

**Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod Bishop Election Report**  
**Research and Evaluation**  
**Office of the Presiding Bishop**  
**January 2019**

Territory

The Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America covers 10,503 square miles. In terms of square miles, it is the 42<sup>nd</sup> largest of the 65 synods in the ELCA. 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 Northwestern Pennsylvania and its neighboring synods.

**Figure 1: Territory of the Synods in Square Miles**

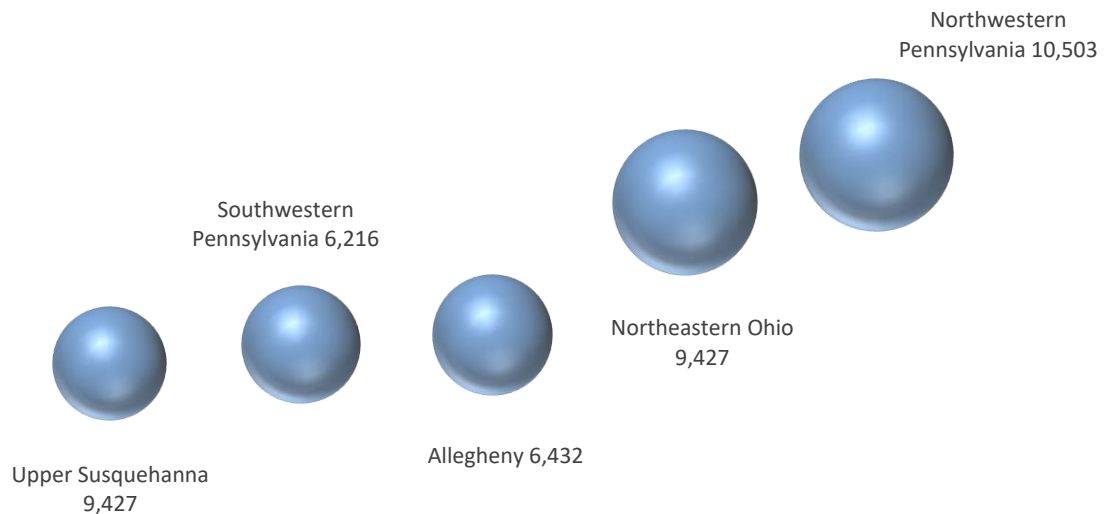
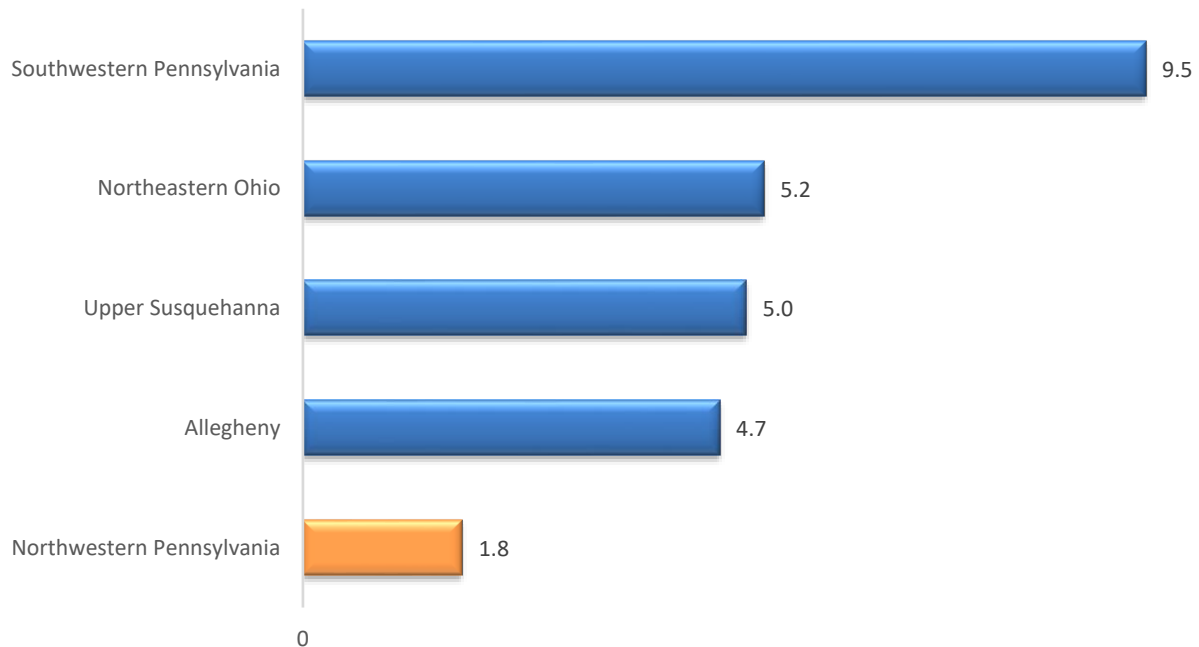


Figure 2 shows the number of Lutherans per square mile in Northwestern Pennsylvania and its neighboring synods. There were 19,115 baptized ELCA Lutherans in the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod in 2017, which is 1.8 baptized members per square mile. Northeastern Ohio, Upper Susquehanna and Allegheny have 5 ELCA Lutheran per square mile. Southwestern Pennsylvania has 10. Southwestern Pennsylvania also has the most baptized members in its territory, 59,323.

According to the 2010 US Census, the population of the territory of the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod was 931,431. The 2018 estimate is 896,098, and the population is predicted to be 880,113 by 2023. Baptized ELCA Lutherans account for two percent of the population currently. In 2000, ELCA Lutherans accounted for three percent of the population (31,298 baptized members out of 952,658 people).

**Figure 2: Baptized ELCA Lutherans per Square Mile**



**Baptized Membership and Worship Attendance**

At the end of 2017, the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod had 79 congregations. In 2007, there were 89.

In 2017, the baptized membership of the synod was 19,115 or an average of 242 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 141 children and 21 adults while also affirming the faith of 114 adults.

In 2017, the aggregate weekly worship attendance in the synod was 3,959 (21% of the baptized members) with an average of 50 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 Northwestern Pennsylvania, its neighboring synods and the ELCA.

**Table 1: Average Weekly Attendance 2017**

Synod	Average Weekly Attendance	Percentage of Baptized Members Attending Worship
Northeastern Ohio	13,681	27.9%
Allegheny	6,499	21.5%
Upper Susquehanna	6,148	21.3%
<b>Northwestern Pennsylvania</b>	<b>3,959</b>	<b>20.7%</b>
Southwestern Pennsylvania	11,312	19.1%
<b>ELCA</b>	<b>899,000</b>	<b>26.0%</b>

Eighty-seven percent of the congregations in the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod had 100 people or fewer attending worship during an average week in 2017 (see Figure 3) while these same congregations accounted for 66 percent of all worshipers in the synod. Thirty-four percent of the people in the pews are in congregations worshipping more than 100 people, yet these same congregations account for four percent of all the congregations in the synod (3 congregations). One congregation, Luther Memorial in Erie, has more than 150 in worship in a typical week. In 2007, the aggregate weekly worship attendance in the synod was 5,875. The average number attending worship during an average week per congregation in 2007 was 66. Since 2007, the percentage of congregations with 50 or fewer in worship has increased from 50 percent to 70 percent. The number of congregations worshipping over 150 per week has decreased from four congregations to one in the same time frame.

**Figure 3: Percent of Congregations and Worshipers by Typical Worship Attendance for the Congregations of the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod in 2017**

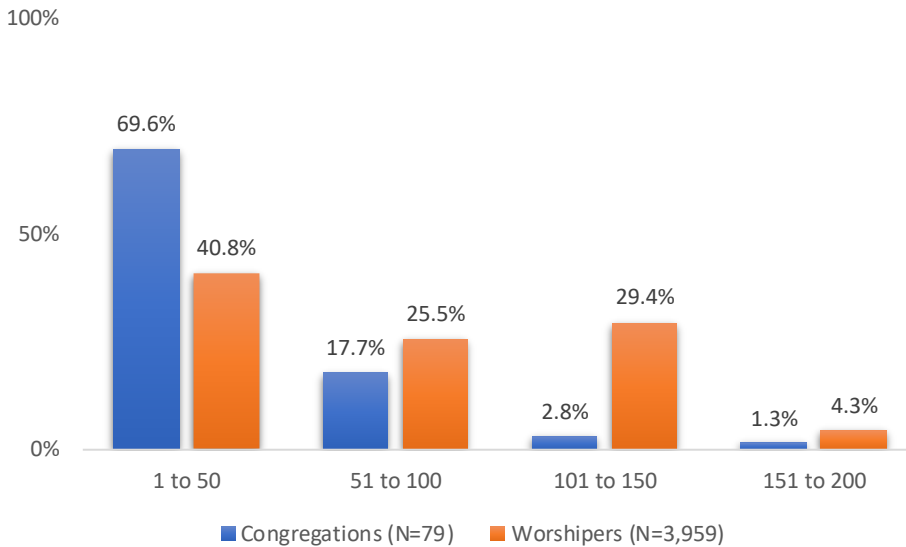
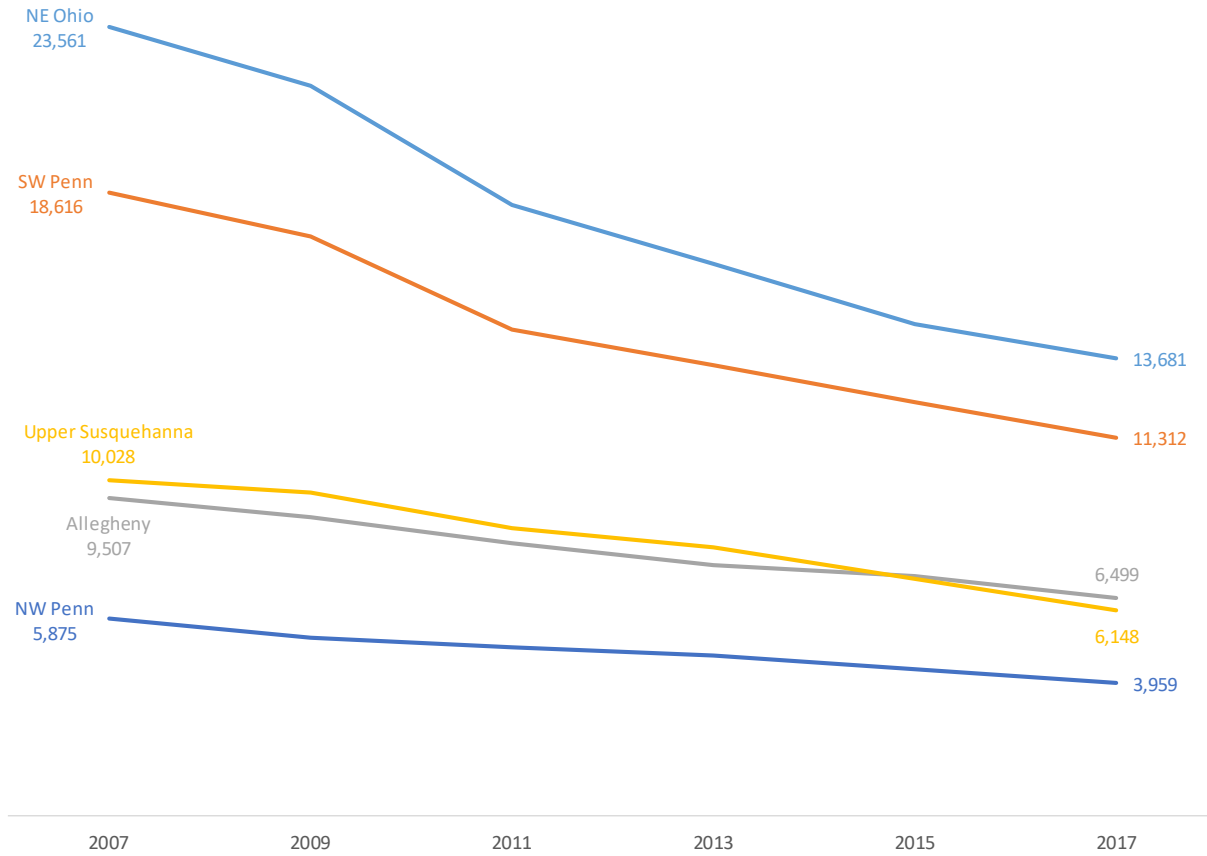


Figure 4 presents the trend in worship attendance for the synods of Northwestern Pennsylvania and its neighboring synods for 2007 to 2017. All synods have seen declines in the past ten years: Northeastern Ohio -42%, Southwestern Pennsylvania - 39%, Upper Susquehanna -39%, Northwestern Pennsylvania - 33%, and Allegheny -32%. The decline in average attendance for the ELCA from 2007 to 2017 was -34%.

**Figure 4: Change in Worship Attendance from 2007 to 2017**



**Giving**

Total giving (undesignated and designated giving) from the members of the Northwestern Pennsylvania synod in 2017 was \$7,643,936; the average amount given per attendee was \$1,931 (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Total Giving per Worship Attendee**

Synod	Total Giving Per Worship Attendee - 2007 <sup>1</sup>	Total Giving Per Worship Attendee - 2017
Northeastern Ohio	\$1,964	\$2,210
Southwestern Pennsylvania	\$1,755	\$1,991
<b>Northwestern Pennsylvania</b>	<b>\$1,784</b>	<b>\$1,931</b>
Upper Susquehanna	\$1,612	\$1,887
Allegheny	\$1,595	\$1,862
<b>ELCA</b>	<b>\$1,996</b>	<b>\$2,289</b>

<sup>1</sup> Adjusted for inflation to reflect 2017 dollars.

In 2007, total giving to the congregations in the synod was \$8,868,626 (\$10,479,515 in 2017 dollars). The average amount given per worship attendee in 2007 was \$1,510 (\$1,784 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 slightly decreased as a percentage of total giving from 89 percent in 2007 to 88 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. The congregations of the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod share six percent more of their regular giving as mission support than the ELCA as a whole. The average attendee shares \$88 more per year (Northwestern Pennsylvania \$191, 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
<b>Northwestern Pennsylvania</b>	<b>11.41%</b>	<b>\$191</b>
Southwestern Pennsylvania	7.84%	\$135
Upper Susquehanna	7.50%	\$125
Allegheny	7.77%	\$122
Northeastern Ohio	5.22%	\$100
<b>ELCA</b>	<b>5.49%</b>	<b>\$107</b>

#### 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.

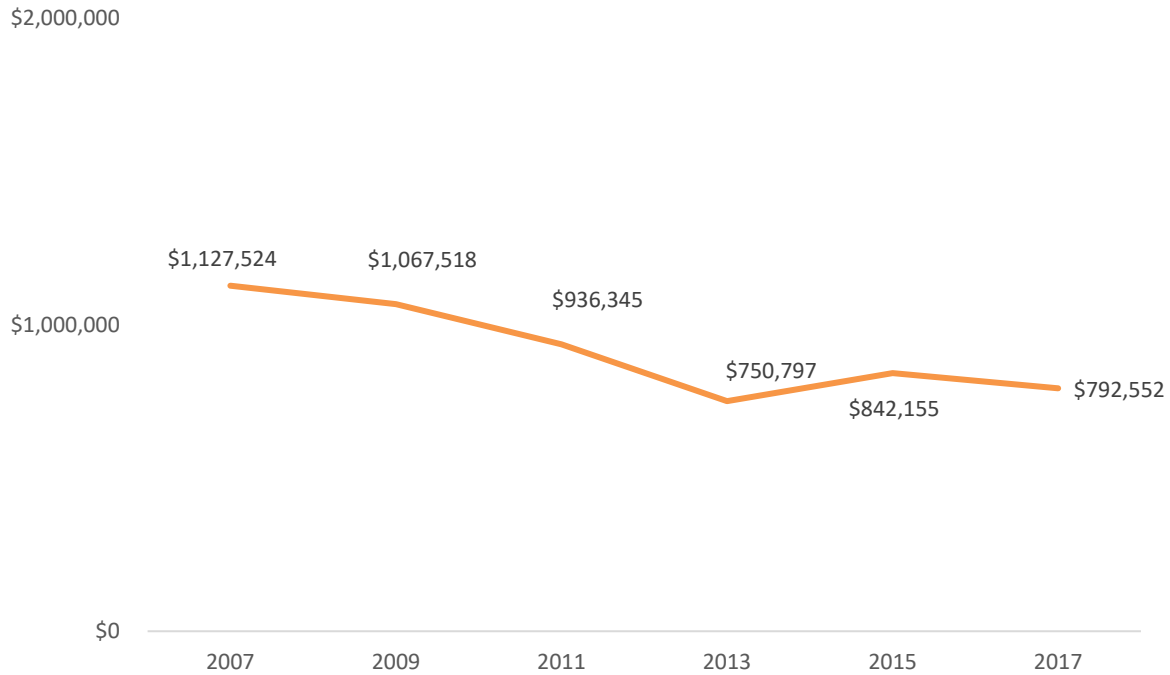
Despite the consistency of responsibilities, the amount of money available to synod offices to carry out these responsibilities varies widely. Table 4 shows mission support figures for the synods referenced in this report.

**Table 4: Mission Support in 2017**

Synod	From Congregations	Percent to Churchwide	Amount to Churchwide	Amount Remaining in the Synod
Northwestern Pennsylvania	\$792,552	50.00%	\$396,276	\$396,276
Southwestern Pennsylvania	\$1,553,727	48.00%	\$745,789	\$807,938
Allegheny	\$718,450	50.00%	\$359,225	\$359,225
Upper Susquehanna	\$847,738	50.00%	\$423,869	\$423,869
Northeastern Ohio	\$1,371,614	50.00%	\$685,807	\$685,807
<b>ELCA</b>	<b>\$94,375,013</b>	<b>47.06%</b>	<b>\$44,412,881</b>	<b>\$49,962,132</b>

Figure 5 presents the amount of mission support income shared with the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod office from the congregations of the synod.

**Figure 5: Congregational Giving to Mission Support for the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod from 2007 to 2017<sup>2</sup>**



<sup>2</sup> These figures have been adjusted for inflation to reflect 2017 dollars. The actual dollar amount in 2007 was \$954,203.