jesus Christ in mission.

In response to the vision's call, the following strategy describes the mission opportunities in these key areas, which have been identified for releasing the power to create and sustain the vision. The recommended actions are for this whole church's participation in the continuing journey of African descent Lutheran ministry.

This strategy is a living document intended to stir imagination and ministry initiatives beyond what is presented on its pages. It is founded upon documents like *Confession for the Third Millennium: Black Lutheran Experiences*². It is rooted in the experiences and writings that have preceded it in the Black Lutheran community.

The development of this strategy represents a partial attempt to address racism and other “isms.” It is understood that all of the communities of the ELCA should continue to address these evils. The journey of people in the African descent community has included oppression, racism, colonialism, classism, and sexism.

² *Confession for the Third Millennium: Black Lutheran Experiences*, ed. Nelson T. Strobert and Theodore Schroeder (Chicago: ELCA, 2001).

It also has included delivering the power of the Gospel and transformation in Jesus Christ. This strategy affirms the gifts and leadership of Black people and calls for action in a variety of settings within the structures of the ELCA.

The strategy strives to contribute to the efforts of the ELCA as expressed in its Plan for Mission. It relates to the mission plan's strategic directions by supporting congregations in their call to be welcoming, assisting congregations to grow in evangelical outreach, and assisting in the recruitment, preparation, and care of leaders who serve a missional church in a pluralistic world. In addition, this strategy relates to the implementation of the strategic directions by pursuing the ELCA's commitment to becoming more diverse in a pluralistic societal context.

VISIONARY PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

People of African descent traditionally understand themselves to be a part of a larger community. The community is a social organism. Apart from the community there is no life. Our humanity, given by God, is discovered amid a complex, interdependent network of relationships revealing us to be people who belong to families of nations and to our African ancestors. Life is known as we give and receive life from God and one another. As the African proverb from the Xhosa people says, “I am because we are.”³ Faithful leaders in the African context understand belonging to the community as a core value for a quality life.

The Black community historically has looked to its pastoral leaders to articulate prophetically the story of the community. With a true sense of oneness with community, pastoral leaders are called to serve God and the community with visionary fervor and prophetic passion. Visionary pastoral leaders speak the language of the people and convey the message of the Gospel. Visionary pastoral leaders share the wisdom of the elders and offer solutions grounded in the Scriptures for everyday problems.

Visionary pastoral leaders understand the importance of pastoral care for congregants and themselves. They understand the sacred task of building ecumenical and global relationships. Visionary pastoral leaders exemplify Christian values as a way of life, leading the way in giving and tithing, the struggle for justice, and the call for peace. Visionary pastoral leaders understand preaching as an awesome responsibility and a primary way the people hear the Word of God. They connect God's story with the people's story. As James Cone writes:

Telling the story is the essence of Black preaching. It means proclaiming with appropriate rhythm and passion the connection between the Bible and the history of Black people. What has Scripture to do with our life in a white society and the struggle to be *somebody* in it? To answer that question, the preacher must be able to tell God's story so that the people will experience its liberating presence in their midst.⁴

³ Michael Battle, *Reconciliation: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1997), p. 39.

⁴ James H. Cone, *Speaking the Truth: Ecumenism, Liberation, and Black Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), p. 24.

Visionary pastoral leaders are developed and prepared contextually for ministry. This requires congregations, synods, institutions, and the churchwide expression of the ELCA to increase sensitivity, understanding, and acceptance of the many dynamics of the African descent experience and world-view. Visionary pastoral leaders are generally grown from within—affirmed, nurtured, and sustained by the Holy Spirit in and through the community.

Mission Context

As of December 2004 there were 200 rostered leaders of African descent: 113 congregational pastors; 36 seminary faculty, synodical and churchwide staff members, and college chaplains; eight mission developers; four deaconesses and diaconal ministers; 17 retired clergy; five retired associates in ministry (AIMS); three clergy on disability; 12 pastors on leave from call (seven female and five male); one pastor on study leave; and one deaconess on leave from call. According to the Division for Ministry and the Commission for Multicultural Ministries, there are presently 37 students in the Master of Divinity degree program and 49 Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM) students.

Goal

That by no later than 2015 there be a minimum of 100 additional visionary pastoral leaders of African descent preparing or prepared to serve African descent Lutheran congregations.

Mission Actions

Congregations are encouraged to:

1. Discern, identify, and support at least two people from their congregation as future visionary pastoral leaders. To this end congregations are encouraged to:
 - provide mentoring programs for youth;
 - encourage young adults in full participation within the community;
 - enable lay leaders to explore leadership education possibilities; and
 - engage in honest appraisal of the community's needs and potential for developing future visionary pastoral leaders.

2. Affirm and continue to support with love and care their existing pastoral leadership. In pursuit of this goal, congregations are encouraged to:
 - provide for mutual ministry teams to facilitate open communication within the congregational leadership and community;
 - seek to provide livable compensation packages with parity to area professionals in order to eliminate “working poor” clergy;
 - work toward providing sabbatical leave with compensation in order to enhance spiritual, educational, and personal renewal; and
 - provide for continuing education leave and compensation.
3. Develop lines of open communication about needs and practices with synod, regional, and churchwide offices.

Synods are encouraged to:

1. Sponsor and promote an “Invitation to Service” (call process) that is culturally grounded in the Lutheran communities of African descent, but participates fully in the established ELCA process. To this end, synods are encouraged to:
 - review how the synod’s internalized racism creates barriers for the growth of African descent leadership;
 - look at how financial resources perpetuate the barriers for growth and development of African descent leadership; and
 - consult and partner with members of African descent congregations and the Black community to recruit at least five new candidates of African descent per year for preparation for ministry.
2. Provide meaningful and ongoing care for visionary pastoral leaders and their families, including continuing education, spiritual counseling, and personal support.
3. Encourage an environment of strong visionary pastoral leadership in the ministries of congregations and their members. Toward this goal, synods are encouraged to:
 - identify and provide educational resources; and
 - promote training programs for all lay and clergy leaders.
4. Promote and encourage open communication with congregations and African descent leaders presently serving congregations.

Churchwide units are encouraged to:

1. Coordinate all ministries related to the African descent communities under the auspices of a major initiative that recognizes and affirms the sense of “oneness” shared by those communities.
2. Create and promote a more active communication network within the people of African descent communities, among other ethnic-specific communities, and within the larger church community.
3. Support financially and encourage participation in conferences, workshops, seminars, convocations, and continuing education opportunities that will provide resources to promote a culture of community expectation and accountability, contextually relevant education, community building, and related goals and values.
4. Welcome with respect and sensitivity African national pastors and other leaders who have been prepared and authorized for ministry in other churches of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and who now are considering service in the ELCA.
5. Assist candidacy committees and synods to understand and acknowledge the gifts and skills of African national pastors as they help them adapt to the specific needs of this church.
6. Provide African national clergy with orientation to Western culture and church polity by working with seminaries, online educational opportunities, and mentorship programs.
7. Advocate for contextual theological reflection opportunities for seminarians and pastors serving in the Caribbean and other communities of African descent.
8. Affirm and validate the value, quality, and uniqueness of the program at the Lutheran Theological Center in Atlanta.
9. Affirm and support Lutheran colleges and universities (*e.g.*, Wagner College and Wartburg College) in their efforts to provide scholarships to students of African descent whose goal is rostered leadership in the ELCA.

Seminaries are encouraged to:

1. Provide internship and clinical pastoral education (CPE) opportunities that are contextually relevant for communities of African descent.
2. Prepare seminarians for leadership in African descent congregations.

3. Increase by intentional recruitment the number of qualified African descent faculty at each seminary as vacancies, promotions, and opportunities become available.
4. Review curricula to identify and provide courses that will prepare all seminarians for leadership in African descent congregations with a focus on increasing the quality and number of Horizon internship sites to include African descent congregations.
5. In consultation with the Division for Ministry, initiate a sustained five-year effort to identify, recruit, and support future visionary pastoral and lay professional leadership for ministry in the African descent community.
6. Establish supportive and relevant mentoring programs for all seminarians seeking a call to rostered ministry, especially in African descent congregations.
7. Maintain working relationships with the African descent Lutheran congregations in their area or region by providing theological programs open to African descent Lutheran leaders, both lay and clergy, and by establishing community—seminary committees or specific community liaisons.
8. Develop methods to communicate the existence and availability of educational or informational programs and training as well as program needs to local Lutheran communities of people of African descent.
9. Listen to the voices of seminarians of African descent as they navigate their way through the normal rostering process.
10. Encourage four-year programs that lead to a Master of Divinity degree or other advanced degrees as well as the TEEM certificate process.

The African American Lutheran Association (AALA) is encouraged to:

1. Support the Visionary Pastoral Leadership goal. To that end, it should:
 - identify, encourage, and support members of African descent whose vocational gifts are being stirred towards rostered ministry;
 - encourage candidates for rostered ministry to complete their theological education at culturally relevant institutions such as the Lutheran Theological School at Atlanta;

- encourage members to volunteer to serve on synodical candidacy committees;
- contribute to scholarship funds, such as the Daniel A. Payne Memorial Scholarship Fund;
- provide scholarship information to all congregations of the ELCA; and
- facilitate efforts to gather and guide young leaders in service to ELCA colleges, seminaries, synods, and social ministry organizations.

The Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL) is encouraged to:

1. Develop processes, programs, and resources to teach people how to deal biblically and theologically with the indigenous and ecumenical nature of leadership.

WORSHIP

The worship experience—God’s address to us and our response to God’s power proclaimed through the Word and Sacraments—is central to the religious life of the Black community. Congregations building disciples from within the African descent community take the worship experience seriously. The language of the people is the language through which the Gospel is to be heard, proclaimed, sung, danced, and sacramentally embodied during worship and lived experiences.

Worship in the Black community is more verb than noun, a holistic engagement of head, heart and body touched by the sacred. Telling the story, testifying, preaching, and praying are communal acts, set in the context of music, movement, and dance. All are infused with a deep awareness of activity of the Holy Spirit within worship and a readiness for spontaneous response.⁵

There are common elements present in all Lutheran worship: gathering, word, meal, and sending. However,

The interplay between worship and culture is often a messy enterprise. Practices that seem right and salutary in one era or within one culture may be judged odd or quaint in another. The dialog between culture and the Christian faith expressed in worship is as old as faith itself. Fortunately, the Lutheran heritage welcomes this dialog, calling for unity in the common, evangelical core of worship and at the same time allowing for flexibility and freedom in the ways this essential core is communicated and celebrated.⁶

A Lutheran World Federation study presents helpful categories for framing and understanding this dialog:

The reality that Christian worship is always celebrated in a given local cultural setting draws our attention to the dynamics between worship and the world’s many local cultures. Christian worship relates dynamically to culture in four ways. First, it is *trans-cultural*, the same substance for everyone everywhere, beyond culture. Second, it is *contextual*, varying according to local situation (both nature and culture). Third, it is *counter-cultural* challenging what is contrary to the gospel in a given culture. Fourth, it is *cross-cultural*, making possible sharing between different local cultures.⁷

⁵ *This Far by Faith* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, 1999), p. 10.

⁶ *This Far by Faith*, p. 11.

⁷ Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture (Lutheran World Federation, 1996), as quoted in *This Far by Faith*, p. 8.

Mission Context

In 1999 *This Far by Faith* was published and made available for ELCA congregations. This resource shares the gifts of the Black community for worship. The African descent community is known for its musical gifts and talents, but African descent congregations are often challenged to find musicians to support the worship experience in the Black idiom.

Goals

1. To increase the number of African descent congregations in which there is freedom for contextualized worship and in which all people invited to worship are able to see themselves in God's story and in the worship experience.
2. To increase the number of musicians available to support worship in the Black idiom.
3. To increase the number of worship resources that are ethnically specific to the various cultures of African descent peoples.

Mission Actions

Congregations are encouraged to:

1. Purposely study worship practices in relationship to specific community contexts and needs and in relationship to traditional Lutheran worship, and incorporate these learnings into practical worship use.
2. Develop training opportunities for using *This Far by Faith* as a resource to promote contextual worship.
3. Model shared leadership in worship by using trained laity as worship leaders where appropriate.
4. Explore Black preaching, providing opportunities and continuing funds to develop the preaching skills of clergy and worship leaders in the African descent context.
5. Identify musicians, with a particular focus on youth, and assist them to develop the skill sets required for worship leadership.
6. Explore alternative music options that target youth and young adult interests.

Synods are encouraged to:

1. Sponsor workshops on contextualized resources, encouraging congregations in African descent communities to participate in events such as Black preaching seminars and revivals.
2. Use synodical events and synod assemblies as opportunities to share *This Far by Faith* and other resources and gifts from the African descent community for worship.
3. Sponsor musical training events for musicians in African descent congregations. Provide resources for professional and lay leadership.
4. Encourage the mentoring of youth and young adults who can expand the range of musical options for youth and young adult worship participants.

Churchwide units are encouraged to:

1. Provide contextually relevant resources.
2. Encourage use of resources and gifts from the African descent community at events such as the Churchwide Assembly, Global Mission Events, and Youth Gatherings.
3. Promote and use the gifts and diversity of music offered by young adults and youth.

Seminaries are encouraged to:

1. Encourage professors of music and worship, particularly through ecumenical partnerships, to seek ways to increase opportunities to train seminarians to lead worship in the Black context without compromising the community's Lutheran doctrine and heritage.
2. Encourage seminarians to explore the diversity of worship and music, including music that resonates with young adults and youth.
3. Continue to provide and support preaching with power and spirit events through convocations and classes. Communicate the dates of such events churchwide in a timely fashion so that sufficient time is provided for registration and participation.

The African American Lutheran Association (AALA) is encouraged to:

1. Promote and communicate the voice of the community that calls for change in the worship experience.

2. Support congregations in their regions by being present at events that assist in adapting worship and music to meet community needs.
3. Continue to identify resources that empower the community to be uplifted through Word and Sacrament and that identify them as Lutherans of African descent.
4. Empower and promote young adult and youth worship leadership in local events.

The Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL) is encouraged to:

1. Develop processes, programs, and resources to teach people how to deal biblically and theologically with the indigenous and ecumenical nature of worship.

WITNESS

As an institution whose mission is God's work for transforming the world, this church is called to bear witness to God's redeeming love. This witness includes inviting people into relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

In the African descent community, as in many ethnic communities across America, economic and familial survival has become a primary concern. Historically, the Black church has offered a witness to another reality given by God in Jesus Christ. As pointed out in *African American Evangelism: Proclaiming the Power*,

African American Christians have come to understand that they are a community within a community. Just as the apostle Paul in Romans 11:5 talks about “a remnant, chosen by grace,” so are African American Christians a remnant that has a mission given under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. That mission is to share Him with others. For African American Christians, the “others” are those within the community who need to hear from their brothers and sisters what difference it makes to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. This difference is not simply spoken, but is shown in deeds of righteousness.⁸

African descent Lutheran congregations have the gift of hope and life to offer within their community; they are called to proclaim the power, love, and presence of Jesus Christ. The strength of churches in the African descent community is best demonstrated when the entire church witnesses to God's presence in its midst and in the world, recognizing the multiplicity of gifts within a culturally pluralistic church body. Telling the story or evangelizing within the African descent community must be culturally relevant, capturing the pain, the joy, and the future hopes of the community.

African descent Lutheran communities are faced with the competition of Evangelical Free and Pentecostal outreach strategies that speak with a familiar and Black voice to the community. Because of these persistent and well-developed outreach ministries, the numbers of people in the Black community who continue to be unchurched have become sophisticated hearers of the words of a “cloud of witnesses.” The Lutheran message must be given with

⁸ James Capers, *African American Evangelism: Proclaiming the Power* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1996), p. 30.

clarity and with conviction to address the differences in its message of grace. The voice must be strong and united in purpose and spirit. Telling the story is not only about who we are as Lutherans; it is also about who we are as children of the Living God. As we tell the stories of a people who celebrate the God of the oppressed, we also promote the God of abundance, who has set us free through grace. This witness makes our message unique and real for all people, especially people of African descent of all ages and socio-economic backgrounds. This is the message that goes from sea to sea, that reaches from coast to coast.

Mission Context

Many African descent Lutheran congregations are known for their welcoming spirit and hospitality, social witness, social justice ministries, and positive presence in the community. An evangelical witness and invitation to faith in Jesus Christ are sometimes less evident.

Goal

Lutheran congregations of African descent are called to be deep and wide in their evangelical witness and service. 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.

Mission Actions

Congregations are encouraged to:

1. Train, educate, encourage, and empower members to “tell their stories” and proactively invite other people into relationship with Jesus Christ.
2. Practice genuine hospitality and welcome all who come, regardless of differences.
3. Reach out to the community, sharing the Gospel and building community alliances for creating spiritually healthy communities.
4. Provide intentional witnessing to young adults by providing opportunities for inclusion in the life of the congregation through worship and program experiences. An important element will be the development of age-appropriate programs targeted at those with specific needs.

5. Promote youth events and programs specifically designed to develop youth involvement by providing mentoring programs, connections with the Lutheran Youth Organization (LYO), youth choirs, and Sunday school programs that meet the needs of youth.

Synods are encouraged to:

1. In partnership with African descent congregations, develop a specific strategy for witness and evangelism in the African descent community.
2. Affirm and support congregations seeking to “re-tool” for more effective outreach in the African descent community.
3. At each Synod Assembly, place an emphasis on witness and evangelism from a variety of cultural contexts.
4. In partnership with the churchwide organization, develop a synodwide outreach strategy for people of African descent.
5. Equip leaders to evangelize with spirit and conviction through development of community-relevant materials and training.
6. Promote the recruitment of energized and spirit-filled leadership by supporting those ministries that dare to be different.
7. Develop specific programs for youth and young adults, including those programs that connect with LYO.

Churchwide units are encouraged to:

1. Identify and evaluate possibilities and specific recommendations for supporting existing congregations, establishing new starts, and developing rostered leadership within the ELCA, using as a work plan the Division for Outreach African American and Black Outreach strategy.
2. Include mission opportunities for evangelism in the African descent community.
3. Provide additional financial resources and staff for resource development, training events, and congregational program support to enhance the evangelical witness of the African descent community within the ELCA.
4. In conjunction with ELCA seminaries, provide direction for the development of evangelism tools that respond to the ecumenical communities that exist outside of the ELCA’s full-communion partnerships (e.g., Church of God in Christ).
5. Create outreach resources that target young adults and youth.

Seminaries are encouraged to:

1. Develop curriculum focused on the evangelical witness of people of African descent to create avenues of spiritual experience and expression within the Lutheran context.
2. Through education of ecumenical partners, reaffirm the need for cross-training strategies for evangelism and outreach within the context of the communities of African descent.

The African American Lutheran Association (AALA) is encouraged to:

1. Affirm the message of public witness through social activities, and support programs for Lutherans of African descent of all ages.
2. Provide contacts for mission congregations and developing leaders to participate in the goals and vision of AALA.

The Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL) is encouraged to:

1. Develop processes, programs, and resources to teach people how to deal biblically and theologically with the indigenous and ecumenical nature of witness.

DISCIPLESHIP

Discipleship is lived out through several dimensions of the faith journey, in the command to go and tell, in inviting others to come and see, and in being sent out to witness, serve, and make disciples.

The connection of life and faith is enfleshed in our communities as we see ministry happening daily and the Word being lived out Monday through Saturday, not just on Sunday. It is not good enough for us to *say* that we are disciples; we are called to *be* followers of Jesus, to *be* disciples. Discipleship is not a “time-sensitive” program or project.

At its heart, discipleship is a series of relationships. The first relationship is the disciple's relationship with Jesus. The second is the relationship between disciples. The final relationship that must be included in any New Testament study of discipleship is the relationship of disciples to others. Each relationship begins in the same way: with an invitation and a response.⁹

Worshipping communities must prepare for discipleship through faith-filled, intentional study of the Word. This involves regular interactive sessions in which the Word, its meaning, and the way it is lived out in daily lives is engaged. Learning and living the Word is not for individual benefit alone; it is also for becoming living examples in order to make disciples.

Mission Context

The ELCA offers an abundance of faith-formation resources to its congregations. There are resources that have been developed by and for use in the African descent Lutheran community, such as *Rooted in the Gospel*, *Planning Revivals*, and *Confession for the Third Millennium: Black Lutheran Experiences*. Many Black congregations have engaged in training opportunities around these resources.

Historically, the Black Christian community has a strong witness of prayer, Bible study, worship, and sharing of faith stories. African descent congregations can build on this legacy and continue the journey of passing on the faith to the next generation. Making disciples is an intentional response to the Gospel.

⁹ “Called to Discipleship: Congregation Planning Guide” (Chicago:ELCA, 2000), p. B-5.

Goal

To make discipleship a priority over membership.

Mission Actions

Congregations are encouraged to:

1. Pray constantly for God's discerning Spirit to direct the life of the congregation.
2. Provide Bible study opportunities, encourage members to bring their Bibles to Bible study and worship, and provide Bible study teachers with training and resources.
3. Offer intentional processes for making disciples of every member (*e.g.*, "each one teach one").
4. Create opportunities for disciples to use the diversity of their gifts within their congregation and community.
5. Create small groups to provide mutual encouragement and accountability among disciples in the congregation.
6. Have leaders who are proficient in the Word and model discipleship.

Synods are encouraged to:

1. Encourage congregations to be communities that study the Bible, building partnerships ecumenically, cross-culturally, and across economic barriers.
2. Create a communication network for congregations to share their best practices for making disciples.
3. Establish lay schools or academies for formal learning, fellowship, and interaction with teachers, theologians, and bishops of this church.

Churchwide units are encouraged to:

1. Continue to provide and develop the ethnic-specific resources necessary to encourage greater discipleship.
2. Strengthen the ELCA's "Call to Discipleship" emphasis.
3. Provide forums for congregations to share best practices for making disciples.

The African American Lutheran Association (AALA) is encouraged to:

1. Assist congregations in providing an atmosphere of outreach through open gatherings that promote public access to the gifts and community of the Lutheran church.
2. Through small group activities and Bible study, witness to the body of Christ being active in the Lutheran understanding of inclusiveness and discipleship.
3. Work with congregations, clusters, and synods to promote the witness of the community of Lutherans of African descent as active in and vital to the growth of the ELCA.

The Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL) is encouraged to:

1. Develop processes, programs, and resources to teach people how to deal biblically and theologically with the indigenous and ecumenical nature of discipleship.

STEWARDSHIP

“Merciful God, we offer with joy and thanksgiving what you have first given us—ourselves, our time, and our possessions, signs of your gracious love”

(Lutheran Book of Worship, p. 108).

Stewardship begins with God, and its primary purpose is to serve the will of God. The Black community understands itself as a “community of communities,” which embodies an interdependent, holistic view of creation and relationships with one another.

Through ministry out of their own resources, steward disciples experience the joy and passion of giving. Through this relationship of giving and blessing, steward disciples experience the connection between God’s work in and through their lives and God’s mission and ministry in the world. Making this connection brings growth in both faith and service, as well as a lifelong journey of following the example of Jesus.

Christians are called to be in the world, but not of the world, because the world does not live according to Christ. As partners in God’s mission, we are called to be in the world serving and meeting people’s needs. This service is a large part of how we steward or manage what God has given us.

Our service reflects and is influenced by our stewardship in the ways in which we budget our financial resources, use our church facilities, care for the environment, educate ourselves about the needs of the world, and share the Good News in and with the community.

The African descent community has been characterized as those with the least. The expansion of the Black middle class, however, means that Black Americans, as a group, have greater philanthropic potential than originally perceived. It is time for the African descent community to be recognized as a full partner in giving of itself and its resources to the community. It is time for the communities of African descent to develop the resources that already exist and to pay their own way when it comes to supporting congregations and rostered leaders within their communities.

Church bodies do not take the assets of the Black community into full consideration. Blacks, along with other people of color, are part of today’s growing demographic majority. Since congregations are the

primary institution that people of African descent have always supported, this church should ask for and receive contributions from the African descent community in ways that will acknowledge all of its gifts.

Mission Context

People of African descent link stewardship to the covenantal relationship with God and the kinship of all people. Traditionally, congregations have been the primary institution supported by this community. Congregations of people of African descent must take a systematic approach in teaching stewardship that includes tithing, holistic giving, and discipleship.

Goal

African descent congregations will demonstrate sustained growth, grow in their 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.

Mission Actions

Congregations are encouraged to:

1. Connect the teaching of stewardship of time, talents, and possessions with their social ministry actions.
2. Teach tithing as a faith practice.
3. Encourage church leaders to model tithing as an example for congregation members.

Synods are encouraged to:

1. Sponsor stewardship workshops designed for African descent congregations.
2. Produce culture-specific stewardship material, ensuring an understanding of stewardship that goes beyond fiscal responsibility to time and talent.
3. Call qualified African descent staff to serve as stewardship specialists.

Churchwide units are encouraged to:

1. Identify strong stewardship congregations within the African

descent community to serve as models.

2. Call people of African descent to serve as stewardship staff.

Seminaries are encouraged to:

1. Offer programs in financial planning and budgeting to prepare future leaders for the task of directing the fiscal affairs of congregations.
2. Develop programs open to the congregational leaders of local churches to promote healthy congregational asset management and planning.
3. Offer seminars on writing programs and proposals for faith-based grants.

The African American Lutheran Association (AALA) is encouraged to:

1. Urge its membership to utilize existing programs to “grow” fiscal, volunteer, and creative assets in congregations. The variety of stewardship programs presently offered by this church can be used in many contexts.

The Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL) is encouraged to:

1. Develop processes, programs, and resources to teach people how to deal biblically and theologically with the indigenous and ecumenical nature of stewardship.

FAMILY MINISTRIES

Mission Context

The task of the Black church is—like that of Ezra and Nehemiah in the Old Testament— to promote spiritual, ethnic, and psychological rejuvenation among a people recovering from captivity; to model and proclaim God's truth to Black men, women and children through evangelism and discipleship so that Christ's sovereign rule will be acknowledged in the family. Weak families suggest weak churches and vice versa! Satan thrives where spiritual authority is weak.¹⁰

The first institution was the human family. God created Adam and Eve to provide for the care of creation. As the family increased, so did the need for God's guidance. “At that time people began to invoke the name of the Lord” (Genesis 4:26b). “The Black church is often much like an extended family of care, sharing and fellowship,” writes Darlene Hannah.¹¹ It takes the whole church to provide for the education, nurture, and inclusion of all that extended family. As the Black Lutheran church seeks to be a community proud of its history and culture, no member of that family can be left behind.

Goal

That every congregation of African descent will support and nurture leaders of all ages.

Mission Actions

Congregations are encouraged to:

1. Provide mentoring programs to educate and train leaders of all ages.
2. Develop inclusive programs for all ages directed at increasing leadership participation.
3. Weave Youth Sundays and young adult focus groups into the fabric of best practices for cohesive, connected worship.
4. Identify and support laypeople who exhibit the gifts of the Holy Spirit to serve in rostered Word and service ministry (*e.g.*, diaconal ministry, associates in ministry).

¹⁰ Hank Allen, “The Black Family: Its Unique Legacy, Current Challenges, and Future Prospects,” in *The Black Family: Past, Present & Future: Perspectives of Sixteen Black Christian Leaders*, ed. by Lee N. June (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), p. 27.

¹¹ Darlene B. Hannah, “The Black Extended Family: An Appraisal of Its Past, Present, and Future Statuses,” in *The Black Family*, p. 50.

Synods are encouraged to:

1. Provide education and training information for congregations seeking to develop family ministries.
2. Recognize communities striving to be inclusive of youth and young adults and provide mentoring assistance and resources.
3. Acknowledge that smaller congregations will benefit from this model of family ministry and direct funding to them as needed.
4. Develop training tools and resources to aid family ministry communities.
5. Provide adequate financial resources for attendance at training and growth seminars.
6. Provide support and training for congregants preparing for rostered Word and service ministry.

Churchwide units are encouraged to:

1. Develop training and mentoring tools to empower synods and congregations in their family ministry programs.
2. Recognize the need to develop family ministry tools that incorporate members of every age into the life of the congregation.
3. Reinforce with Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, the need for age-inclusive Christian education materials.
4. Advocate for just state and federal policies in all areas related to the quality of family life.

Seminaries are encouraged to:

1. Create an environment for future rostered leaders to acquire skills for family ministries.
2. Develop relationship, marriage, and family courses that will increase the availability of family ministry-ready rostered leaders able to work with a variety of family units to promote whole family participation in worship and Christian education.
3. Recognize the need for seminary-trained youth workers and family practitioners and work to provide educational support for such vocations.

The African American Lutheran Association (AALA) is encouraged to:

1. Support congregational youth programs by utilizing youth and

young adults in programs and chapter boards and offices.

2. Provide elder leadership to congregations developing mentoring programs for youth and young adults.
3. Encourage young adults to see confirmation as a stepping stone into life in this church, not a graduation from it.
4. Support ministries that seek to work with family life issues (*e.g.*, shelters for women survivors of domestic violence and child advocacy programs).

The Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL) is encouraged to:

1. Develop processes, programs, and resources to teach people how to deal biblically and theologically with the indigenous and ecumenical nature of family ministries.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

“But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream” (Amos 5:24).

Mission Context

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.

Goal

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

Mission Actions

Congregations, synods, and churchwide units are encouraged to:

1. Use the social statements of the ELCA (e.g., *Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture*) as theological foundations for advocacy and service ministries.
2. Use available printed resources (e.g., *Criminal Justice Ministry: A Congregational Handbook*) as aids to encourage this church to be about faith active in love.

3. Partner with Lutheran social ministry organizations and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) so that faith active in love might be lived out within communities of African descent.
4. Interact with the Lutheran Office for Governmental Affairs (LOGA) and grassroots programs of governmental offices and agencies to empower and nurture the relationship between those officials and congregations of Lutherans of African descent.
5. Develop plans to share effective congregational models of doing justice and showing mercy.
6. Work with ecumenical and global networks pursuing social justice ministry.
7. Develop resources for assisting all expressions of the ELCA in responding to HIV-AIDS, developing prison ministries, improving public school education, and working with other issues of importance to African descent communities.
8. Convene a broad-based churchwide consultation for the purpose of identifying models of health-care ministries and developing plans for promoting healthcare among people of African descent.

Seminaries are encouraged to:

1. Promote the exchange of ideas through seminars and convocations in which social justice is discussed to address the issues that prevent the body of Christ from being all that it can be in a chaotic world.
2. Equip future Lutheran rostered leaders of African descent with information and networking skills to access the myriad of political avenues through which justice can be pursued for all members of the body of Christ in the world.
3. Provide opportunities for training in community development that helps build appropriate organizations responsive to the needs of the community.

The African American Lutheran Association (AALA) is encouraged to:

1. Promote social issues in the African descent community.
2. Organize avenues for exercising the rights and responsibilities of

people of African descent (*e.g.*, voter registration drives and food drives).

The Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL) is encouraged to:

1. Develop processes, programs, and resources to teach people how to deal biblically and theologically with the indigenous and ecumenical nature of social justice.

UNITY AND DIVERSITY

Mission Context

Diversity is in the very nature of African descent. In the 21st century, the African descent community unites the three largest communities of people of African descent: the African American, the African Caribbean, and the African national. The diverse social, cultural, geographical, and historical presence of the African descent community represents the most under-utilized and significant community in the ELCA. From the tribes of Africa, the Caribbean, and the United States come the richest cultural and spiritual assets that claim kinship in the Lutheran church. The people represented by these communities unite to maintain their spiritual “soul” in the ELCA. Their gifts of connectedness with the earth, family, neighbor, and stranger provide the ELCA a true vision of the future of this church.

As a people continually discouraged from witnessing to their oneness with Christ in the literature, art, and music of the religious community, the diverse people of African descent willingly offer their gifts to the spiritual community that has cradled them and nurtured them with the means of grace. The African descent community seeks to respond to that invitation by sharing its heart and being with the church. For the past 338 years of Lutheranism in a multicultural context, people of every race in God’s creation have shared the love of Christ through the gifts of the diverse cultures from which they evolved. This reality calls this church to transcend culture and to build relationships with and within communities of color.

Goal

To create a strategic team of leaders of the various communities (African American, African Caribbean, African national) to develop cohesive programs that will create openings for recognized churchwide leadership, not tokenism.

Mission Actions

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

1. Extend an open hand of fellowship to all people with respect and dignity regardless of race, color, or culture.
2. Acknowledge the leadership styles, diversity, and differences of all people of African descent, and promote the recognition of such gifts.
3. Support and enhance the historical perspectives of Lutherans from diverse communities of color as effective and embrace them as willing leaders for the church.
4. Dismantle the glass ceiling that prohibits the growth of communities by removing political obstacles that impede the growth and nurture of leaders of African descent.
5. Through education, mentorship, and media, empower thoughts, words, and deeds that reflect the need to be responsive to Christ's call to the entire community of all people.
6. Acknowledge prayerfully and deliberately the brokenness of the past and move towards the future as a unified body of Christ.
7. Regularly convene consultations that gather congregational leaders, rostered leaders, teaching theologians of color, synodical leaders, and churchwide staff to assess and plan future directions in this church's common ministry.
8. Convene and participate in regular consultations with this church's ecumenical partners engaged in multicultural ministry.

The African American Lutheran Association (AALA) is encouraged to:

1. Educate Lutherans of African descent regarding the institutional structure of the ELCA.
2. Maintain a Web site that provides the historical background of Black Lutherans' journeys; a listing of rostered leaders of African descent; congregational, synodical, and churchwide news and events of interest; and online resources for dialogue.

The Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL) is encouraged to:

1. Develop processes, programs, and resources to teach people how to deal biblically and theologically with the indigenous and ecumenical nature of unity and diversity.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF MISSION OPPORTUNITIES AND GOALS

Visionary Pastoral Leadership

Mission Context

As of December 2004 there were 200 rostered leaders of African descent: 113 congregational pastors; 36 seminary faculty, synodical and churchwide staff members, and college chaplains; eight mission developers; four deaconesses and diaconal ministers; 17 retired clergy; five retired associates in ministry (AIMS); three clergy on disability; 12 pastors on leave from call (seven female and five male); one pastor on study leave; and one deaconess on leave from call. According to the Division for Ministry and the Commission for Multicultural Ministries, there are presently 37 students in the Master of Divinity degree program and 49 Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM) students.

Goal

A goal of this strategy is that by no later than 2015 there be a minimum of 100 additional visionary pastoral leaders of African descent preparing or prepared to serve African descent Lutheran congregations.

Worship

Mission Context

In 1999 *This Far by Faith* was published and made available for ELCA congregations. This resource shares the gifts of the Black community for worship. The African descent community is known for its musical gifts and talents, but African descent congregations are often challenged to find musicians to support the worship experience in the Black idiom.

Goals

One goal of this strategy is to increase the number of African descent congregations in which there is freedom for contextualized worship and in which all people invited to worship are able to see themselves in God's story and in the worship experience.

A second goal is to increase the number of musicians available to support worship in the Black idiom.

A third goal is to increase the number of worship resources that are ethnically specific to the various cultures of African descent peoples.

Witness

Mission Context

Many African descent Lutheran congregations are known for their welcoming spirit and hospitality, social witness, social justice ministries, and positive presence in the community. An evangelical witness and invitation to faith in Jesus Christ are sometimes less evident.

Goal

Lutheran congregations of African descent are called to be deep and wide in their evangelical witness and service. 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.

Discipleship

Mission Context

The ELCA offers an abundance of faith-formation resources to its congregations. There are resources that have been developed by and for use in the African descent Lutheran community, such as *Rooted in the Gospel*, *Planning Revivals*, and *Confession for the Third Millennium: Black Lutheran Experiences*. Many Black congregations have engaged in training opportunities around these resources.

Historically, the Black Christian community has a strong witness of prayer, Bible study, worship, and sharing of faith stories. African descent congregations can build on this legacy and continue the journey of passing on the faith to the next generation. Making disciples is an intentional response to the Gospel.

Goal

A goal of this strategy is to make discipleship a priority over membership.

Stewardship

Mission Context

People of African descent link stewardship to the covenantal relationship with God and the kinship of all people. Traditionally, congregations have been the primary institution supported by this community. Congregations of people of African descent must take a systematic approach in teaching stewardship that includes tithing, holistic giving, and discipleship.

Goal

African descent congregations will demonstrate sustained growth, grow in their 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.

Family Ministries

Mission Context

The task of the Black church is—like that of Ezra and Nehemiah in the Old Testament—to promote spiritual, ethnic, and psychological rejuvenation among a people recovering from captivity; to model and proclaim God's truth to Black men, women and children through evangelism and discipleship so that Christ's sovereign rule will be acknowledged in the family.

Weak families suggest weak churches and vice versa! Satan thrives where spiritual authority is weak.¹²

The first institution was the human family. God created Adam, then Eve to provide for the care of creation. As the family increased, so did the need for God's guidance. "At that time people began to invoke the name of the Lord" (Genesis 4: 26b). "The Black church is often much like an extended family of care, sharing, and fellowship" writes Darlene Hannah.¹³ In order to provide for that extended family, it takes the whole church to provide for the education, nurture, and inclusion of all the members. As the Black

12 Hank Allen, "The Black Family: Its Unique Legacy, Current Challenges, and Future Prospects," in *The Black Family: Past, Present & Future: Perspectives of Sixteen Black Christian Leaders*, ed. by Lee N. June (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), p. 27.

13 Darlene B. Hannah, "The Black Extended Family: An Appraisal of Its Past, Present, and Future Statuses," in *The Black Family*, p. 50.

Lutheran church seeks to be a community proud of its history and culture, no member of that family can be left behind.

Goal

The goal of this strategy is that every congregation of African descent will support and nurture leaders of all ages.

Social Justice

Mission Context

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.

Goal

One goal of this strategy is to speak God’s Word forthrightly to those systems that continually drive life out of God’s people.

Unity and Diversity

Mission Context

The very nature of being of African descent is diversity. In the 21st century, the African descent community unites the three largest communities of people of African descent: the African American, the African Caribbean, and the African national. The diverse social, cultural, geographical, and historical presence of the African descent

community represents the most under-utilized and significant community in the ELCA. From the tribes of Africa, the Caribbean, and the United States come the richest cultural and spiritual assets that claim kinship in the Lutheran church. The people represented by these communities unite to maintain their spiritual “soul” in the ELCA. Their gifts of connectedness with the earth, family, neighbor, and stranger provide the ELCA a true vision of the future of this church.

As a people continually discouraged from witnessing to their oneness with Christ in the literature, art, and music of the religious community, the diverse community of people of African descent willingly offers their gifts to the spiritual community that has cradled them and nurtured them with the means of grace. The African descent community seeks to respond to that invitation by sharing its heart and being with the church. For the past 338 years of Lutheranism in a multicultural context, people of every race in God’s creation have shared the love of Christ through the gifts of the diverse cultures from which they evolved. This reality calls this church to transcend culture and to build relationships with and within communities of color.

Goal

The goal of this strategy is to create a strategic team of leaders of the various communities (African American, African Caribbean, African national) to develop cohesive programs that will create openings for recognized churchwide leadership, not tokenism.

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The African American Lutheran Association (AALA)

Mission Statement:

The primary purposes of the association are to:

1. Help assure that each individual will be respected as a unique gift to the community, made in the image of God.
2. Encourage members to become fully involved with the affairs of the congregation, synod and churchwide expressions.
3. Provide a vehicle to unify and convey the needs and concerns of African American members of the ELCA through all existing expressions of the ELCA—especially through the Commission for Multicultural Ministries.
4. Strengthen the Christian bonds of the African American community of believers. Forging linkages between African peoples throughout the world.
5. Develop a full partnership between the ELCA and the whole African American community through evangelism, education, stewardship, worship and social ministry.

For further information refer to the AALA Web site:

www.aala-online.org

The Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL)

Mission Statement:

The Conference of International Black Lutherans exists to:

1. Bridge the gap between Black Lutherans in Diaspora in the Americas, the Caribbean and Africa.
2. Involve Black Lutherans in theological discussions and dialogue at domestic and international levels.
3. Facilitate the spiritual and physical liberation of all people.
4. Develop contextualized theological education programs, that foster effective ministerial formation.
5. Promote an appreciation of Black contribution(s) to Lutheranism.

The Conference of International Black Lutherans carries out this mission through the following “Goals and Objectives:”

- a. To dialogue about our African and African-American experiences, our identity, our relationships and mission as Blacks and Lutherans.
- b. To develop our God-given potential for the continued passing on of our historical legacy through research, production, and publication of materials for theological education.
- c. To posit common solutions and to create new theological insights based on (the) Black experience in order to enrich the Lutheran church in particular and the Church catholic generally.

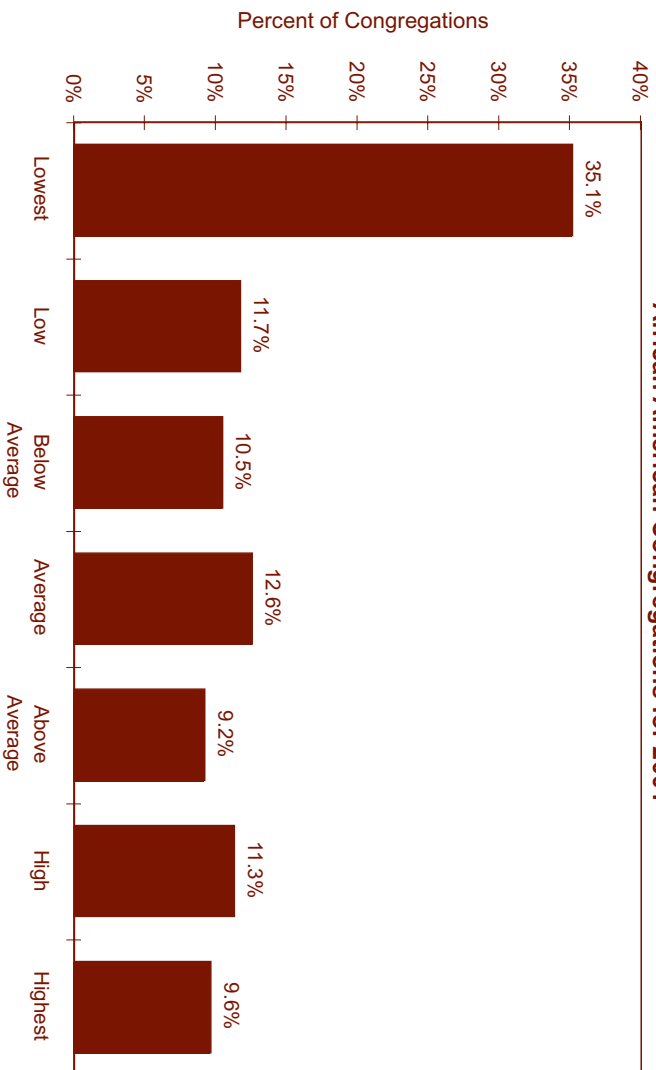
www.cibl-us.org/mission.htm

For further information about CIBL, write to CIBL, 1100 E. 55th Street, Chicago, IL 60615 or visit *www.cibl-us.org*

APPENDICES

- Average Family Income of the Neighborhoods served by African American/Black Congregations
- Average Worship Attendance
- Current Operating Expenses
- Number of African American/Black Congregations and their percentage of Black Members
- Percentage of African American/Black Congregations and their percentage of Black Members
- Racial Diversity of Congregations in which African American/Black people are Members
- Racial/Ethnic Percentages of Pastors serving African American/Black Congregations
- Size of African American/Black Congregations Over Against All ELCA Congregations

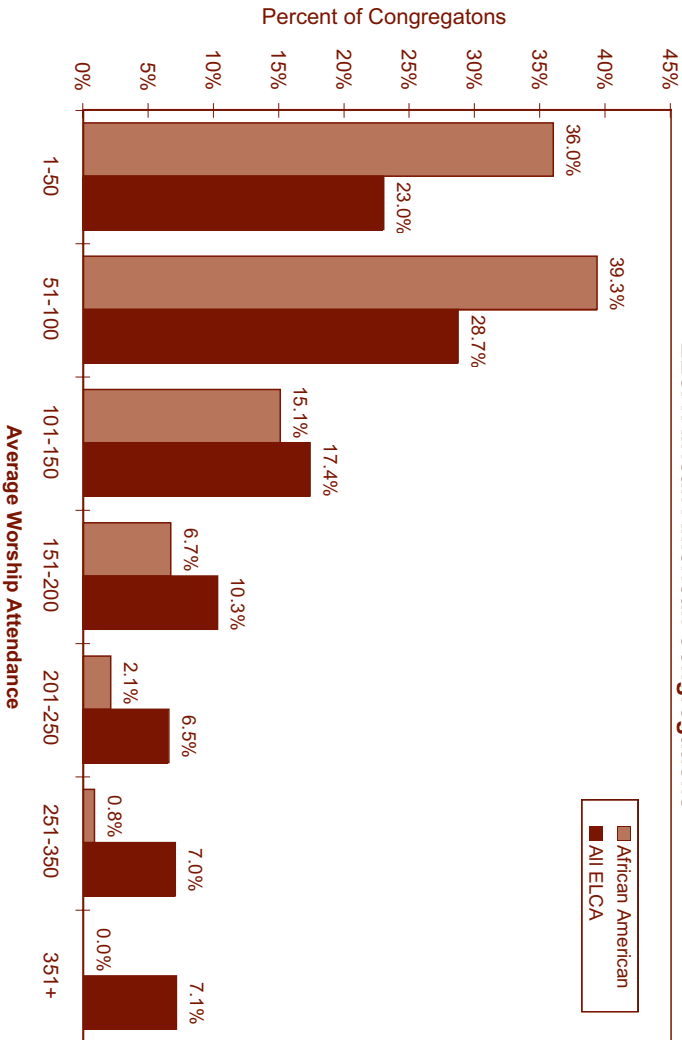
Average Family Income* of the Neighborhoods of 239 ELCA African American Congregations for 2001



The average family income for African American congregation ZIP Codes is \$56,127 compared with \$65,579 for the whole ELCA.

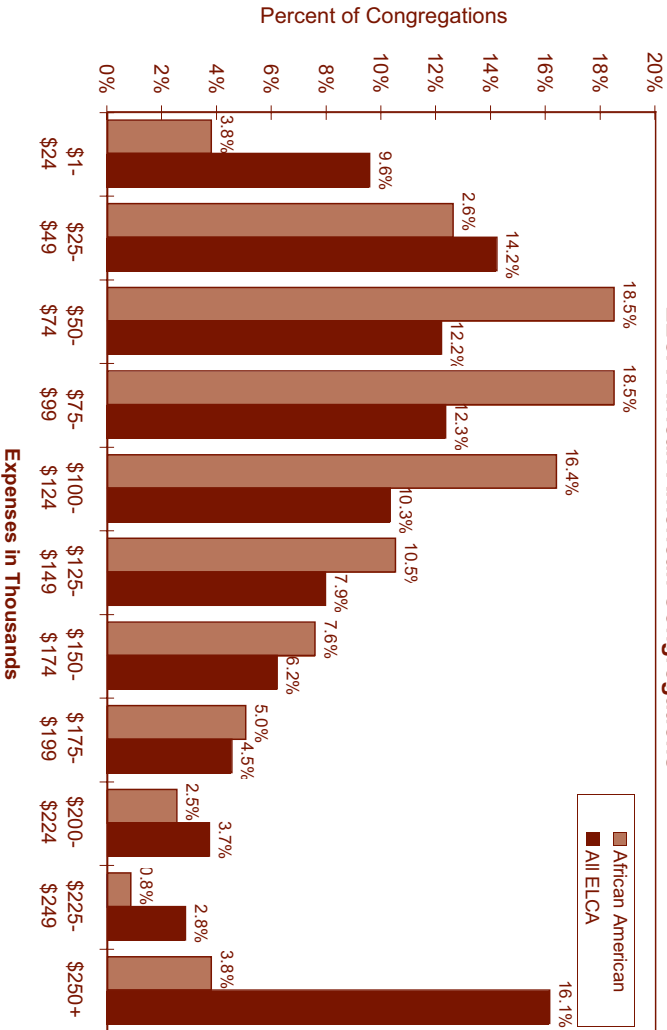
*For all ELCA congregations, 14.3% fall in each of the seven socioeconomic categories.

2002 Average Worship Attendance of 240 ELCA African American Congregations



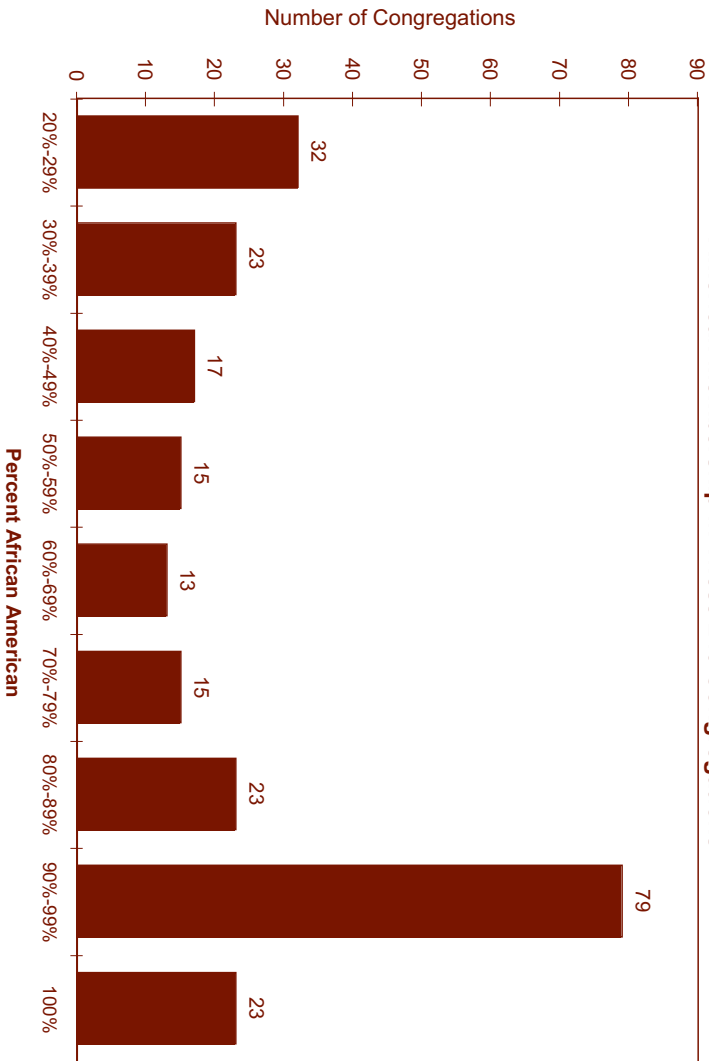
The average average attendance for African American congregations is 78 compared with 145 for the whole ELCA.

2002 Current Operating Expenses of 238 ELCA African American Congregations



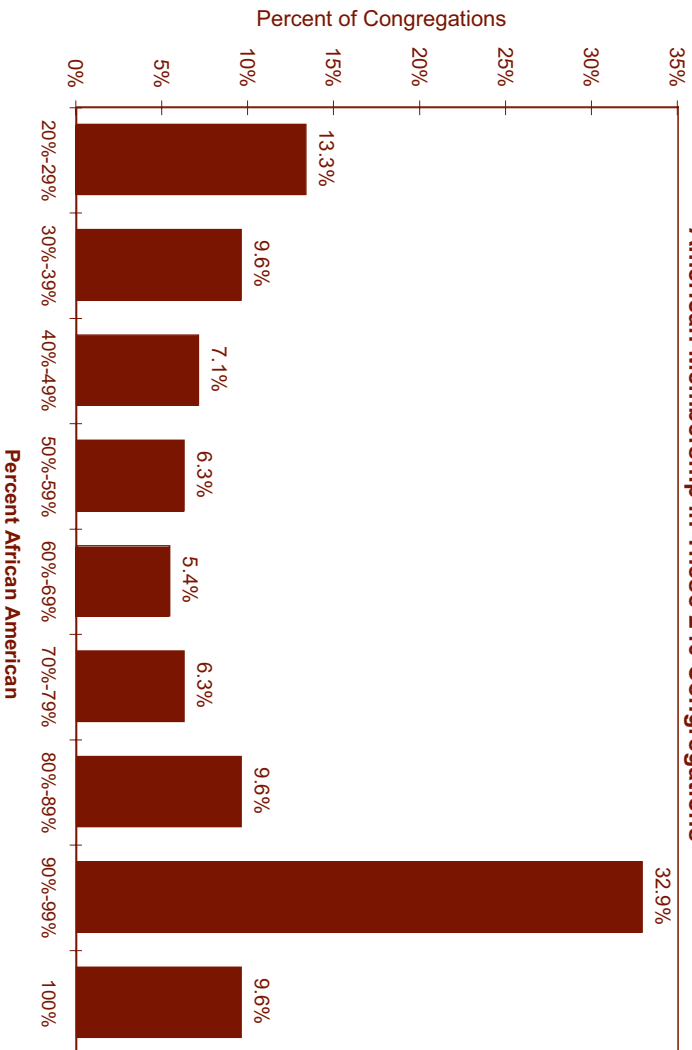
The average current operating expenses for African American congregations is \$115,263 compared with \$153,353 for the whole ELCA.

Number of African American Congregations by 2002 % African American Membership in These 240 Congregations



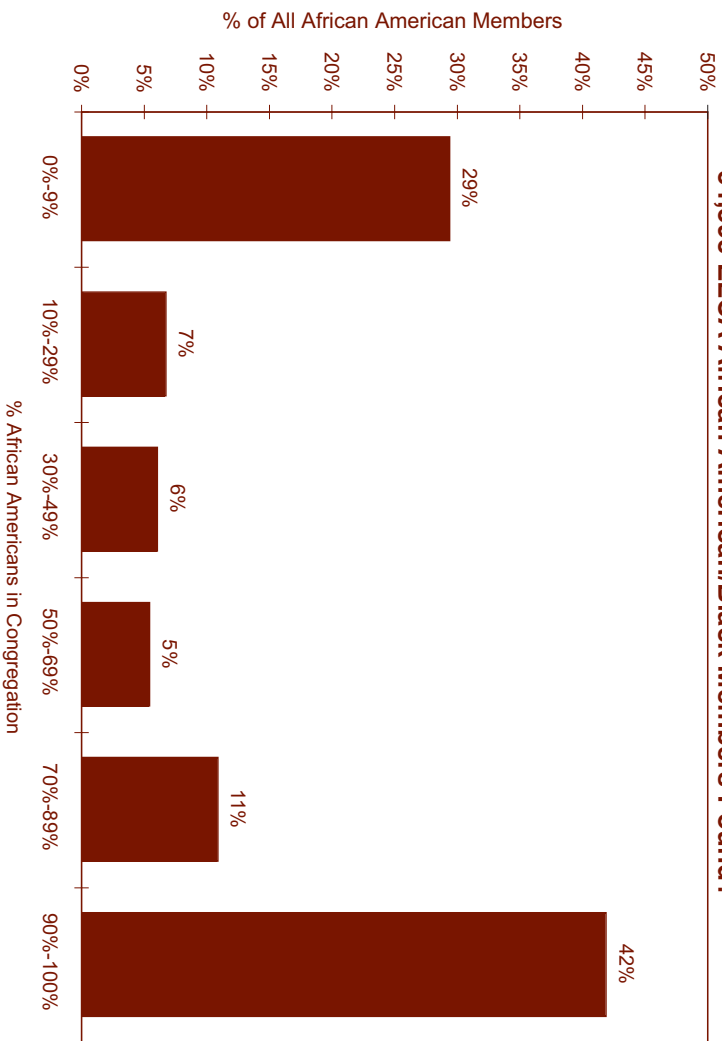
*Not all 2001 Forms Have Been Received. Source: Congregational Report Forms.

Percent of African American Congregations by 2002 % African American Membership in These 240 Congregations

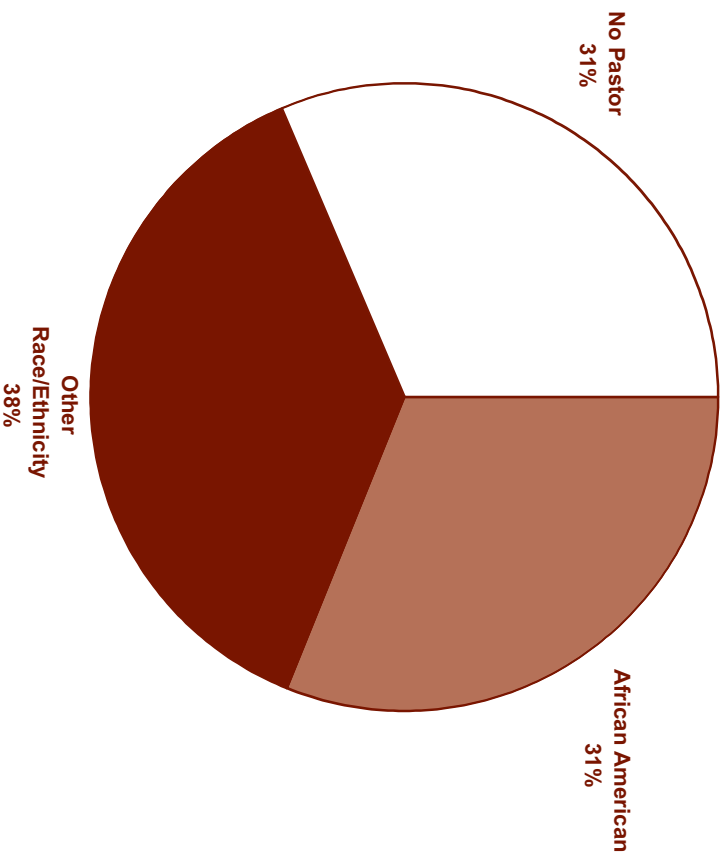


*Not all 2001 Forms Have Been Received. Source: Congregational Report Forms.

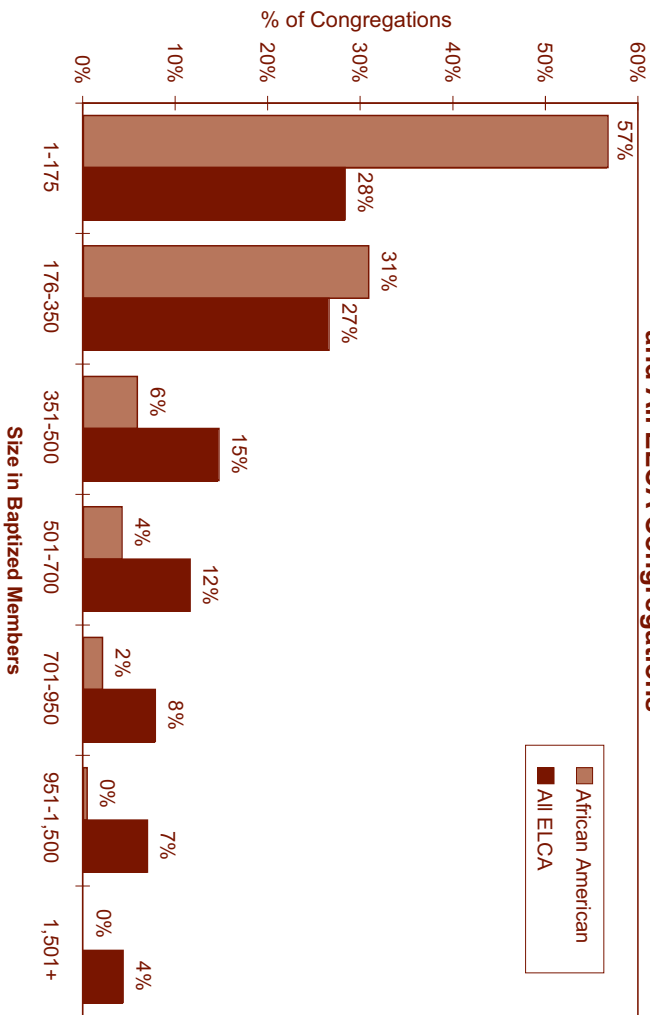
How Diverse Are the 2002 Congregations in Which 54,398 ELCA African American/Black Members Found?



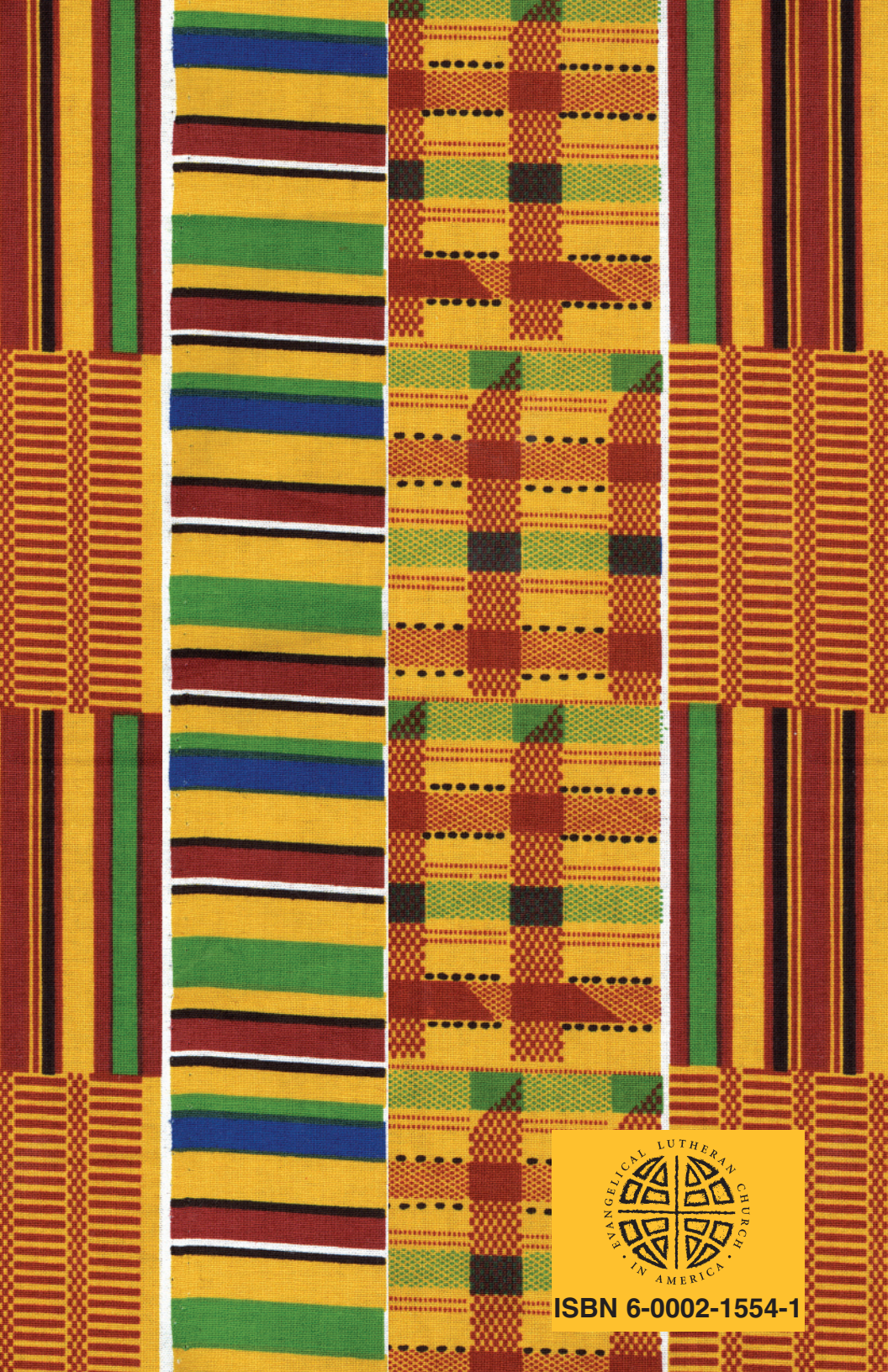
Pastors of African American Congregations - September, 2003



2002 Size of 240 ELCA African American Congregations and All ELCA Congregations



The average size of African American congregations is 204 compared with 474 for the whole ELCA.



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