



NEXT FAITHFUL STEP

Rocky Mountain
Synod
ELCA





Rocky Mountain Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

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Dear Beloved in Christ in the Rocky Mountain Synod,

We have so much to be thankful for here in the Rocky Mountain Synod, and in my prayers of thanksgiving I give thanks for you. Thank you for your continued commitment to sharing grace and peace as together we proclaim and embody God's unconditional love for the sake of the world.

Recently I've been inviting you to think about what we get to do together as Christ's Church here in this synod. Your Synod Council engaged that question at our meeting in early February and affirmed some exciting directions for our shared life as fellow members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in this part of God's world.

Now we are taking our Next Faithful Step. I think it's fitting that we are conducting this feasibility study as the seasons once again change from winter to spring. As nature springs with new life, so too are opportunities at the congregational and synodical levels. There is a spirit of growing generosity moving in congregations across the Rocky Mountain Synod, and I'm hopeful about what God will call us to do together through that generous spirit as we live out our shared faith.

The following pages include information about four opportunities synod leadership is exploring.

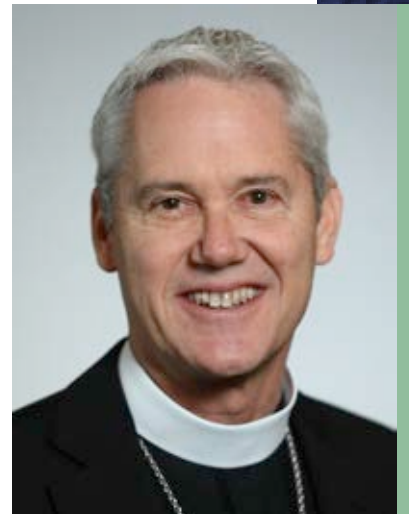
- Two of the initiatives relate to pastoral and lay leader support. In many ways, they are a continuation and further implementation of ongoing support to equip and strengthen leaders in each congregation.
- The other two initiatives regard the future of two shared Synod properties: The Lutheran Center (Office of the Bishop) and the Messiah Mountain Retreat Center.

I invite you to consider these Next Faithful Step opportunities prayerfully and thoughtfully and in the context of what will serve the Rocky Mountain Synod well in the coming years and beyond.

Thank you for participating in this study and discernment process for the Synod. I'm incredibly grateful to you.

Yours in Faith,

Bishop Jim Gonia



HISTORY OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN SYNOD



The ELCA is a result of a merger among The American Lutheran Church (ALC), the Lutheran Church in America (LCA) and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC). The three churches agreed to unite in 1982. They formed a 70-member Commission for a New Lutheran Church, which planned the merger. The plan was approved by church conventions in 1986, and the ELCA constituting convention was April 30-May 3, 1987, in Columbus, Ohio, with the church actually beginning operations on January 1, 1988.

The Rocky Mountain Synod is one of 65 synods that came into existence when the ELCA came into being. The territory of the Rocky Mountain Synod, ELCA, closely follows what had been the LCA Rocky Mountain Synod which included Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, and El Paso, TX. The ALC Central District Territory had covered the states of Nebraska, Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma and Missouri.

Bishop Wayne Weissenbuehler was elected to serve as the first Bishop of the Rocky Mountain Synod, ELCA. He served for five years until he was called to serve as the senior pastor of Bethany Lutheran Church in Cherry Hills Village.

Bishop Allan Bjornberg was elected to serve as the second Bishop of the Rocky Mountain Synod on November 13, 1993. Serving for 18 years, Bishop Bjornberg celebrated the synod's diversity and unity through synod-wide events and initiatives, including "Gathered, Gifted, & Sent," "One Bread, One Body," "Invitation to Service," and "Vision, Passion, Action." The Rocky Mountain Synod also piloted the ELCA brand campaign: "God's Work. Our Hands."

Bishop Jim Gonja was elected to his first six-year term at the 2012 Synod Assembly in Colorado Springs, Colorado, on April 28, 2012. He was installed as bishop of the Rocky Mountain Synod September 23, 2012, at Bethany Lutheran Church in Cherry Hills Village, Colorado. He was elected to a second term at the 2018 Synod Assembly in Westminster, Colorado on May 4, 2016.

Having served as a missionary in Madagascar, as a parish pastor, and in ELCA Churchwide ministries, Bishop Gonja brings an expansive view of what it means to be the church. He continues to champion this theme: "We are Church: Better Together!" And he highlights the synod's mission statement to focus our work together: Together, we proclaim and embody God's unconditional love for the sake of the world.

The Rocky Mountain Synod's vision for the future is focused on the five areas depicted in the graphic to the right.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN SYNOD OFFICERS

The Rev. James Gonja - Bishop
 Ms. Earline Bohling - Vice President
 Ms. Jody Hoelter - Secretary
 Mr. Dennis Reynolds - Treasurer

SYNOD COUNCIL SYNOD COUNCIL LAY

Diana Biggs
 Susan Mitchell
 Terry Cole
 Todd Herreid
 Amelia Decker
 Maggie Nieberger
 Jay Voth
 Debra Frank Dew
 Ray Ferry
 Jeff Fairfax

SYNOD COUNCIL CLERGY

The Rev. Julie Brooks
 The Rev. Sara Wirth
 The Rev. Matthew Weber
 The Rev. Reba Kiger-Kolasch
 The Rev. Dave Palma-Ruwe
 The Rev. Terry Schjang



MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

The Rocky Mountain Synod is exploring two (2) Congregational Support Initiatives and two (2) Shared Property Initiatives as a means of supporting the collective and ongoing ministries of partnering congregations.

CONGREGATIONAL SUPPORT INITIATIVE - REAPPLY FOR AN EDUCATE, EQUIP, ENACT (3E) GRANT

EXTEND THE MINISTERIAL EXCELLENCE FUND

The three-year, \$500,000 grant we received in 2016 from the Lilly Endowment's "National Initiative to Address Economic Challenges Facing Pastoral Leaders" has concluded. These funds are awarded to help pastoral leaders develop stronger financial literacy skills and provide direct aid to help these leaders reduce or eliminate education debt, participate in pension programs, pay off extraordinary medical bills, and address other financial challenges.

This program has truly transformed our culture and thinking around money throughout the Synod. Through this funding, more than 100 pastors and deacons across the RMS received grants and scholarships to increase their capacity for healthy ministry by alleviating education, credit card, or medical debt and helping supplement retirement savings or continuing education.

Now we may apply for an additional Lilly grant which would enable us to continue and expand this program. A renewing grant of \$250,000 up to \$500,000 is possible, with the requirement that the RMS must match the granted funds.



"The 3E Lilly grant offered me a chance to pay off nearly all of my credit card debt. My financial health is better, my participation in the monetary giving of my church is greater, and my financial future is less worrisome than it was a very short time ago. For all of these things, I'm so very grateful."

—RMS Pastor & 3E grant recipient



EXPAND STEWARDSHIP FOR ALL SEASONS

RMS is in our 3rd year of Stewardship for All Seasons (SAS), a congregational program that inspires generosity and financial health. The concluded Lilly Grant provided for participation of 60 congregations across the Synod. The results have been fruitful in many of the congregations that have engaged in this collaborative opportunity. Because of their growth in giving, the Synod Mission Support from congregations to the Rocky Mountain Synod for 2018 exceeded expectations, an increase of 2.1% over the previous year. This enabled us to share in this generosity by growing our commitment to Churchwide ministries for 2019. Renewing a Lilly grant would provide the opportunity for us to invite more congregations to participate and to thrive.

“SAS equipped our congregation to not be fearful about our giving but to look to what God is doing in our midst. In 2018 we saw over 15% growth in giving, plus we were able to raise over \$50,000 in capital to address deferred maintenance and building improvements. The fear and anxiety around finances has dissipated and we have some individuals who are thinking of making estate gifts because they want to make sure our long-term future can be realized.”

—RMS Pastor & SAS participant




EQUIP THROUGH COACHING

Through the Lilly funding, twenty (20) rostered ministers were provided the opportunity to each receive a set of coaching sessions with a certified coach. For many, this was a life-changing experience that dramatically improved their outlook on work and life while improving leadership skills. Coaching helps participants tap into their potential, unlocking sources of creativity and productivity. An additional Lilly grant would allow us to continue to offer this service to leaders across the Synod.

“I had found the terrain of ministry since August 2016 to be very rocky. The monthly conversations with my coach provided incredibly life-giving and purposeful as—with the professional expertise and personal prayers of my coach—I built and continue to live out a strategy for the grounding of daily life and clarity of vocation.”

—RMS Pastor & Coaching participant



Excellence in 
LEADERSHIP
 Rocky Mountain Synod, ELCA

CONGREGATIONAL SUPPORT INITIATIVE – EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP (EIL) PROGRAM

Congregations often fail to thrive when leaders are not equipped to present an inspiring vision and lead the community together toward this vision. They often decline when leaders are unable to communicate deeply with one another or engage their contexts at a deep level. Systemic issues in congregations and other ministries can hinder communication and shared vision. Many times, leaders are hindered by the limits of their knowledge of how best to understand themselves or those with whom they work. By increasing the capacity of leaders, the Church in all its forms is strengthened. Healthier leaders will lead to healthier ministries.

To foster greater leadership across the RMS, we plan to launch **Excellence in Leadership (EIL)**, a comprehensive leadership development initiative. Through a series of workshops for rostered and non-rostered leaders, EIL aims to form courageous, resilient and faithful leaders who are better equipped to build courageous, resilient, and faithful communities of faith, for the sake of the world. It is the vision of this initiative that pastors, deacons, leaders of congregations and other ministries will all be equipped to exercise wise, mature, emotionally intelligent leadership in the many settings of their lives.

EIL will be an in-depth workshop series for rostered and non-rostered leaders in the RMS. The participants will likely be a pastor and three lay leaders from a given congregation, and we hope to have about 30 congregations participating in the first year.



2 year program

Year 1 – Self awareness
 Year 2 – Community awareness



5 locations

Border Conference
 North New Mexico
 Denver South
 Wyoming/North Colorado
 Utah



Commitment

8 Saturdays, all day;
 6, 2 hour teleconferences;
 over the course of the two years



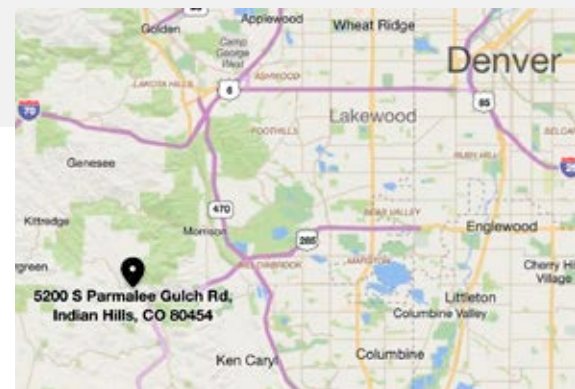
SHARED PROPERTY INITIATIVE – THE MESSIAH MOUNTAIN RETREAT CENTER

Through the generosity of Messiah Community Church (Denver), a 28-acre retreat site in the Denver foothills that has been stewarded by the Messiah congregation for 60 years is being gifted to the Rocky Mountain Synod. This gift of space and Sabbath retreat will be an attractive and convenient place for outdoor ministry, supporting the spiritual life and faith formation of all – especially adults.

Like most aging facilities in a mountainous climate, the nearly 100-year old Lodge and the Cabin require repairs and have a backlog of maintenance. So the facilities are welcoming and safe for guests, a number of improvements must be addressed including:

- Roof Repair
- Renovation of the Lodge meeting area
- Tuckpointing of stonework and cement block foundations
- Bathroom upgrades
- Replace all Lodge exterior doors
- Fix outdoor drainage issues
- Repair and seal window
- Repair decks and railings
- Replace furnaces
- Electrical repairs and upgrades
- Renovate and winterize the Cabin for year-round use
- Improve the outdoor chapel for safety
- Septic System Repair
- Update the Lodge kitchen

While these physical needs are being accomplished, a vision for the future of Messiah Mountain will unfold with the partnership of ministry visionaries, building professionals, funding specialists, and strategic consultants. How will we use this shared space for the ministry? As the vision for mission unfolds, new needs may be clarified determining a plan for further improvements to the site to support this collective vision.





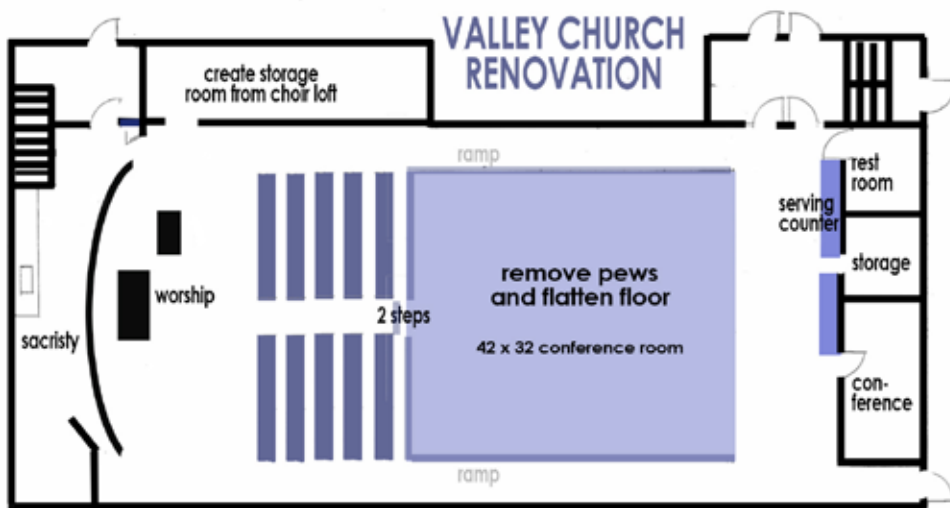
SHARED PROPERTY INITIATIVE – THE LUTHERAN CENTER

The Lutheran Center is the home of the Rocky Mountain Synod Office of the Bishop. Formerly home to the Valley Lutheran Church, the original facility was constructed uniquely with three separate buildings connected by a breezeway. The Office of the Bishop occupies the north building, which was the congregation’s original sanctuary and then used as its fellowship hall. A renovation and building project concluded four years ago.

The church’s sanctuary building with pew seating for 350 on a gently sloping floor is never used because it does not offer a usable and flexible space. Additionally, there is no restroom on the main floor in that building. As requests increase from large groups seeking to hold multiple meetings simultaneously, improving the use of this building is evident.

Removal of a portion of the pews and leveling the floor would create a flexible space for meetings, worship, concerts, lectures, and retreats. Establishing a single, non-gendered restroom on the main floor, adding a small kitchenette and defining a storage and archive room would transform a currently unusable space to one which would provide additional opportunities for education and discipleship. This space may be rented to civic groups and ecumenical partners for community outreach, educational and cultural events.

As with every aging property, the Lutheran Center parking lot is well past its usable life. Because the lot is in such poor condition, it will be necessary to remove all of the asphalt and start fresh building the lot from the subsurface up. Additionally, significant drainage issues will be addressed on the property.



WHAT IT WILL TAKE

To achieve all of these initiatives, an estimated \$1,045,000 - \$1,295,000 is needed. Associated funds for each effort are projected as follows:

CONGREGATIONAL SUPPORT INITIATIVE – REAPPLY FOR A LILLY 3E GRANT \$250,000-500,000

This variance is determined by what the RMS will match for the renewal grant. A \$250,000 commitment will sustain the level of support provided over the last three years. A \$500,000 commitment will scale the support to an increased number of participants in the Ministerial Excellence Fund, Stewardship for All Seasons program, partnered coaching, and new initiatives.

CONGREGATIONAL SUPPORT INITIATIVE – EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP (EIL) PROGRAM \$345,000

This training will take place throughout our vast synod territory – likely in five locations over a series of three years. To fully implement this program so that it is financially within the reach of all pastors and deacons, a portion of these funds will stipend the expense of travel and time for the leaders to enable their participation. The program costs also include curriculum development, staffing costs, administrative support, marketing, and trainings.

Year One	\$87,000
Year Two	\$129,000
Year Three	\$129,000

SHARED PROPERTY INITIATIVE – THE MESSIAH MOUNTAIN RETREAT CENTER \$275,000

A series of immediate building repairs, improvements and upgrades are necessary to bring this asset to a suitable level of safety and hospitality for guests. A portion of these funds, estimated at \$50,000, will be directed toward developing a strategic vision for the use of this space and identifying additional improvements for the site to serve that vision.

SHARED PROPERTY INITIATIVE – THE LUTHERAN CENTER \$175,000

Heating and caring for a large and, currently, unusable space has led to revisioning this space for the benefit of the Synod as well as community and ecumenical partners. To improve this space, three specific components have been identified:

PHASE 1: level the floor, install the restroom and kitchenette, technology, furnishings	\$75,000
PHASE 2: install air conditioning units for year-round use	\$35,000
Parking lot reconstruction & drainage improvements	\$65,000

RMS FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

DECEMBER 31, 2018

Total liabilities:	\$678,073.05
Total Equity:	\$1,653,994.18
Total Liabilities and equity:	\$2,332,067.21

CAMPAIGN LEADERS

Committed and enthusiastic volunteers to serve as leaders and workers are required to make the campaign for the Rocky Mountain Synod a success.

CAMPAIGN STANDARD OF GIFTS

\$ GIFT AMOUNT	# OF GIVERS NEEDED	CUMULATIVE TOTAL
\$125,000	1	\$125,000
\$100,000	1	\$225,000
\$75,000	2	\$375,000
\$50,000	3	\$525,000
\$35,000	4	\$665,000
\$25,000	8	\$865,000
\$15,000	10	\$1,015,000
\$10,000	12	\$1,135,000
\$5,000	15	\$1,210,000
Less than \$5,000	Many	\$1,295,000



CONGREGATIONAL PARTICIPATION

CONGREGATION GOALS

Each partnering congregation will be asked to set a non-binding, three-year goal for their campaign effort. Recommended goal levels are proposed on the basis of the average weekly worship attendance of the congregation. The following are the proposed goal levels for congregations.

Basic Goal	\$100 per worshipper
Advanced Goal	\$200 per worshipper
Challenge Goal	\$300 per worshipper

For example, a congregation with an average weekly worship attendance of 100 persons could select from among the following three-year goals:

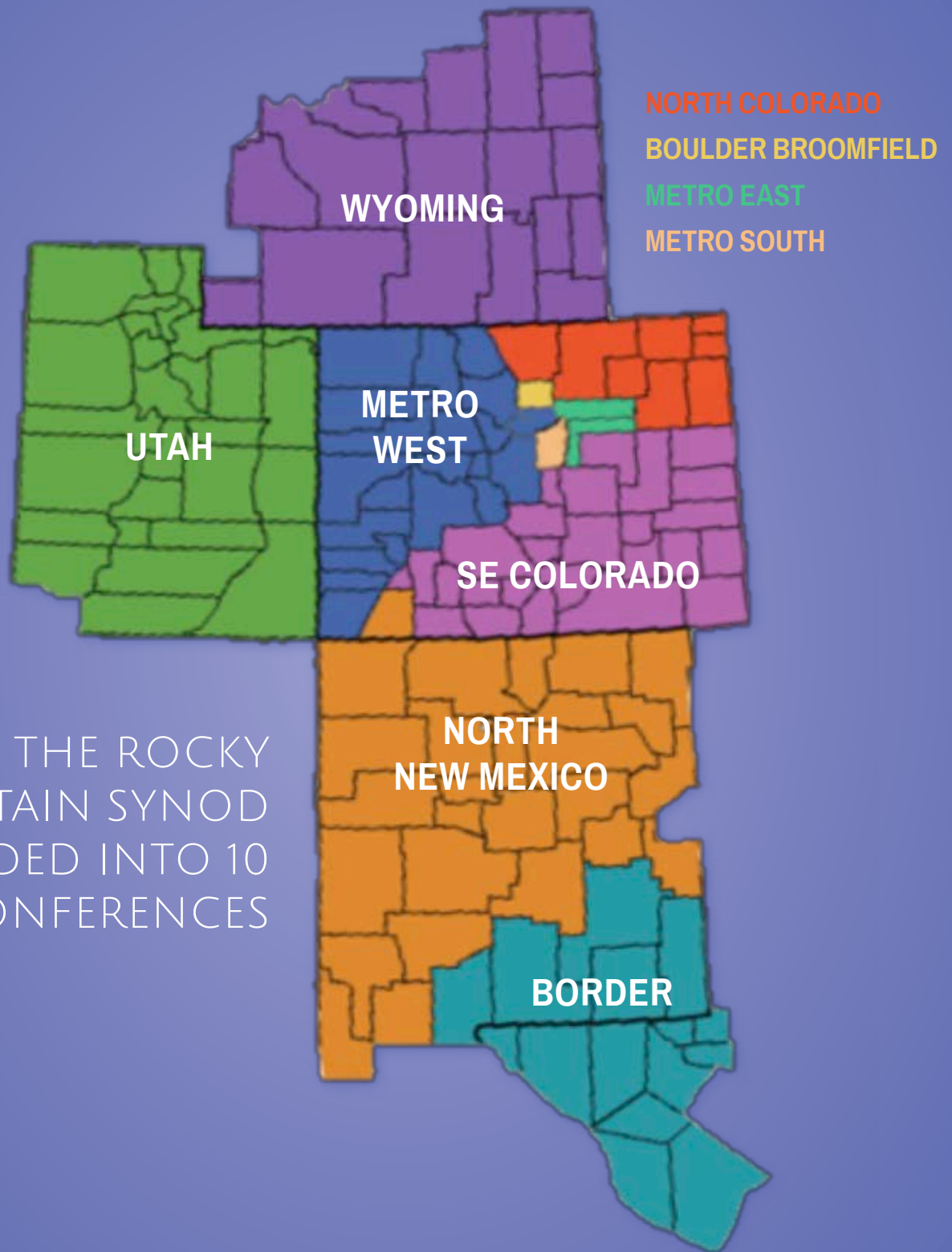
Basic Goal of	\$10,000
Advance Goal	\$20,000
Challenge Goal	\$30,000

CONGREGATION GIFTS CAMPAIGN

Each congregation will be asked to participate in this challenging campaign effort through a careful three-step process.

- 1 Receive a congregation council visit to learn the specifics of the campaign projects, timetable, and activities.
- 2 Select a member of the congregation to serve as the campaign leader and have that selected leader attend a training program.
- 3 Set a goal for the congregation and then conduct a five-week campaign effort that offers every member family of the congregation an opportunity to participate through a contribution.

The Synod will provide for the congregations all the materials needed to effectively carry out the campaign including brochures, bulletin inserts, and training materials.



THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN SYNOD IS DIVIDED INTO 10 CONFERENCES



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