

Report of GMS *Equipping the Saints* Mission Appeal – May 2024

As a synod, we began the *Equipping the Saints* mission appeal early in 2020 and had to pause in our efforts as so much of life came to a standstill. As we emerged from the pandemic, we have been learning to be church in new ways. Now in 2024, the campaign initiatives of innovation and collaboration and leadership are taking on greater meaning and importance as we learn to listen and engage with our communities, seek new ways of doing ministry, support efforts in authentic diversity, and provide funds to support rostered leaders.

While we fell short of the \$2.3 million goal, we have raised \$1,274,500, with over \$1 million already received from Synod Council, ETS Steering Team, current and former staff, advance donors, retired rostered ministers, Siebert Lutheran Foundation, congregations, and other synod partners. The strong generosity in giving has had a tremendous impact in many different ways and places within our synod, and beyond our synod to our global partners and other partners in ministry. This table is a summary of giving and numbers of donors.

Appeal	Gifts	Pledges	Pledge Balance	Total Raised	Number of Donors
Closing Congregations	292,194.22			292,194.22	4
Congregations	270,336.11	193,249.48	77,640.56	347,976.67	461
Synod Council	32,076.82	29,360	357.68	32,434.50	14
Steering Comm	43,587.32	38,600	2020	45,607.32	9
Individual Giving: Staff, Retired & Active Rostered Ministers, Advance Gifts	303,395.71	235055	33,796.99	337,192.70	92
Grants-Siebert Lutheran Foundation	75,000	175,000	100,000	175,000	1
ELCA Grant	20,000			20,000	1
Ken Wheeler Scholarship	24,086.02			24086.02	76
	\$1,060,676.20		\$213,815.23	\$1,274,491.43	658

The model for giving through *Equipping the Saints* has been significant in enhancing ongoing congregational giving. Hear the words of Pastor John Norquist at Faith in Cedarburg on the impact of how participation in *Equipping the Saints* has continued to build generosity:

Faith is about to embark on our second year of conducting a special 6-week mission appeal modeled on the *Equipping the Saints* appeal. We participated in *Equipping the Saints* as a "first round" congregation and had a great response, and it got my imagination going about new ways for my congregation to communicate its mission and reach out to new folks beyond our traditional fall pledge campaign. We called last year's campaign "Cultivating Community" and this year's campaign is called "Faith Is Active".

We have been working on building relationships with neighbors and I wanted to use the campaign to highlight these relationships, so each Sunday of the campaign we featured video

stories from neighbors and friends of the congregation sharing how they have experienced community here. We also printed special envelopes for the congregation to use and invited a special guest preacher (Pr Matt Short) for our commitment Sunday. We ended up raising around \$30,000, which included 11 families who did not give in 2022 and even some families who are not members but appreciated what the congregation is doing. Also, our pledging for 2024 saw a 16% increase. The majority of gifts came from people who are already supporting the congregation, but I think they appreciated hearing the stories of impact and it is starting to reach folks who are not as engaged. We invited our more generous members to be "pacesetters" early in the campaign to encourage others to give.

Equipping the Saints initiative of "Innovation and Collaboration" focused on providing space and resources to discover and teach innovative and collaborative practices to explore new ways of doing church and to grow as places of healing and renewal.

One of the major impacts of the campaign is the new initiative of providing a mission and innovation coach to any interested congregation. A coach provides skills for listening to congregation neighbors, thought-provoking questions for reflection and exploration of new ways of doing ministry, and encouragement for experimentation, assessment, and continued growth in mission and ministry.

Hear the words of Pastor Karl-John Stone at House of Prayer in Franklin on the impact of having a congregation coach:

At House of Prayer, our team of six was enthusiastic and curious about learning the Faithful Innovation process, but we didn't know how to get started. We needed a wise and helpful guide to help us learn what Faithful Innovation was all about, begin our experiments, reflect on the results, and make adaptations for the future. The synod provided Pastor Andy Fetters as our coach, and he was exactly who we needed. Faithful Innovation has really helped us to grow spiritually as a congregation, and to begin the slow but essential process of becoming more connected with people outside the walls of our church. The funding of a coach from the "Equipping the Saints" mission appeal is making a lasting impact on the vitality of our congregation!

Funds allocated to the initiative for "Innovation and Collaboration" total \$290,000. Innovation and Collaboration grants are bringing new life to individual congregations and fostering new partnerships. Generous giving to *Equipping the Saints* has energized synod ministries and brought healing and renewal to individuals and congregations.

The "Leadership" initiative of the campaign, with support from Siebert Lutheran Foundation, has funded the Authentic Diversity Audit and has funded the position of the Rev. Afi Dobbins-Mays, Assistant to the Bishop for Authentic Diversity and Leadership for three years.

In addition, leadership funds have

- Supported development of Lutheran Campus Ministry's long-term funding strategy;
- Distributed \$24,136 to the Ken Wheeler Scholarship Fund; and
- Provided 101 grants to rostered ministers, with \$76,000 given to BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ candidates and rostered ministers, and \$81,200 to rostered ministers for continuing education, supplemental retirement contributions, or student loan payments.

A tithe of all giving to *Equipping the Saints* has been shared with mission and global partners, with 10% of all giving divided equally among four partners: ELCA Holy Innovations, Lutheran Social Services Refugee Resettlement, Diocese of Meru, Tanzania, and the Lutheran Synod of El Salvador. Funds have been disbursed on all gifts received at the end of 2021, 2022, and 2023, with a total tithe to our partners of \$97,911.67.

We give thanks to the Siebert Lutheran Foundation for its support of the Authentic Diversity work of the Synod, and to the ELCA for its grant to support the work of Innovation.

We give thanks for the generous support of many individual donors.

- Rostered and Lay members of congregations
- Advance Donors
- Retired Rostered Ministers
- Synod Council
- Campaign Steering Team
- Current and Former Staff
- Lutheran Campus Ministry Board
- Outreach for Hope Board

Four congregations of the synod included significant gifts to ETS in their legacy plan. While the doors of each congregation were closing, the commitment to our collective ministry was continuing.

- Abiding Savior, Milwaukee
- Messiah, Racine
- Our Savior's, Milwaukee
- Redemption, Milwaukee

We give thanks to the following congregations who conducted an ETS-focused campaign within the congregation or provided a special ETS gift.

Adoration, Greenfield	Memorial, Milwaukee
Advent, Cedarburg	Messiah, Twin Lakes
Ascension, Waukesha	Mount Olive, Mukwonago
Christ the King, Delafield	Our Savior, Hartland
Cross, Milwaukee	St John's, Brookfield
Faith, Cedarburg	St John, Jackson
First United, Sheboygan	St John, Stone Bank (Oconomowoc)
Gethsemane, Brookfield	St Luke, Greendale
Gloria Dei, Menomonee Falls	St Luke's, Waukesha
Grace, Grafton	St Mary's, Kenosha
Grace, Thiensville	St Matthew, Wauwatosa
Hephatha, Milwaukee	St Olaf, Rubicon
Holy Cross, Menomonee Falls	St Stephen the Martyr, Greendale
House of Prayer, Franklin	Trinity, South Milwaukee
Living Hope, Saukville	Trinity, West Bend
Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, Racine	Unity, Milwaukee
Lutheran Church of the Resurrection, Racine	

The *Equipping the Saints* mission appeal was grounded in our faith and trust in a God who is calling us into a daring spirit of creativity for the sake of the Gospel. We began with a bold plan to renew our life together in mission, working together to equip each leader and all members of our congregations into new and deepening connection to each and a renewed vision of our call to join in God's mission for our world. We have done that. With the bold and generous support of many individuals and congregations in our synod. Together we have been able to experiment with innovative ways to be and do church; to deepen and expand the work of the Gospel through strong partnerships; to reflect on our shortcomings and step forward into authenticity in our diversity; and to support our rostered ministers.

We give thanks for the many ways the gifts received through *Equipping the Saints* will continue to have an impact on our ministries and life together as church. If you would like to learn more about the impact of *Equipping the Saints* or would like to contribute, visit the ETS website at [Equipping the Saints GMS Mission Appeal – Coming together to find new ways to follow Jesus, form communities, and love all.](#)