

North/West Lower Michigan Synod Bishop Election Report
Research and Evaluation
Office of the Presiding Bishop
January 2019

Territory

The North/West Lower Michigan Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America covers 33,820 square miles. Geographically, it ranks 25th out of ELCA synods. The smallest area covered by a synod is the Saint Paul Area, 1,535 square miles; the largest area covered is Alaska, 571,951 square miles. The median territory covered is 22,000 miles. Twenty synods in the ELCA cover 10,000 square miles or less. Figure 1 shows the territory covered for the synods of Region 6.

Figure 1: Territory of the Synods of Region 6 in Square Miles

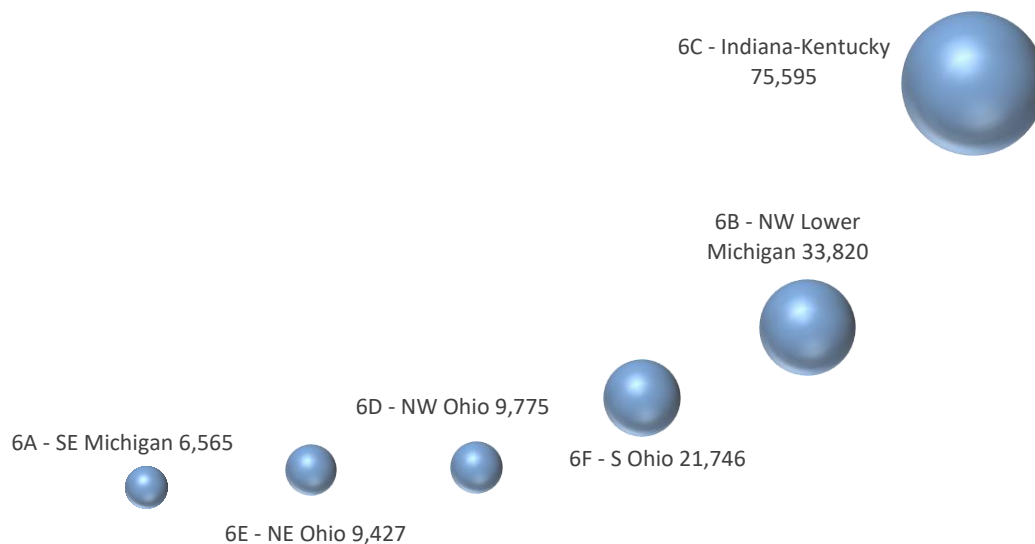
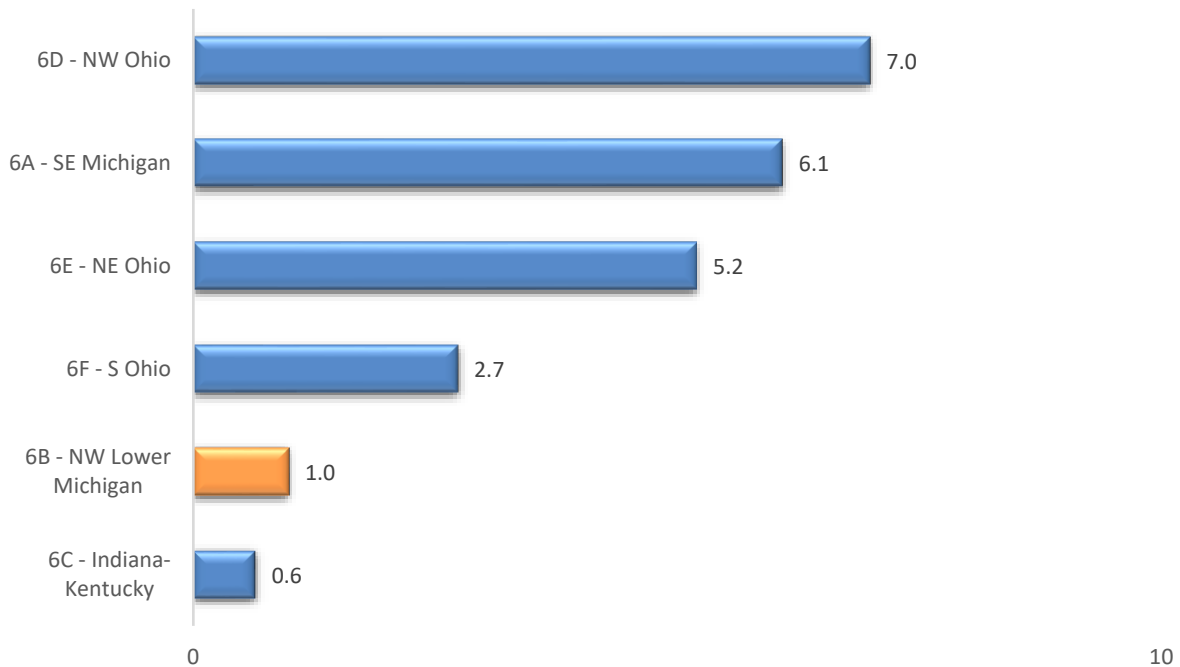


Figure 2 shows the number of Lutherans per square mile in the synods of Region 6. There were 33,431 baptized ELCA Lutherans in the North/West Lower Michigan Synod in 2017, which is one baptized member per square mile. North/West Lower Michigan also has the fewest baptized members of all the synods of Region 6. Northwestern Ohio has the most baptized members, 68,382, and the most ELCA Lutherans per square mile.

According to the 2010 US Census, the population of the territory of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod was 4,253,535. The 2018 estimate is 4,321,290, and the population is predicted to be 4,365,325 by 2023. Baptized ELCA Lutherans account for one percent of the population currently. In 2000, ELCA Lutherans accounted for 1.3 percent of the population (55,411 baptized members out of 4,164,405 people).

Figure 2: Baptized ELCA Lutherans per Square Mile



Baptized Membership and Worship Attendance

At the end of 2017, the North/West Lower Michigan Synod had 114 congregations. In 2007, there were 129.

In 2017, the baptized membership of the synod was 33,431 or an average of 293 per congregation. The average number of baptized members in a congregation in the ELCA was 383. Also, in 2017, the congregations of the synod baptized 286 children and 52 adults while also affirming the faith of 341 adults.

In 2017, the aggregate weekly worship attendance in the synod was 9,603 (29% of the baptized members) with an average of 84 in worship per congregation. The average weekly attendance for a typical congregation in the ELCA in 2017 was 98 or 26 percent of the baptized. Table 1 shows average weekly attendance for the synods of Region 6 and the ELCA.

Table 1: Average Weekly Attendance 2017

Synod	Average Weekly Attendance	Percentage of Baptized Members Attending Worship
6F – S Ohio	17,581	29.6%
6C – Indiana-Kentucky	14,031	28.9%
6B – NW Lower Michigan	9,603	28.7%
6E – NE Ohio	13,681	27.9%
6A – SE Michigan	11,144	27.9%
6D – NW Ohio	15,523	22.7%
ELCA	899,000	26.0%

Seventy-six percent of the congregations in the North/West Lower Michigan Synod had 100 people or fewer attending worship during an average week in 2017 (see Figure 3) while these same congregations accounted for 46 percent of all worshipers in the synod. Forty percent of the people in the pews are in congregations worshipping more than 150 people, yet these same congregations account for 15 percent of all the congregations in the synod. Trinity in Grand Rapids and Trinity in Midland both have more than 400 people attending worship in a typical week. In 2007, the aggregate weekly worship attendance in the synod was 16,311. The average number attending worship during an average week per congregation in 2007 was 126. Since 2007, the percentage of congregations with 50 or fewer in worship has increased from 15 percent to 37 percent. The number of congregations worshipping over 200 per week has decreased from 16 percent to six percent in the same time frame.

Figure 3: Percent of Congregations and Worshipers by Typical Worship Attendance for the Congregations of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod in 2017

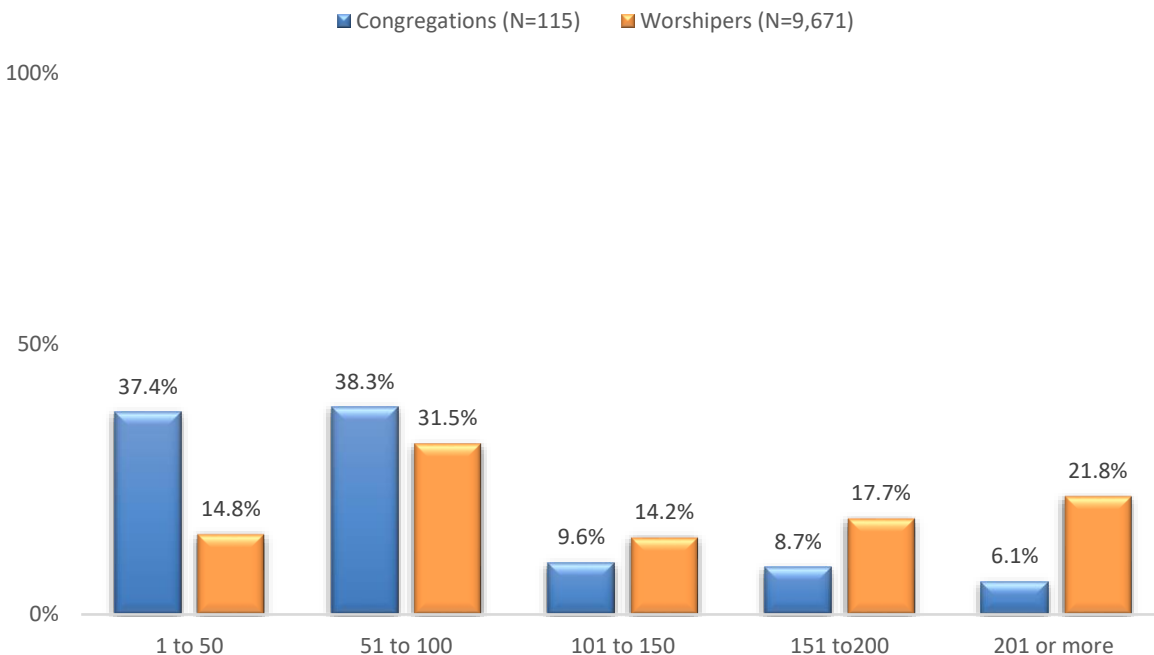
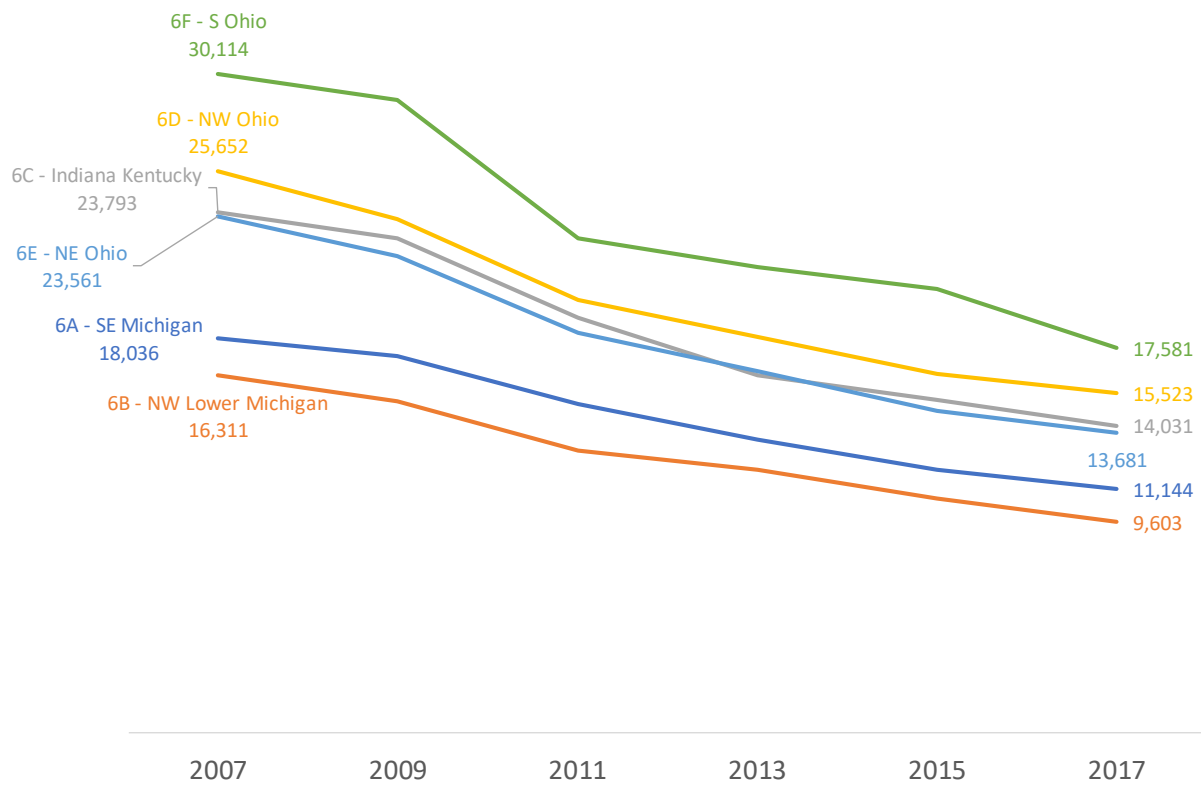


Figure 4 presents the trend in worship attendance for the synods of Region 6 for 2007 to 2017. All synods have seen declines in the past ten years: Northeastern Ohio and Southern Ohio -42 percent, North/West Lower Michigan and Indiana-Kentucky -41 percent, Northwestern Ohio -40 percent, Southeast Michigan -38 percent. The decline in average attendance for the ELCA from 2007 to 2017 was -34 percent.

Figure 4: Change in Worship Attendance from 2007 to 2017



Giving

Total giving (undesignated and designated giving) from the members of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod in 2017 was \$22,404,823; the average amount given per attendee was \$2,333 (see Table 2).

Table 2: Total Giving per Worship Attendee

Synod	Total Giving Per Worship Attendee - 2007 ¹	Total Giving Per Worship Attendee - 2017
6C - Indiana-Kentucky	\$2,153	\$2,544
6F - S Ohio	\$2,377	\$2,350
6B - NW Lower Michigan	\$2,047	\$2,333
6A - SE Michigan	\$2,185	\$2,262
6E - NE Ohio	\$1,964	\$2,210
6D - NW Ohio	\$1,781	\$2,157
ELCA	\$1,996	\$2,289

¹ Adjusted for inflation to reflect 2017 dollars. The actual amount for North/West Lower Michigan in 2007 was \$1,732.

In 2007, total giving to the congregations in the synod was \$28,247,114 (\$33,377,894 in 2017 dollars). The average amount given per worship attendee in 2007 was \$1,732 (\$2,047 in 2017 dollars). Despite giving more, these attendees have been unable to offset losses due to the overall decline in worship attendance.

Operating expenses in the synod have increased as a percentage of total giving from 75 percent in 2007 to 80 percent in 2017.

Mission support is the amount of money shared through congregations for the ministry of synods and the ELCA churchwide expression. Table 3 presents mission support both as a percentage of undesignated giving from congregations and per average attendee. Among the synods of Region 6, the congregations of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod share the highest percentage of their regular giving as mission support. North/West Lower Michigan also has the highest dollar amount per worship attendee in Region 6. The average attendee in the North/West Lower Michigan Synod shares \$30 more per year than the average attendee in the ELCA (North/West Lower Michigan \$137, ELCA \$107).

Table 3: Mission Support as a Percentage of Congregational Undesignated Giving and per Worship Attendee - 2017

Synod	Percentage of Congregational Undesignated Giving for Mission Support	Mission Support per Worship Attendee
6B - NW Lower Michigan	6.86%	\$137
6C - Indiana-Kentucky	5.74%	\$125
6D - NW Ohio	5.52%	\$99
6E - NE Ohio	5.22%	\$100
6A - SE Michigan	4.75%	\$93
6F - S Ohio	4.44%	\$90
ELCA	5.49%	\$107

The Synod Office and Its Financial Resources

Section 10.21. of the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* outlines the primary purposes of synod offices.

10.21. Each synod, in partnership with the churchwide organization, shall bear primary responsibility for the oversight of the life and mission of this church in its territory. In fulfillment of this role and consistent with policies and procedures of this church, the synod shall:

- a. Provide for pastoral care of congregations and rostered leaders in the synod;
- b. Plan for, facilitate, and nurture the mission of this church through congregations;
- c. Strengthen interdependent relationships among congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization, and foster relationships with agencies and institutions affiliated with or related to this church as well as ecumenical partners.
- d. Interpret the work of this church to congregations and to the public on the territory of the synod.

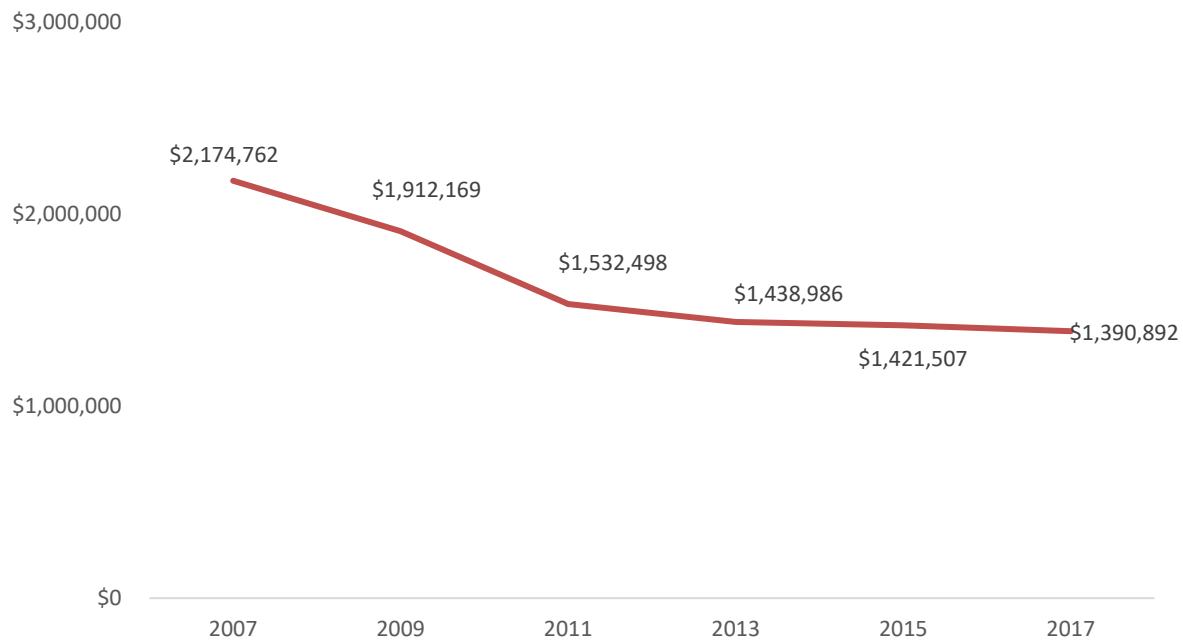
Despite the consistency of responsibilities, the amount of money available to synod offices to carry out these responsibilities varies widely. Table 4 shows mission support figures for the synods of Region 6.

Table 4: Mission Support in 2017

Synod	From Congregations	Percent to Churchwide	Amount to Churchwide	Amount Remaining in the Synod
6F - S Ohio	\$1,626,510	40.00%	\$650,604	\$975,906
6C - Indiana-Kentucky	\$1,710,540	43.00%	\$735,532	\$975,008
6D - NW Ohio	\$1,561,131	51.00%	\$796,177	\$764,954
6B - NW Lower Michigan	\$1,390,892	50.00%	\$695,446	\$695,446
6E - NE Ohio	\$1,371,614	50.00%	\$685,807	\$685,807
6A - SE Michigan	\$1,052,150	40.00%	\$420,860	\$631,290
ELCA	\$94,375,013	47.06%	\$44,412,881	\$49,962,132

Figure 5 presents the amount of mission support income shared with the North/West Lower Michigan Synod office from the congregations of the synod from 2007 to 2017.

Figure 5: Congregational Giving to Mission Support for the North/West Lower Michigan Synod from 2007 to 2017²



² These figures have been adjusted for inflation to reflect 2017 dollars. The actual dollar amount in 2007 was \$1,840,462.