



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America

Congregation Pulse Surveys

What are ELCA Congregation Pulse Surveys?

The ELCA Congregation Pulse Surveys are an experimental effort to allow ELCA congregations and worshiping communities to communicate their perspectives, strengths, and development needs to synods and the churchwide organization.

Rationale

Historically, the Annual Congregation Report Form C was a way for congregations and worshiping communities to communicate their knowledge, attitudes, and practices on a wide variety of topics to synods and the churchwide organization.

As time went by, the Office of the Secretary determined that Form C was no longer a helpful information-gathering tool. There was no common theme to the questions, so they frequently appeared unorganized. Given limited space on the form, only one question about a given topic could be included. Finally, the entire process took too long; questions solicited in the summer of one year were not answered until the fall of the next year.

With those concerns in mind, we are trying a new way to collect data. Instead of soliciting information from all congregations and worshiping communities simultaneously through Form C, we will be conducting quarterly Congregation Pulse Surveys. The Pulse Surveys seek to address some of the same topics covered by Form C; however, they provide an opportunity to dig a bit deeper to better understand the perceptions and actions of congregations and worshiping communities. Additionally, with quicker turnaround of reporting results, synods and the churchwide organization will be able to begin conversations based on responses, make adjustments to better serve the needs of congregations and worshiping communities, and gain insight into the impact of those changes.

Process

Over the next year each ELCA congregation and worshiping community will receive one Pulse Survey, in either April, July, October, or January 2025. Surveys will be distributed to the email address on file for the congregation or worshiping community with the churchwide organization.

For congregations or worshiping communities who do not have a specific email address on file, the survey will be sent to the rostered minister, administrative assistant, or Council President.

The surveys are designed to be completed in five minutes or less and without any research. Each survey will remain open for three weeks. At that point, the data will be summarized and shared.

Survey Topics

In this first year, Pulse Surveys will include topics that had been part of Form C. Each survey will contain approximately 12-14 questions, exploring two topics. The first topic on each survey is congregational vitality—using the ELCA's [Gifts of Baptism – Five Gifts of Discipleship](#) resource as a guide. The same set of questions will be used in each of the first four Pulse Surveys.

Additionally, because congregations and worshiping communities frequently ask the churchwide organization to share narratives about the vitality of their ministry, the Pulse Survey asks what part of ministry gives them joy. The verbatim comments will be shared with synods.

The schedule for the other topics is:

- Communication methods (April) – completed, report forthcoming
- Creation Care (July)
- Christian Education (October)
- Welcoming/Engagement practices (January 2025)

How you can help

Each quarter, you will be provided with a list of congregations and worshiping communities in your synod who will receive the Pulse Survey. Please encourage the congregations and worshiping communities on this list to complete the survey.

Additionally, because the Pulse Survey process is an experiment, there are many questions to consider around response rate, usefulness of the data, importance of the topics being investigated, etc. We ask for your openness to conversation about the process, so we can refine it and provide actionable data in an expedient way.

If you have questions, comments or suggestions before we can engage in formal conversation, please email us at Research@elca.org.