Giving Opportunities in the Central/Southern Illinois Synod

Stewarding the Ministry of the Church through our Synod

The work of the synod is to strengthen the ministry we do with each other and on behalf of one another and the whole church. Called to be good stewards of our financial resources, as well as stewards of the gifts we have to offer the church locally and more widely, the Central/Southern Illinois Synod has identified several areas where additional funds would benefit the ministry of our synod.

To give to any of these funds, you may send a check to the Central/Southern Illinois Synod with the fund designated in the memo line or contribute online at CSIS-ELCA.org.

Strengthening the ministry of the church to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ now and into the future.

New Mission Starts/Word and Sacrament Outposts

Jesus' foundational command to "Go, make disciples" propels us to plant new ministries and to find fresh ways for the body of Christ to proclaim the saving gospel in our diverse cultural contexts here in the territory of the Central/Southern Illinois Synod. A fund that could generate $100,000 per year would enable us to support one self-standing mission start or to partner with two congregations in satellite mission starts every year.

Endowment for Mission Fund

The Endowment for Mission Fund was established to support mission and outreach within the territory of the Central/Southern Illinois Synod. The earnings are distributed annually through a grant process that encourages projects designed to reach the unchurched with the gospel of Jesus Christ and to bring them into a fellowship of Word and Sacrament. Growing the Endowment for Mission Fund would increase our capacity to support these projects.

Renewal Ministry Grants to Congregations

Some congregations reach a point in their life when congregational desire for renewal and revitalization is high, when their local context offers opportunities for outreach and growth, and yet the congregation's financial resources are insufficient to provide for a called pastor to lead the congregation through renewal and growth. Our synod has developed a partnership plan that includes three years of supplemental funding to help the congregation support a full-time pastor. A fund that could generate $20,000-30,000 per year would fund one of these partnerships every year.

Companion Synod Missions

Our Central/Southern Illinois Synod is blessed with Companion Synod relationships with two synods of the Lutheran Church in Madagascar. Companion Synod support is expressed in a variety of ways: in face-to-face visits from Companion Synod representatives to the Central/Southern Illinois Synod and vice versa; in mutual conversations about evangelism and life in the Holy Spirit; in our financial participation in support for ELCA Young Adults in Global Mission; and in our financial participation in the training of Malagasy pastors and catechists in the companion synods. A fund that could generate $15,000 per year could provide consistency and stability to our companion synod relationships.

Scholarships for Seminary Students

Our hope is to encourage high-quality candidates to pursue ordained ministry. The more we can do to remove the specter of graduation from seminary with a high debt load, the more we will foster a healthy context for ministry for new pastors, congregations, and the church at large. Our synod generally has 5-10 seminarians working toward ordination at any given time.

Seminary Debt Reduction Fund

Many seminarians graduate with extensive debt assumed in order to pursue rostered ministry. The C/SIS currently draws on existing designated giving to provide some assistance. Rostered ministers in the first 7 years of their ministry may apply for grants. A fund that could generate $20,000 per year could provide for this financial assistance to continue indefinitely; additional funding would provide greater educational debt reduction for our pastors and deacons.

Campus Ministry

College is a time when young people are faced with many choices – personally, socially, spiritually, and professionally. It is a time of exploration, questioning, learning, and adult spiritual formation. Campus Ministry brings the presence and resources of the Body of Christ to this challenging, yet exciting, environment. There are two ELCA campus ministries on the territory of the Central/Southern Illinois Synod. In addition, congregations of the synod strive to minister to and with students at five other major universities and at numerous smaller colleges and universities on the territory of the synod. A fund that could generate $30,000-40,000 per year would ensure our ability to maintain a ministry presence on our two main campus sites; additional funds would enable us to expand ministries at other college and university settings.

Continuing Education for Rostered Ministers

Because our contexts for ministry are ever-changing and new challenges continually emerge in congregational ministry, a great service that a synod can provide for its congregations is to plan, organize, and implement continuing education events for its rostered ministers. In a related vein, experience is teaching us the value both to pastor and to the congregation of a sabbatical leave (clergy renewal leave) for a pastor. Financial constraints are typically a major impediment to a congregation's ability to provide sabbatical leave. A fund that could generate $35,000 per year could fully provide for one major continuing education event and one clergy sabbatical leave every year.

Synod Assembly

Synod Assembly is an event at which all the congregations and pastors of the synod come together. Beyond gathering to conduct the business aspects of the Synod Assembly, we gather for worship, inspiration, mutual support of one another, reviewing and communicating our synod’s vision and goals, and listening to concerns, joys, and hopes of congregations and synod groups. Synod Assembly is a pivotal time for building a shared sense of mission and relationships among mission partners. Because congregations bear the high cost for travel, overnight accommodations, and food for their members to attend the Synod Assembly, charging congregations a registration fee that would cover all of the costs attendant to the Synod Assembly itself is prohibitive. A fund that could generate $20,000 per year would provide sleeping accommodations for retired pastors and their spouses, meeting room rental, audio/visual equipment rental, rental of electronic voting devices, a featured speaker, and various costs associated with Synod Assembly Worship.

Infrastructure Grants to Congregations

A healthy, viable congregation can find itself facing an unwieldy expense beyond its normal financial capability: for example, roof replacement, HVAC equipment replacement, plumbing fixture failure, or window replacement. A fund that could generate $10,000 per year would assist where such an unwieldy expense would imperil the ongoing ministry of a congregation.

Bishop's Discretionary Fund

Needs present themselves to the bishop that are best responded to inconspicuously, such as assistance with health coverage premiums for pastors unexpectedly on leave from call or assistance with a rostered minister's funeral expenses. A fund that could generate $5,000 - 10,000 per year would enable the synod to respond generously in such circumstances.

Synod Administration and Assistance with Synod Events

This need has arisen as funds available for general administration have declined. A vital piece of the ministry of synod administration is that the synod provides working structures within the synod for cooperatively extending the mission-guided effectiveness of local congregations in such areas as worship, lay and professional learning, service to local and regional communities and to communities world-wide, evangelism, and stewardship. We do this by convening meetings, consultations, workshops, forums, retreats, presentations, and trainings. Arranging and implementing these events call for supplemental support staff and guest speaker involvement, transportation costs (for on-site events), and technology infrastructure (for on-site and for virtual events). A fund that could generate $10,000 – 15,000 per year would provide the synod with the opportunity to fulfill this ministry of ours.

If you have questions about the funds or giving to the Central/Southern Illinois Synod, please contact Jennie Ruth, synod bookkeeper (217-753-7915 or jennie.ruth@csis-elca.org).

For more information about giving to the ELCA or assistance with congregational giving, including setting up an endowment fund, contact Tim Urness, the Regional Gift Planner for the ELCA Foundation for Illinois (tim.urness@elca.org , 331-444-3120 or 800-638-3522).

What can a Regional Gift Planner do for your congregation?

- Assist in establishing a “Mission Endowment Fund”
- Lead an Estate Planning and Planned Giving Presentation
- Provide support for your Stewardship Education
- Cultivate planned gifts
- Assist Lutherans in reaching their Charitable Goals

Tim has a BA from Southern Illinois University, and a MS from Northern Illinois University. He was until recently a Registered Representative (stockbroker), Registered Investment Adviser Representative (adviser), and Licensed Insurance Producer, with annuity and long-term care qualifications. His experience includes employment with Bank Financial, Fixed Income Capital Partners, and AXA Advisors. Tim has been a member of Bethlehem Lutheran Church in St. Charles, Illinois for over thirty years. He is an usher, active in the Men’s Bible Study, and volunteers for Hesed House in Aurora. He is married with three children.