

Bethesda Lutheran Church's 2023 Grace Grant Application – (Worksheet. The proposal had to be submitted online through the synod website.)

6. Proposal title? Innovations for Small Congregations: A Cooperative Model

7. Provide a brief description of your proposal

Proposal:

Bethesda Lutheran Church will use this Grace Grant to hire a Cooperative Support Administrator. This person will

1. Enable part-time pastors to better utilize their limited hours to maximize pastoral duties.
2. Provide specialized IT and Social Media support to Bethesda and other congregations in our ELCA Sno-King Cluster.
3. Nurture cooperation within our cluster, creating a database of equipment, spaces, and human resources (paid and volunteer) that can be shared among our congregations.
4. Support outreach efforts to youth and young adults.

Case

Many congregations in the NW-WA Synod find themselves unable to afford full-time pastoral ministry. By the time a decision is made to go to reduce pastoral hours, often administrative staffing has already been cut. Clergy then wind up without sufficient admin support to make up for the tasks that now fall through the cracks; either the pastor must overextend beyond their FTE in order to maintain essential functions, or critical coordinating work that is more validly performed by (less expensive) lay professionals is left undone. This can hasten a downward spiral.

NW-WA Synod could experiment with providing sufficient administrative support to part-time pastors and thereby demonstrate the value of this support in re-vitalizing small congregations. Improved efficiency will make better use of limited pastoral availability. We could become a model for the rest of the ELCA, which seems to be following in this same trajectory. By pioneering healthy support we can free up rostered leaders and overworked volunteers to do their best work together.

This Cooperative Support Administrator will provide direct support to the pastor of Bethesda Lutheran Church. They will also reach out to neighboring small ELCA congregations to explore various possibilities for cooperation, including:

- Tech training for staff and volunteers
- Event piggy-backing to maximize impact
- Website maintenance and social media outreach
- Scheduling and coordination of trainings throughout the Sno-King Cluster.

thriving when new visitors to Bethesda begin telling us consistently that our web and social media presence influenced their decision to check us out in person.

15. List your active mission partners

Whole Foods Grocery (provides food for our Gleaning program); Concern for Neighbors Food bank; Latino Students Club of Mountlake Terrace High School; Projects for a Civil Society (coordinating the Alternatives to Violence Project); Resonance Duo (bell ringers who use our space for rehearsal); Westway Korean Church (uses our worship space weekly); Girl Scout Service Unit #254 and three separate Girl Scout troops; two twelve step groups (one Spanish language) use our spaces; Northwest Dance Network (uses our new dance floor); Foodie Book Group (uses our space monthly); the Mountlake Terrace Police Department (pastor participates in their Cops & Clergy program); Lynnwood Community Band (sectional rehearsals and summer concert at Bethesda); churches of the Sno-King Cluster (we've provided our van to Edmonds Lutheran and are scheduling it for Gloria Dei this summer; our pastor is committed to attending Cluster meetings); Wally Webster and his ACCESS Program AND MORE.

16. How would this grant allow you to deepen your relationship with your current partners and/or create new partnerships?

It will free up our pastor to more fully participate in those partnerships because she'll have her CSA recruiting volunteers to clean toilets at the church, and Pastor won't have to do that!

The main impact will be in strengthening the ties between the congregations of the Sno-King Cluster.

The partnership with Projects for a Civil Society will be strengthened because the CSA will be more efficient at advertising our AVP workshops, preventing the need to cancel any for lack of registration.

Schedules will be better coordinated, information easier to locate, and Bethesda will miss fewer opportunities for not having known about them. Our CSA will catch and follow-up on events that we otherwise would have missed. Our CSA will help us to strengthen the relationships with Westway Korean Church by intentionally building connections and relaying information in a timely fashion.

17. Planned timeline for your proposal

Bethesda intends to launch the search for the right CSA immediately upon being awarded this Grace Grant. We expect to be interviewing by mid-July. One possible candidate already has expressed interest. The Cluster database should be ready to start populating by the end of August. We want to get this CSA on board asap.