

## **MATCHING GIFT FUND CHALLENGE FOR ELCA SEMINARIES**

In February, an announcement was sent from the Central States Synod office that, due to a reduction in giving, the Synod anticipated reducing its budget by \$40,000 and invited congregations to contribute more generously to overcome the anticipated reduction. At the February church Council meeting, the Council heard several proposals and asked Pastor Bob Dealey, Coordinator of Stewardship and Outreach, to help educate the congregation about the Synod and also to share that information with other congregations. Information about the Synod appeared in the March and April church newsletters, and that information was shared electronically with other congregations across the Synod.

At the May church Council meeting, a Matching Gift Fund Challenge for ELCA seminaries proposal was approved by the church Council for presentation at the 2019 Central States Synod Assembly, and the following announcement was prepared and distributed at the synod assembly:

*“In gratitude to God for the ministry of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago and Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, IA, and to provide funding for these two seminaries, First Lutheran Church of Topeka, KS is inviting the constituents of the Central States Synod to participate in a Matching Gift Fund Challenge in an effort to raise \$10,000 between now and January 31, 2020.*

*Here’s how it works:*

- *First Lutheran Church, Topeka, KS will match one dollar for every dollar received by the Central States Synod office for this purpose (up to a maximum of \$5,000) between now and January 31, 2020.*
- *Individuals and congregations may send checks to the Central States Synod, 420 W. 14<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 101, Kansas City, MO 64105, with a notation that the offering is designated for “ELCA Seminaries.”*
- *Once the basic matching goal of \$5,000 has been met, the synod office will contact First Lutheran Church and the church treasurer will remit a check to the synod.*
- *Individuals and congregations are encouraged to celebrate their pastors’ ordination anniversary with a gift to this Matching Gift Fund Challenge.*

*Together, with your support, we will be able to help fund theological education at these two seminaries as they prepare leaders for the Church today and in the future. Thank you for your partnership and for generously sharing your gifts in this venture!*

**For Your Information:** The Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago and Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, IA are the two ELCA Seminaries that are supported by the Central States Synod. At a time, when there is a decrease in the number of students who are entering Lutheran seminaries to study for ordained ministry, it seems like providing financial support to seminaries ought to be a priority for synods and congregations.

You can help underwrite the cost of this Matching Gift Challenge by remitting a check to “First Lutheran Church” designating the gift for “ELCA Seminaries.” Thank you for your generous support!

# STEWARDING OUR FAITH: 15 MINUTES WITH GOD

Stewardship is the responsible management of all of the gifts that God gives us. One of the greatest gifts we can manage is to grow in our faith. To help accomplish this and to help you develop a more disciplined prayer life, you are invited to participate in an intentional prayer process called “**15 Minutes With God.**”

Prayer is an “on-going, two-way conversation with God.” At times, we speak and God listens; at other times, God speaks and we listen. Through our conversation, our relationship with God is strengthened by sharing the things that are on our hearts and minds, and by listening to God, we gain a better understanding of God’s intentions for our lives.

Think of it this way: Suppose you were trying to develop a deeper relationship with someone you love, wouldn’t it make sense to spend time in conversation with them to get to know them, to find out what is important to them, and to deepen your relationship with them? Prayer helps us to deepen our love relationship with God.

**How it works:** You are invited to make a commitment to spend 15 minutes in prayer with God each day for a specific period of time (your choice—it can be for a week, a month, three months, etc.). During this time period selected by you, you agree to “make every effort to the best of your ability” to pray 15 minutes each day.

## 5 Easy Steps

1. Set aside a specific time each day for “uninterrupted conversation with God.”
2. Find a “quiet place” where there will be no outside distractions.
3. Make yourself comfortable as if you were going to sit down and have a conversation with a familiar friend.
4. Speak aloud or from your heart and tell God what has been going on in your life.
5. If you are unsure of what to say, do any of the following:
  - PRAISE** God for something wonderful that has happened;
  - ASK** God for guidance and/or direction;
  - CONFESS** something that has been troubling you;
  - THANK** God for the blessings in your life;
  - PRAY** for someone else;
  - LISTEN** in silence and wait for God to speak to you;
  - READ** the Bible and allow God to speak to you via the scriptures.

As you spend **15 Minutes With God**, here are some questions for you to consider:

- What did you learn, feel, and experience?
- In what ways was this beneficial to you?
- How might others benefit from this experience?

Please let me know how this “prayer process” has worked for you. Thank you, in advance, for sharing your experience with me.

*God’s peace and blessings,  
Pastor Bob Dealey  
Coordinator of Stewardship & Outreach*