

New Renewing Congregations grants support revitalization of ELCA congregations 15-54-AM*

CHICAGO (ELCA) – Congregations and synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) seeking to revitalize their ministries are receiving additional support through a new grant program made possible by gifts to the ELCA’s Renewing Congregations priority of *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA*.

The campaign priority on Renewing Congregations seeks to raise \$8 million by 2019 to support congregations and synods as they strive to identify the growing needs in their communities and enhance outreach and faith practices to better welcome their neighbors to participate in God’s work.

“As many more congregations are intentional about spiritual transformation, evangelizing outreach and re-rooting in their communities, *The Campaign for the ELCA*’s Renewing Congregations priority is propelling these renewal journeys,” said Neil Harrison, ELCA program director for congregational renewal. “The campaign is promising to support hundreds of additional congregations as they are engaged with synods in revitalization processes and strategies.”

The first cycle of grants, allocated earlier this summer, will support renewal initiatives in six of the ELCA’s 65 synods. There will be two additional grant cycles during the 2015 fiscal year culminating in October 2015 and January 2016. Grant applications for the October 2015 cycle are due Sept. 15, 2015.

“The Renewing Congregations grant for the Western North Dakota Synod allows us to gather congregational leaders who are ready to enter into an adventure of prayer, Bible study and conversation to see where God is calling them to serve their neighbors,” said the Rev. Mark Narum, bishop of the ELCA Western North Dakota Synod. “We expect that through this process people’s faith in Christ will be strengthened, worship life will be enlivened and a new sense of purpose will arise in congregations.”

Through *The Campaign for the ELCA*, Renewing Congregations grants are being provided in three categories:

- **Synod Strategies:** Renewal grants initiated by the synod to impact a group of congregations in the synod, such as all rural congregations.
- **Fast Growth Grants:** Renewal grants for congregations that are already in the renewal process but growing very rapidly and outgrowing their resources. These grants give an infusion of funds for three years to help the congregation employ new staff and acquire other necessary resources to continue its growth.
- **Area Ministry Strategies:** Grants for pilot projects affecting congregations clustered in relatively close proximity intentionally re-engaging in the community and revitalizing their ministries together.

A focus on the identification and funding of congregational renewal in ethnic-specific, multicultural and poverty contexts within each synod will also continue to be a priority for the Renewing Congregations program.

“Together, the ELCA churchwide organization, synods and other partners are renewing

congregations as vital centers for mission,” said the Rev. Ron Glusenkamp, director for *The Campaign for the ELCA*. “Through this campaign, we hope to create diverse, vibrant and growing communities of faith focused on engaging with God’s mission.”

Renewing Congregations is one of 10 priorities of *The Campaign for the ELCA*, a five-year campaign approved by the 2013 ELCA Churchwide Assembly. The campaign seeks to raise \$198 million by Jan. 31, 2019, in support of new and existing churchwide ministries above and beyond those supported by regular weekly offerings.

For more information on the granting process, contact Neil Harrison at Neil.Harrison@elca.org or 773-380-2667. Information about *The Campaign for the ELCA* is available at www.ELCA.org/campaign.

About the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:

The ELCA is one of the largest Christian denominations in the United States, with about 3.8 million members in nearly 10,000 congregations across the 50 states and in the Caribbean region. Known as the church of “God’s work. Our hands,” the ELCA emphasizes the saving grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ, unity among Christians and service in the world. The ELCA’s roots are in the writings of the German church reformer, Martin Luther.

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