



Southwestern Minnesota Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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Southwestern Minnesota Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) Receives Major Grant from Lilly Endowment Inc.

Contact: Kristin Bakeberg
507.637.3904
Kristin.Bakeberg@swwnelca.org

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The Southwestern Minnesota Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has been awarded a \$500,000 grant from Lilly Endowment Inc., Indianapolis, under the Endowment's National Initiative to Address Economic Challenges Facing Pastoral Leaders. This initiative supports a variety of religious organizations across the nation as they address the financial and economic struggles that can impair the ability of pastors to lead congregations effectively.

The Southwestern Minnesota Synod will use the grant to strengthen current programs and establish new programs to enhance financial literacy among congregational lay leaders and pastors. Special workshops, seminars, and ongoing research will allow congregations to deal openly with financial concerns and work together to produce new solutions.

In addition, the Synod will use the grant to establish a Ministerial Excellence Fund that will help to reduce the burdens of educational costs for pastors, provide incentives for pastors to prepare more effectively for retirement, and meet medical crises. The grant calls for the people of the Synod to raise \$250,000 in order to receive a matching \$250,000 for this Ministerial Excellence Fund (as part of the total \$500,000 grant).

“This grant will open our conversation about money and deepen our capacity to steward financial resources in the congregational life of the people of our synod,” SW MN Synod Bishop Jon Anderson stated. “It will also transform the lives of the pastors who receive grants. We are grateful to Lilly Endowment for this special support. We also want to thank Synod Minister Joyce Piper and her team of lay and clergy leaders that carried out the research and proposal development to make this award possible.” The Bishop noted that the New Jersey Synod of the ELCA, partnering with the Southwestern Minnesota Synod in this venture, received a similar grant.

The Bishop also announced that the people of the Synod will be mobilizing a special initiative entitled “Embrace God’s Mission, Equip God’s People” to not only raise the matching funds for the Lilly grant but to meet other important needs of congregations to expand mission, service, and ministries in the coming years. The grant from Lilly Endowment becomes the major lead gift for this groundbreaking Synod-wide financial initiative, the details of which will be announced when

representatives from all the congregations in the Synod gather for their annual Assembly, June 10-11, 2016, at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, MN.

Lilly Endowment Inc. is an Indianapolis-based private philanthropic foundation created in 1937 by three members of the Lilly family - J.K. Lilly Sr. and sons J.K. Jr. and Eli - through gifts of stock in their pharmaceutical business, Eli Lilly & Company. The Endowment exists to support the causes of religion, education and community development. Lilly Endowment's religion grantmaking is designed to deepen and enrich the religious lives of American Christians. It does this largely through initiatives to enhance and sustain the quality of ministry in American congregations and parishes.

175 E. Bridge St., P.O. Box 499, Redwood Falls, MN 56283
Email: swmn.elca@swmnelca.org

Phone: 507-637-3904 Fax: 507-637-2809
Website: www.swmnelca.org

Bishop Jon V. Anderson; Synod Ministers: Linda M. Pedersen, Kathryn L. Skoglund
Director for Evangelical Mission: Larry E. Strenge