



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.

Over time, 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.

In April 2024, with those concerns in mind, we launched the Congregation Pulse Surveys, which will again be conducted quarterly in 2025. 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, adjust to better serve the needs of congregations and worshiping communities, and gain insight into the impact of those changes. We will be working this second year to decrease our turnaround time on providing results.

Process

The process will remain unchanged this second year. Over the next year each ELCA congregation and worshiping community will receive one Pulse Survey, in either April, July, October, or January 2026. 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 seven minutes or less and without any research. Each survey will remain open for three weeks.

Survey Topics

Each survey will contain approximately 15 - 20 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 used in the previous year will be continued.

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 not yet set.

How you can help

Each quarter, you will be provided with a link to a list of congregations and worshiping communities in your synod who will receive the Pulse Survey. This link will be updated periodically to indicate which congregations have responded. As you are able and as it makes sense, you may encourage the congregations and worshiping communities on this list to complete the survey. Please do not view this as a responsibility for you or your staff.

If you have questions, comments or suggestions, please email us at Research@elca.org.