



Southeastern Iowa Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

MESSAGE FROM BISHOP CURRENT

On behalf of the Southeastern Iowa Synod, thank you!

Thank you to all congregations, pastors, deacons, and partners for the ways in which we together continue to share the Good News of God through Jesus Christ in our congregations, ministries, communities, and throughout the world. The generosity shared in your local contexts of your time, volunteering and leadership, and financial gifts change people's lives. Thank you for responding to God's generous grace with your gifts of generosity.

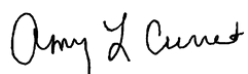
At our Annual Synod Assembly, we pass a budget/spending plan that is based on our anticipated mission support from our congregations. This 2024 Annual Report tells the story of how we are stewarding the financial gifts shared and how together we are making a difference in Southeastern Iowa, throughout the ELCA, and throughout the world.

This year our synod's theme is "Listen God is Calling; God is about to do a new thing. Do you not perceive it?" A combination of a joyful hymn, written by our partners in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, calling us to remember God's mandate to share the good news of God's promise of forgiveness, comfort, and joy. I hope you will see in this report, how we together, are listening for God's call, sharing the Good News, and how we are paying attention as God is about to do a new thing. Do you not perceive it? (Isaiah 43:19). In this report you will see a glimpse of how God, through the congregations, ministries, and people in Southeastern Iowa Synod is indeed doing new things as together we are responding to the needs throughout our synod, encouraging new leaders, welcoming new neighbors, engaging partnership, reaching out through service, and celebrating God's love.

I hope that as you reflect on these stories and as your congregation/ministry setting prepares your budget for 2025 that you will consider sustaining or even increasing your mission support for our synod. The ministry that you share in your local congregations is amazing and the portion shared as a synod multiplies our generosity.

Thank you for our faithful ministry together as witnesses to God's work in and through the world. What a gift and honor to serve with you as we respond to God's abundant love.

Gratefully,



Bishop Current

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respond to God's abundant love**

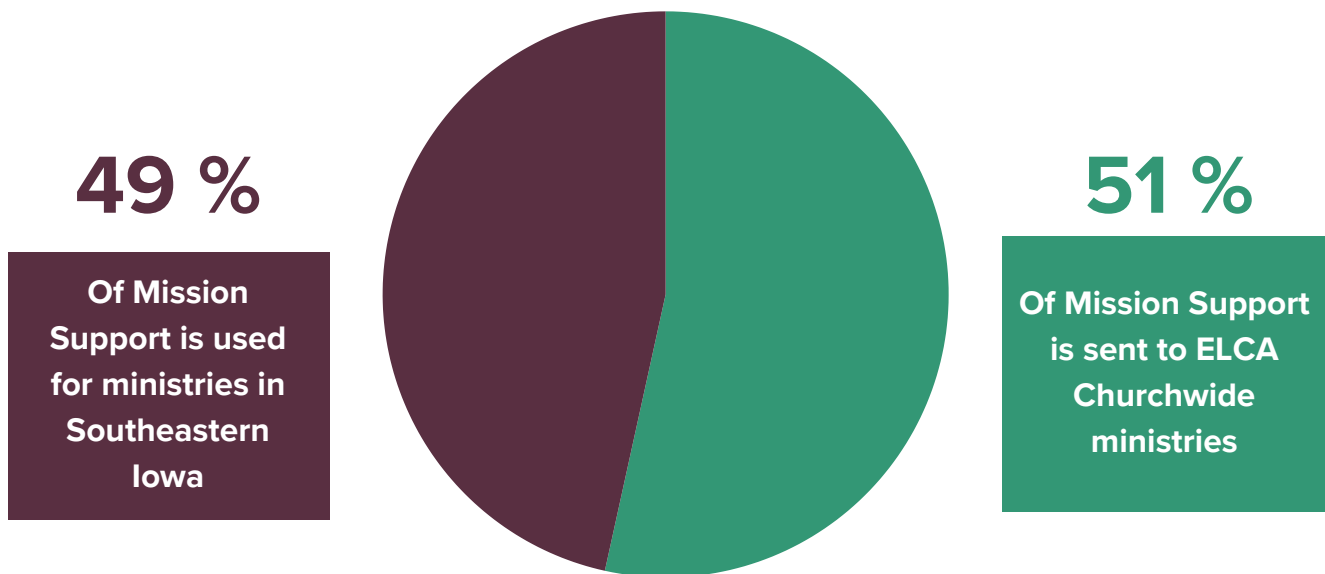


WHAT IS MISSION SUPPORT?

When you give money to your local congregation through pledges or your weekly offerings, a portion of that money is shared with the Southeastern Iowa Synod. This is called Mission Support.

That money is then used to help other congregations, leaders in the church, local and regional partners, ELCA churchwide ministries and global ministries, and more.

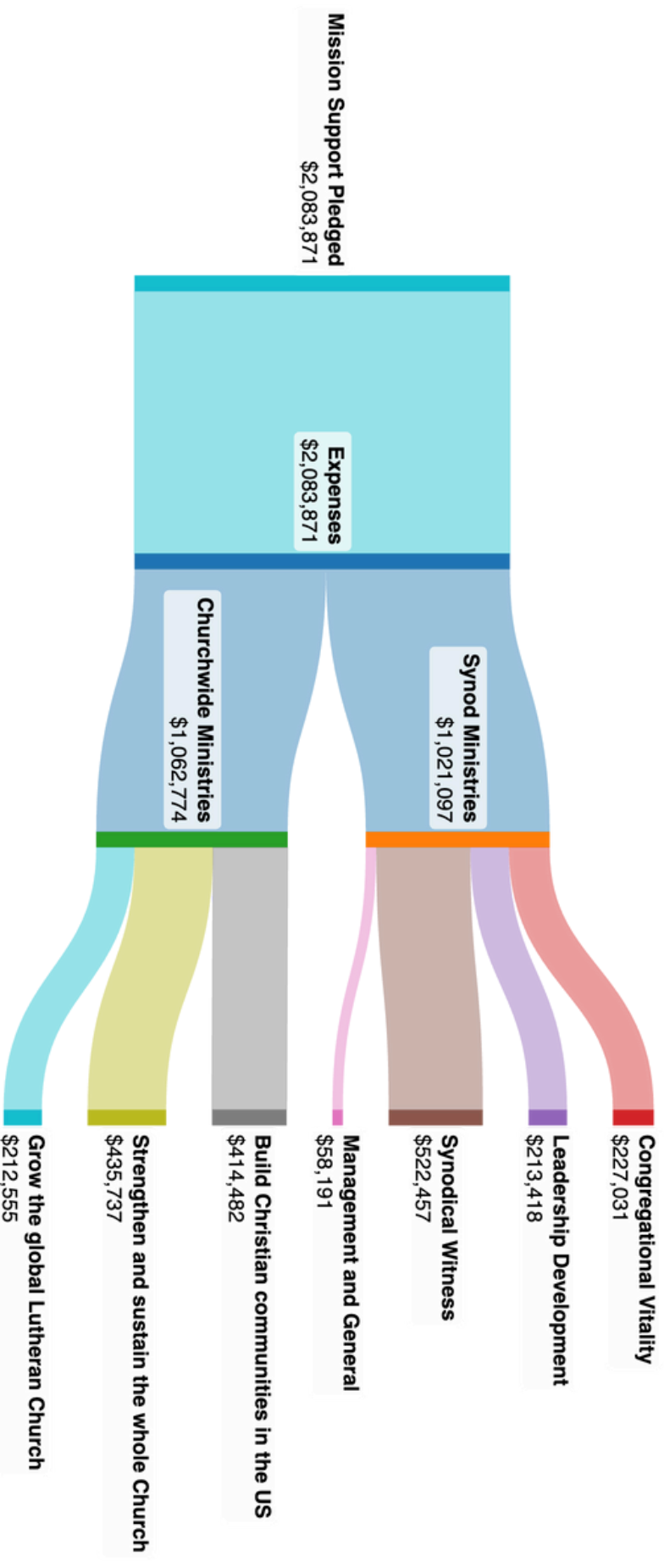
In the Southeastern Iowa Synod 51% of all mission support received goes directly to the ELCA Churchwide Organization and 49% stays for ministry in Southeastern Iowa.



2024 MISSION SUPPORT AND SPENDING

Pledged Congregation Mission Support	\$2,083,871
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ELCA Churchwide Ministries (51 %)	\$1,062,774
Synod Investment in Congregational Vitality	\$227,031
Synod Support of Leadership Development	\$213,418
Synodical Witness (partners, ministries, outreach)	\$522,457
Synod Administration and General	\$58,191

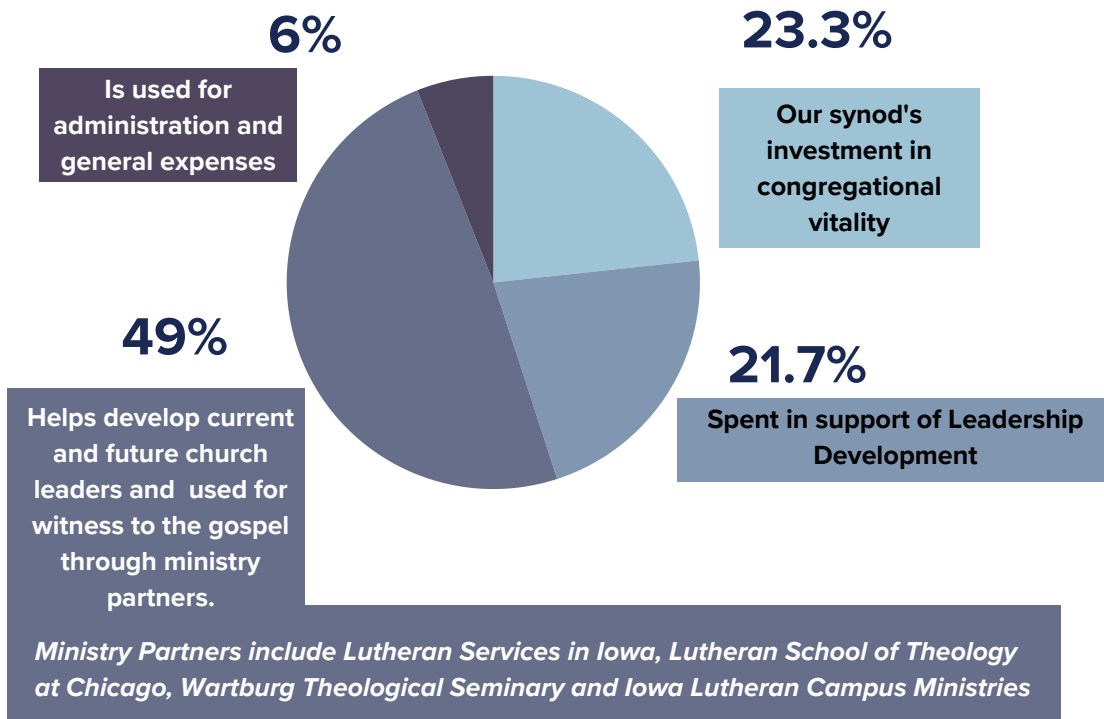
HOW YOUR MISSION SUPPORT IS SPENT



YOUR MISSION SUPPORT HELPS FUNDS MINISTRIES BEYOND YOUR CONGREGATION

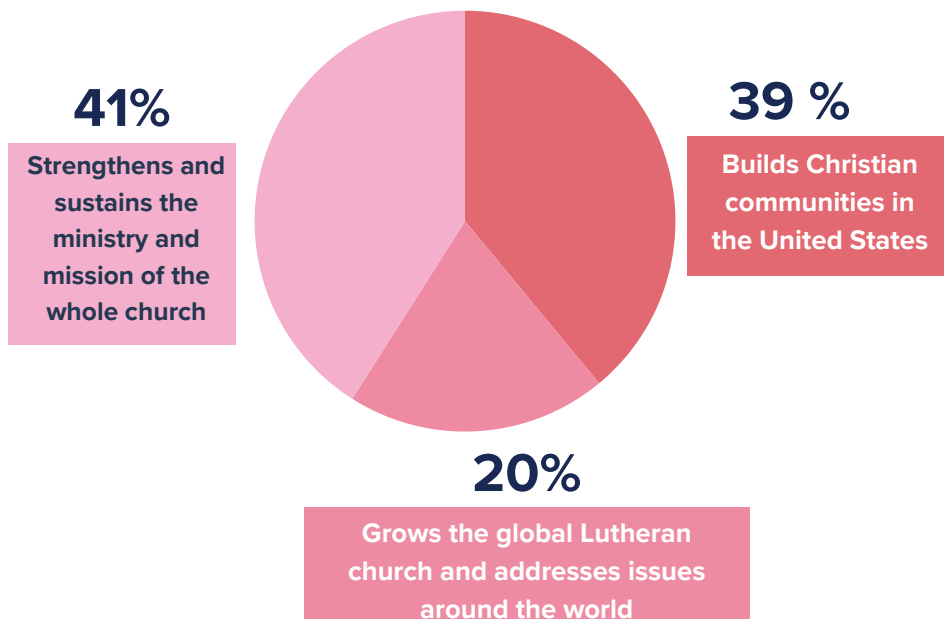
SYNOD MINSTRIES

49% of everything shared with the Southeastern Iowa Synod helps support our synod investment in congregation vitality, support and development of church leaders, and our witness to the gospel through local ministries and partners.



MINISTRIES BEYOND THE SYNOD

51% of everything shared with the Southeastern Iowa Synod goes to ELCA Churchwide Ministries. This Mission Support helps grow the ELCA in the United States, in the world and helps develop current and future church leaders.





LISTEN GOD IS CALLING: NEW MINISTRY

Veterinarian Dr. Jenna Harris began as a Synod Authorized Minister (SAM) serving the people of St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Albia after three years without a called pastor. A SAM is a lay person whom the synod bishop authorizes to provide pastoral support and communion in a particular context. After such a long time without a consistent pastoral presence, the people of St. Paul were very interested in the new SAM program in the Southeastern Iowa Synod. "I had stood in as a lay person once or twice while we were without a pastor and when our congregation saw that the synod was trying something new, I felt called to help any way that I could," said Dr. Harris. In the fall of 2023, Dr. Harris participated in training through the synod office, learning more about preaching and the sacraments, and began serving St. Paul as a SAM.



Synod Authorized Ministry a new opportunity for St. Paul in Albia



This year has been a learning process for the congregation and for Dr. Harris. She says, "I have learned that you go with the flow. Things always change on Sunday morning, and my kids always 'insist' that they help lead worship and I have learned from them and St. Paul that it's ok to pivot."

Dr. Harris is a veterinarian whose practice specializes in in-home euthanasia for pets and is a state meat inspector.

She says, "With both jobs, I drive a lot and I have begun listening to Christian podcasts for [sermon] ideas and I feel I spend more of the time in prayer and devotion. I have always been an empathetic person which is what drove me to create my business but having become a SAM and doing home visits feels very much what I'm called to do."

In the past year, "I have tried to help our congregation step out of their comfort zones when I can. Thankfully, they love my kids and they have appreciated a younger family becoming more active in the church again," said Harris.

There are currently 12 lay people serving as SAMs in congregations without a called pastor in the Southeastern Iowa Synod. For more information contact the synod.



LISTEN GOD IS CALLING: TO SERVICE

At the end of 2023, twelve congregations and area ministries received hunger grants. These funds were generated during the Bishops' 2023 RAGBRAI ride. St. Peter Lutheran Church in Grimes was one of these recipients. The people of St. Peter applied for a grant to extend an ongoing partnership providing breakfast casseroles to be distributed through the Salvation Army's Mobile Canteen. The Breakfast Canteen serves breakfast every Tuesday and Friday morning to nearly 800 people who struggle with housing and food insecurity in the Des Moines area. Due to the cost of supplies volunteers at St. Peter were only able to provide casseroles once a year, so they applied for a grant hoping they could expand their efforts.

With the hunger grant funding, from July 21st through July 28th, St. Peter Lutheran Church in Grimes hosted an event during which volunteers made breakfast casseroles for the Breakfast Canteen. More than 73 volunteers ranging in age from 5 to 70+ participated. They exceeded our goal of 90 casseroles and completed 101 breakfast casseroles, which provided 1,010 breakfasts.



St. Peter in Grimes expands feeding program

Once the casseroles were made volunteers delivered them to the Salvation Army headquarters in Clive. St. Peter also supports this project each year during Martin Luther King Day as a Day of Service in January, typically making between 80-90 casseroles. The RAGBRAI Hunger grant allowed St. Peter to expand the project and double their service to neighbors in 2024!

ELCA World Hunger celebrates 50 years of ministry this year. The 2024 Southeastern Iowa Synod Assembly renewed our synod's commitment to fight hunger by passing a resolution to engage members and congregations. Support World Hunger at seiasynod.org/hunger



LISTEN GOD IS CALLING: PARTNERSHIP

St. John's Lutheran Church in St. Donatus, Salem Lutheran Church in Andrew, and St. Paul Lutheran Church in LaMotte are three congregations in three rural communities in Jackson County. Several years ago the people of these congregations began discussing what shared, or "area ministry" might look like for their communities.



Three congregations working together as Trinity Parish

The road to this kind of partnership is long and has unexpected twists and turns; but following the Spirit, they have arrived at a new and life-giving ministry together. These congregations don't know what the future holds but continue to follow God's call in this partnership between the ELCA and the Episcopal Church, living into their shared mission of proclaiming the Gospel in Jackson County through Trinity Parish.

After a lot of meetings, prayer, and discernment, the three congregations voted to move forward in an agreement and became Trinity Parish at the end of December 2023. They are still three distinct congregations but are working together in partnership in ministry. Even their pastoral team is a partnership of Pastor Will Layton, an ELCA pastor, and Deacon Laurie Finn an Episcopal Deacon.



Pastor Will Layton and Deacon Laurie Finn installed in this new partnership

Eleven congregations were engaged in new partnerships in 2024, and several more communities are in discussion about partnerships accompanied by the Southeastern Iowa Synod Office of the Bishop. For more information contact the synod office.



LISTEN GOD IS CALLING: JOY AND CELEBRATION

This July nearly 40 congregations from Southeastern Iowa sent students and adults to the ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans. This event draws thousands of ELCA youth and adults together for learning, service, worship, and fun. The weeklong events included special programming for young adults, multicultural youth, and one event, called the tAble. The tAble blesses and encourages young people who live with a wide range of physical, cognitive and emotional disabilities so that they might grow as wise, faithful and courageous witnesses. Em and Elizabeth Matthies from Augustana Lutheran Church, ELCA in Boone were able to attend tAble this year.



Youth from across the country and more than 40 congregations in Southeastern Iowa gathered in New Orleans



Em from Augustana in Boone was able to attend tAble as part of the Youth Gathering.

"tAble has provided an accepting and safe space for Em to WHOLY be herself; just as she was fearfully and wonderfully made!" said Elizabeth Matthies, "We've been able to connect with like-minded people across the country in this space while also growing in faith and love, as Jesus modeled for us! This is an experience Em will recall for many years to come!"

Our synod's children youth and family ministry network meets monthly for mutual support, idea sharing, learning, and best practices. For more information, and to be added to the mailing list, contact youth@seiasynod.org.



LISTEN GOD IS CALLING: LOVE OUR NEIGHBORS

Capitol Hill Lutheran Church (CHLC) has a long history of walking alongside immigrants, refugees, and newcomers. In 2023 they connected with a family seeking asylum from Venezuela. After learning what resources the ELCA had, they felt that AMMPARO, the ELCA's strategy to Accompanying Migrants with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities (AMMPARO.) would help give direction, ideas, and inspiration as to how to be effective in walking alongside this family.

CHLC was able to help the Chavez family get established in the community, provide them with monetary support for the legal process of seeking asylum and supporting them as they navigated this new life. In the process, the family became church family, and friendships were established. CHLC became the connection between their family and school, community, and church. Members from CHLC guided the family through the overwhelming systems in a new country like enrolling a young child in school, helping with phones and internet, job searches, healthcare, groceries, and housing.

Changes at CHLC happened on Sunday mornings when the peace now included giving hugs. Sermons and order of service were translated into Spanish and placed in the bulletin.



The Chavez family is involved in the ministry at Capitol Hill Lutheran Church in Des Moines

“[Walking with the Chavez family] has connected us beyond our borders and helped CHLC to see Jesus first. “It has widened our vision, widened our hearts, stretched our minds and our arms, and helped us to see God in our neighbor in the midst of much misunderstanding and misinformation,” said Gloria Dahle, Capitol Hill member and AMMPARO liaison.

The Chavez Family has become involved at CHLC by helping in the kitchen, volunteering at our clothes closet ministry that serves many new immigrants and newcomer families to this country from all over the world, and making quilts for Lutheran World Relief. “They have a deep desire to become integral to the community and to be a blessing as they feel blessed by so many,” said Dahle.

In 2024, the Synod Assembly passed a resolution encouraging congregations to engage with ELCA AMMPARO resources and partners such as Lutheran Services in Iowa to learn about and join in the welcoming efforts to refugees, immigrants, and asylum seekers. Learn more or get involved by emailing ammparo@seiasynod.org.



LISTEN GOD IS CALLING: LEADERSHIP

Daniel Luepke serves at Ascension Lutheran Church in Marion as a pastoral intern, currently in his third year as a collaborative student at Wartburg Seminary. Daniel is referred to as a “second career” seminarian, meaning he worked in a different field before accepting the call to go to seminary and explore pastoral ministry. He worked in energy and environmental education and youth ministry before he finally said “yes” to the call to go to seminary and the path to become a pastor, “I feel called to walk with people through the ups, downs, and the in-betweens,” says Luepke.



Partnership in Cedar Rapids gives new pastoral candidate freedom to follow God’s call

When he began seminary, Daniel worked at First Lutheran Church in Cedar Rapids as the Ministry Engagement Coordinator and Administrative Facilitator. The collaborative learning model has allowed Daniel to work part-time in ministry at First

Lutheran, be with his family and engage in seminary coursework through online classes. A recipient of the Southeastern Iowa Synod’s Fund for Leaders has helped pay a portion of his seminary tuition and he says, “As a second-career seminarian, every little bit helps and this has been a huge help!”

Daniel was unsure of what would happen during internship, a year of hands-on pastoral ministry experience for third-year ELCA seminarians. Through a collaboration with the Southeastern Iowa Synod Office of the Bishop, First Lutheran Church, Wartburg Seminary, and Ascension Lutheran Church, Daniel is serving the people of Ascension in Marion. He even went through a “mock call process” to ensure that his gifts and Ascension were a good fit. Pastor Steve Knudson of First Lutheran Church serves as Daniel’s supervisor on internship and First even helps cover the cost of insurance. “I am still connected to First Lutheran while continuing to learn and be connected to Ascension. It is a joint venture between the two congregations and myself. I feel truly blessed,” says Luepke. Serving with the people at Ascension in Marion, Daniel says, “My call has only gotten stronger during my internship. There is something that I don’t have words for, but feel so deeply when I see people’s reactions when I say ‘Christ is with you’ and ‘in the name of Jesus Christ you are forgiven.’ ”

In 2024, 13 candidates from the Southeastern Iowa Synod are studying to become pastors or deacons. Our synod distributed \$23,000 to support these candidates for ministry through the synod Fund For Leaders. Learn more at seiasynod.org