



EMBRACE
God's Mission

EQUIP
God's People

*The Lilly Program, as a part of our **Embrace God's Mission + Equip God's People Funding Initiative**, seeks to equip and support our pastors to lead flourishing and thriving congregations.*

THE LILLY PROJECT NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2017

At the end of 2015, our Southwestern Minnesota Synod received a grant of \$500,000 from Lilly Endowment Inc.

Read what a difference it is making in our synod!

“THANK YOU FOR OFFERING THIS. IT WAS WELL WORTH OUR TIME!”

The response came from a participant in our Ministry and Money fall event in October 2016. Phil and Janet Jamieson, authors of the book **Ministry and Money**, presented to a group of 39 pastors, pastors' spouses, and congregation leaders. When asked what they would do differently as a result of this event, one participant responded, “use this information to focus on stewardship,” while another said she would “change to narrative budgeting.” You are able to watch the presentations by the Jamiesons as the six sessions are archived and available to you.

A silence can fall over us when the issue of finances arises. Maybe we don't feel competent in the area of finances or maybe we were taught not to talk about such things. Yet becoming more knowledgeable about the finances in our personal life and in our congregation will help us break through the silence to have conversations that bring better health to our personal life and to our ministry.

A second Ministry and Money event will be held this October!

SAVE THE DATE!

2017 Ministry & Money event:
Financial Literacy and Prophetic Witness Training
October 14, 2017

Peace Lutheran Church, New London

For recorded Ministry and Money event videos, go to www.swmnelca.org/news, see the Synod News Categories column on the right-hand side, click Lilly Project.



FINANCIAL LITERACY
live it > teach it



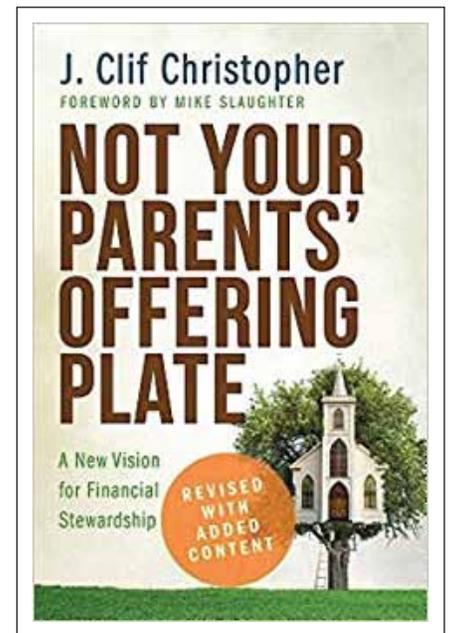
“THIS BOOK CHANGED HOW I THINK ABOUT AND RESPOND TO MEMBERS’ GIVING.”

That's the response of a pastor who read **Not Your Parents' Offering Plate** as part of our synod's Facebook Book of the Month Club. The book club is dedicated to reading books around financial stewardship and other matters in this three-year span of the Lilly project. Four books have been lifted up and read together.

Upcoming books will be announced in time for you to purchase the book. The cost of the books we read can be reimbursed from our Lilly funds by sending in the receipt to Carla Klawitter at the synod office. Our Facebook group moderator is Pastor Erik Karlson. He will pace our reading and guide our discussion.

 **JOIN THE GROUP!**

Search for SW MN Synod Book of the Month on Facebook and join!



by J. Clif Christopher

“WHO IS YOUR TARGET MARKET?”

Identifying a congregation's target market was one of the things Cathy Harms, instructor at Gustavus Adolphus College, encouraged congregational leaders to do as they learned about marketing strategy. This was done at the third Energizing and Mobilizing your Congregation learning event on April 22. The three-event series was offered by livestream and in person. Forty-one congregations were registered, and 120 people signed up to participate in the series.

Earlier Energizing events in January and March gathered participants around topics of narrative budgeting, storytelling, visioning, and long-range planning. Congregational leaders were equipped to try some new practices that will energize their congregation in identifying and telling their story. “What hit me the most,” reflected one participant who learned about visioning in January, “was that we should be thinking about what our church will look like in 5 years.” Watch for more Energizing events that are being planned for 2018.

- Recorded event videos are available for a small fee. Please email Deb Hess at deb.hess@swmnelca.org.
- If your congregation attended all three events with three people, a rebate is available for the \$100 registration fee. Please email Deb Hess at deb.hess@swmnelca.org.



GIFTS TO THE MINISTERIAL EXCELLENCE FUND (MEF) AS OF 5/31/2017

Gifts/Pledges Total \$197,515



Of the \$500,000 Lilly grant, \$250,000 must be matched by our synod. This \$500,000 must be invested in leaders over a three-year period to provide much-needed seminary debt relief, pension equity, and medical emergency aid.

At the end of 3 years we will build a sustainable Ministerial Excellence Fund, implement programs/events designed to improve financial literacy among clergy and lay people in congregations, and to help cover expenses and staffing.

\$52,485 is needed to reach our \$250,000 match.

\$166,017 has already been invested in leaders for the MEF.

FOUR GRANTS AVAILABLE FROM OUR MEF

Educational Debt Reduction Grant – To assist pastors serving in our synod with the educational debt they are servicing. The next application process will open in December.

Medical Crisis Grant – To assist pastors serving in our synod who are experiencing the high costs of an unexpected medical crisis in their family. The application process for the 2017 medical crisis grants will open on June 19, 2017. Please watch your synod e-news.

Pension Equity Grant – To assist pastors serving in our synod whose compensation is below guidelines. The grant will seek to bring up the pension contribution for the year to the level of a guidelines contribution. The application process for the 2017 pension equity grants will open July 1, 2017.

Pension Challenge Grant – To incentivize pastors serving in our synod to either start contributing to or to increase their personal contribution to their retirement account. The application process for the 2017 pension challenge grant will open July 1, 2017.

FREE FINANCIAL COUNSELING IS AVAILABLE

Lutheran Social Service Financial Counseling

For anyone to access.

Call 1-888-577-2227 or visit www.lssmn.org/Debt-Counseling.

Portico Financial

For pastors who are members of Portico.

Call 800-922-4896 or visit www.myportico.porticobenefits.org.

**“HEALTHY, RESILIENT LEADERS SHAPE
HEALTHY, RESILIENT FAITH COMMUNITIES.” - PORTICO**

THE MINISTERIAL EXCELLENCE FUND (MEF)

"Seminary debt affects my well being and ministry," said one pastor in our synod as she applied for a debt reduction grant. Believing this is true, the Lilly Endowment Inc. has helped us establish a Ministerial Excellence Fund (MEF). Both with the generosity of individuals and congregations in our synod and with the matching funds provided by Lilly Endowment Inc., the MEF is going to change lives. Here is what other pastors said about the impact of lowering their educational debt:

"I've discovered that the whole of my life is caught up in being a pastor and that the health of my financial life is as critical as the health of my prayer life."

"This will make me a better model of financial stewardship and decrease some of the anxiety in my household about student debt."

"Once we have paid off my seminary debt, I will serve the Lord and, by extension, my congregation, with greater joy and freedom."

"The amount of my student loans weighs heavily on my heart."

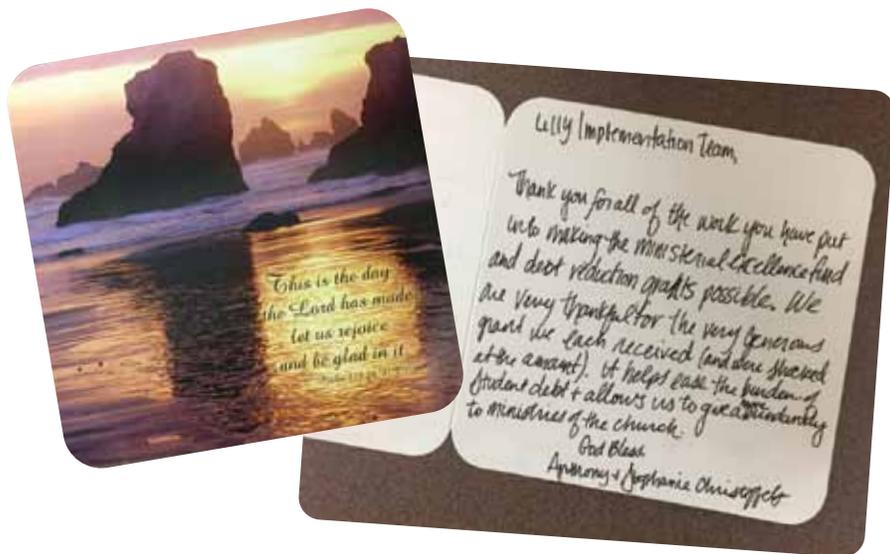
"I think it will make me a healthier leader."

"I often feel guilty because I know I should give back to the church, but I can't give much. I would love to be able to give more."

"Just knowing that the church is a place where I can be honest about finances without hiding behind any sense of embarrassment is encouraging."

"I believe it will allow me to be a better steward of my financial resources."

We celebrate this investment made in our pastors and the way it will enhance the health of our congregations and synod. The MEF has the potential to help make our synod more attractive to pastors and to encourage pastors to remain in rural calls longer. We will continue to grow the MEF through your donations so that the MEF will become a strong ongoing part of our synod's life for years to come.



Lilly Implementation Team,

Thank you for all of the work you have put into making the Ministerial Excellence Fund and Debt Reduction Grants possible. We are very thankful for the very generous grant we each received (and were shocked at the amount). It helps ease the burden of student debt and allows us to give more abundantly to ministries of the church.

God Bless,

Pr. Anthony & Pr. Stephanie Christoffels



Southwestern Minnesota Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.