*Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA*

**Fast Growth Congregations**

Opportunities to share the good news of Jesus and serve our neighbors are all around us.

*In order to reflect our ever-changing neighborhoods and*

*actively engage in God’s mission in the world,*

*strong, vibrant congregational ministries are continually in a process of renewal.*

*In these ministries, places within our own communities,*

*God is at work in the ELCA, building the church.*

Through *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA*, we have the opportunity to increase our efforts through ELCA synods to engage more congregations in strategic renewal initiatives. The goal is to create diverse, vibrant and growing communities of faith focused on increasing their support of and engagement in God’s mission, both locally and globally.  A focus on the identification and funding of congregational renewal in ethnic-specific, multicultural and poverty contexts within each synod will continue to be a priority for the *Renewing Congregations* program.

Many growing congregations are in need of additional resources to grow mission and ministry in their context. Encouragement of the congregation's journey through interdependent partnership, including financial resources to support staffing for growth initiatives, coaching through structural and systemic change, and training for the next chapter will be the focus of the *Fast Growth Congregations* grants program. In addition to up to three year cycles totaling $30,000 maximum (e.g. $15,000, $10,000, $5,000), one-time resource grants may also be available.

To maximize growth potential, this *Renewing Congregations: Fast Growth Congregations* initiative provides a grant to fund staff for enhanced evangelism, music ministry, youth and family ministry, or community outreach ministry (as examples), and/or funds to utilize special training/coaching for outreach. Growth enhancing methods can include, but are not limited to: multiple and varied worship services; intentional community evangelism including the development of small groups for entry, integration and discipleship; and innovative programs for hospitality and first time visitor involvement.

Expected outcomes are:

* Significant numerical growth in worship attendance and participation in the life of the congregation.
* Empowered leadership that is self-reliant (shared leadership/leadership development)
* Community engagement (community partners; social ministry and justice)
* Inclusivity of all in the service area (the congregation is more and more reflective of the demographics of the mission field)
* A deepening of discipleship of those involved in the ministry (discipleship/faith practices)
* Sound stewardship practices with a minimum of 10% of income given to the synod as mission support (holistic year-round stewardship)
* Contextual worship and music ministry (quality & relevant worship life)
* Effective networking (connectedness to ELCA congregations, ecumenical and community partners)

**GRANT CRITERIA**

1. The congregation is proven to be on a fast growth trajectory. Congregations receiving a grant will have a track record of growth for three or more years.
2. The congregation will fund at least one-quarter of any added staff position during the first year, and provide full funding before or at the end of three years.
3. The congregation is fiscally self-reliant for its current mission and ministry. The Fast Growth Congregations initiative funds are generally not available to fund the current pastorate or other operations.
4. Submission of annual congregational report forms.
5. Demonstration of financial need. Congregations with large endowments, savings and "other assets" will not usually be eligible. *Congregations currently receiving ELCA Partnership Support are not eligible for a campaign Fast Growth Congregation initiative grant.*
6. A clear, succinct statement of the desired outcome of the congregation's fast growth initiative along with a defined, measurable plan [in SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely) goal format] with outcome indicators stating the intended impact of this initiative in measurable terms. The plan will describe fully and specifically as possible how the grant requested will enable the congregation to continue on a growth trajectory.
7. The congregation’s budget/financial reports will be submitted, including an initiative budget based on a plan that effectively uses the grant funds.
8. The congregation agrees to evaluate and participate in interdependent (synodical, churchwide, and congregational) evaluation of the project. The congregation will monitor and adjust the initiative plans as needed. Mid-term and annual/final progress reports will be submitted.

**SUMMARY**

The Campaign for the ELCA’s Renewing Congregations initiative ministry will multiply the number of existing congregations engaged in intentional renewal to fully participate in God's mission in the world. This work will enable people in congregations to deepen their spiritual lives and faith practices, discern the work God is already doing among and around them, help them better welcome and retain people to participate in God's work and refocus for effective mission in the communities where they live and work. After the renewal process as they continue the renewal journey, congregations experience enhanced personal discipleship, growth and diversifying that reflects their communities and fuller investment in God’s mission, both locally and globally. Engaging congregational renewal in ethnic-specific, multicultural and poverty contexts is an ongoing priority of this church. The Fast Growth Congregations initiative provides funds for additional staff or other resources to maximize the growth potential of growing congregations.

*Definitions:*

Partnership Support: Financial support to congregations facilitated by the synod and churchwide organization to support the strategic renewal of congregations, ethnic specific/multi-cultural ministry, ministry among/with people living in poverty, and specialized ministries (e.g. people with disabilities, prison).

Mission Support: Mission Support is your congregation’s regular financial offering that is shared with your synod and the churchwide organization for our synodical, national, and global interdependent ministries.