

# WE ARE CHURCH TOGETHER

2024



## APRIL 2024 Mission Support Memo

### STORYTELLING ENGAGEMENT

#### Seasons of Holy Discernment

A story of partnership with the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod and Virginia Synod

As you read this story, what connects with you?

How is God calling you?

Do you wonder if God is calling you into ministry? Are others sure ministry is your call, still, you are not personally sure? Candidacy committees have walked alongside leaders for generations, exploring these questions, yet many wonder if more is needed to facilitate deep holy discernment.

The [Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod](#) Candidacy Committee decided to explore this idea. They were concerned about seeing an increasing number of postponements and denials and determined they needed to create a unique discernment process. At the same time, the [Virginia Synod](#) wondered about better supporting candidates. The two synods realized they need not work in silos but would rather lean into partnering in this “discernment cohort” model.

The discernment cohort invites anyone in the Metro D.C. and Virginia synods who is feeling a call to ministry or is looking for a space to engage in holy listening, discernment and pondering. The cohort meets online once a month for six months and explores Scripture and discernment questions. It reads books and requires participants to bring a discernment partner; some bring their pastor, a friend, a parent, a sibling or another member of the church. These partners are integral to the process as they meet outside the monthly meeting, join in prayer and act much like a coach.

Some have been skeptical of requiring an added six months to an already extensive seminary and candidacy process. Don't we need more ministry leaders as soon as we can get them? It turns out that the Metro D.C. and Virginia synods are now requiring all candidates to go through the discernment cohort. They have found that deep intentional discernment makes for a more faithful, confident candidate who, though they may question and stress through the process, has been able to walk with others and have holy discussions that guide their decisions. The cohorts bring people together to realize they are not alone but are creating each other's stories of discernment in this time of exploration.

Both synods are delighted that since beginning these cohorts, there have been no postponements or denials. Plenty of participants have determined that rostered ministry is not for them but have gained a deeper understanding of God's call for them. Synod facilitators have been grateful for the time shared in partnership, the reminder to deeply and maybe slowly discern, but also found the process has given them a hopefulness for the ministry of the gospel and the life of the church.

What a collaborative and hopeful way to see Mission Support, which funds synod staff and provides resources for this cohort, successfully leading people to explore God's call in their life. There are also other discernment opportunities, many offered by our seminaries and other synods. The Metro D.C. and Virginia synods' discernment cohorts and various discernment models are actively informing our wider church's candidacy process for the future. Now, that's being church together!

## ENGAGE WITH US

### Webinar: Creating a Stewardship Team (and Then Empowering Them!)

Wondering how you might go about creating a team that focuses on the stewardship efforts of your community? Looking for a practical guide to launching a team and focusing its work?

In cooperation with the Lake Institute on Faith & Giving, the ELCA presents a practical guide to starting a stewardship team with purpose, hosted by the Rev. Tim Brown. This is a free webinar, and there is no need to register in advance. Show up with your questions and curiosities!

#### Mark your calendar:

“Creating and Empowering a Stewardship Team”

Monday, May 13

6:30-7:30 p.m. Central time

[Zoom Link](#)

Meeting ID: 899 3649 0900 - Passcode: 993518

## GRATEFUL

This month we celebrate all who have responded to God's call to be leaders in our wider church. The ministry of our churchwide organization, synods and of course congregations happens only through the care, dedication and hard work of each of us as leaders, disciples of Christ carrying the message of hope and love. We encourage any who are discerning what God has in store to reach out and learn how their gifts can build up “the ministry of the Gospel and the life of the church,”<sup>1</sup> today and to come.

1. Grateful for the Rev. Sarah Garrett Krey's words.

In deep gratitude,

Victoria Flood, Senior Director for Congregation and Synod Support

Nick Kiger, Director for Mission Support

Karen Kretschmann, Coordinator for Storytelling Engagement

