

**“I AM ABOUT TO  
DO A NEW THING  
NOW IT SPRINGS FORTH,  
DO YOU NOT PERCEIVE IT?**

**I WILL MAKE A WAY  
IN THE WILDERNESS  
AND RIVERS IN THE DESERT.”**

ISAIAH 43:19



# **IMAGINING RENEWAL**

**MICROGRANTS**

*The Year of Rest* | 2024



# SPIRIT OF THE GRANT

**Make disciples** who recognize the needs of their community and are encouraged to respond with creativity and a passion to serve.

**Equip leaders** with the resources to be imaginative in outreach.

**Strengthen parishes** through original projects that reach beyond our church buildings and address the needs of our community in this time.

**Nurture** new and adaptable ways for the people of Northwestern Ohio to be in community.

---

All applicants should imagine the needs of their community through these four lenses.



## ELIGIBILITY

Any congregation, individual or community organization that is in relationship with a faith community in Northwestern Ohio is welcome to develop a proposal, in partnership with other individuals or ministries. We are only able to award one grant per congregation or organization, so please take the time to talk about your ideas in your community and dream about a project together.

*...for the renewal of Northwestern Ohio, and the world.*

# THE CALL

Being the church in our contexts provides a unique opportunity to use our creativity to share the Good News with our communities. As people of faith, we are called into mission, defined by hope and tenacity, to support our neighbor and be of service to each other. We are called by God to ministry that reaches beyond the walls of our Church buildings and better connects to the life of our communities. When we are tempted to turn inward, the Holy Spirit calls us out.

Holy innovation and dreams are unique components as people of faith ever-committed to reformation and renewal in our spaces. Aligned with our mission and vision, the Northwestern Ohio Synod is excited to provide the resources to support and equip innovative proposals for people of faith to generously work towards the renewal of Northwestern Ohio and the world.



# THE PURPOSE

Imagining Renewal Microgrants are intended to offer support and resources to individuals, congregations, and organizations with the desire to engage in an original community-based project that uniquely meets a need of the community, encourages social engagement, and furthers the gospel.

These grants are not designed to sustain current outreach ministries but rather encourage new and needed engagement with our communities. Funding may be used to assist a currently operating program to innovate and meet an identified need in a new and creative way that grows relationship with neighbors and encourages a life of active faith beyond the walls of church buildings.

# CATEGORIES OF CARE

## Community Sabbath



In Hebrews 4, we read about the promise of God's rest: "So then, a sabbath rest still remains for the people of God" (Hebrews 4:9). Rest is an important part of our healthy lives together in community. Jesus provided an example of how to balance rest and work in a world that is always demanding more. What does it look for us to reimagine rest and recreation within our communities? These projects will focus on bringing people together in ways that build relationships and encourage rest and recreation.

## Ministry Transformed



Many of our ministries have cared for our neighbors for a long time without pause to dream new dreams alongside those we serve. What does it look like for us to reimagine our current outreach ministries in partnership with our communities? These projects will be imagined in partnership with folks who are engaged by the ministry, with the goal of developing a meaningful way to transform the work for the betterment of the community. Transformed ministry projects will be rooted in relationships, more relevant to the lives of clients and those cared for by the project and provide opportunities to break cycles and make lasting change.

## Creative Collaboration



We cannot be the church alone, and dreaming new dreams is much more fun together. What would it look like for you to partner in new ways in your community? Projects in the creative collaboration category will require the applicant to be partnered with another local leader / group / agency to create a way to care for their community in tandem.

## Awards up to \$1,500

# SEEDING FUTURE GROWTH

Funding for these grants has been made possible through generous donors. The 2023 Year End Ask invited folks to give to the Imagining Renewal Microgrants from October to December. Together these gifts have made \$63,000 available for supporting innovative projects during this Spring 2024 round of Imagining Renewal Microgrants. We pray that this generosity will seed further generosity from those who value this ministry and have experienced its impact on their community.

Each awardee organization will be asked to prayerfully consider how in the future they may aspire to join in this generosity and give back to the Imagining Renewal Fund. Microgrant recipients are asked to aspire to give back at least 10% of the grant monies awarded in the year following the completion of their proposed project. This donation could be provided by donors within the awardee's community inspired by the impact of their project, through a fundraiser, or by funds that the awardees have available to designate through a budget or dividends. A concern over being able to donate back to the fund should not deter any individual or organization from proposing their project and does not have any bearing on eligibility.

Additionally, it is a high value of this initiative to imagine the ways each project can grow. We do not do this work alone. Each application is required to have two co-creative leaders engaged in the design and implementation of the proposed project. This may be a pastor and lay person, a staff member and client, a youth and an adult, a family and a teacher or any combination of ways that we walk through the world together in our communities. Coaches will ask about the specific dynamics of these teams, as healthy discipleship is collaborative and an important part of sustainable ministry.

# COACHES

Proposals are reviewed and microgrants are awarded by a team of coaches that reflects a variety of experiences serving within our synod. Coaches engage in conversation with every applicant to help them continue to build on their ideas for outreach. These talented individuals ask questions to understand “what is” within the community and help dream about “what could be” as the applicant explores reaching beyond the walls of their buildings and walking with their neighbors in new ways. The role of the coach is to pose questions, challenge and encourage, working towards “yes”.



## PROPOSAL REVIEW PROCESS

Coaches will personally correspond with applicants, assisting them in creatively thinking through the practical implementation of their proposal. Following review, coaches may ask applicants to submit edits to their proposal drafts. If there is any question that a proposal does not meet the guidelines of the initiative or is impractical after further guidance, it will be discussed by the team of coaches. The coaching team ultimately determines grant approvals and award amounts.

# RESPONSIBILITIES OF GRANT RECIPIENTS



Ensure imagined proposal meets the guidelines outlined above. Submit proposal via electronic application available at <https://nwos-elca.church/renewal/> or call (419) 518-6069 for non-digital application accommodations.



Engage with your coach! Respond to requests for additional information regarding your application. Coaches serve as guides through the process and are helpful in dreaming about how a specific proposal could be carried out. If your coach requests a second draft amendment, submit it as soon as possible. Your proposal cannot be considered in full without the amendment.



Attend a celebratory picnic on the evening of Tuesday, May 21<sup>th</sup> where applicants will share their stories, and be awarded their checks. Awardees are also expected to attend the June 1, 2024 blessing of microgrant awardees at Synod Assembly.



Initiate your project, being sure to begin within two weeks of receiving the funds. If a particular circumstance makes this difficult, an inquiry should be submitted to your coach in advance. Funds must be used by November 1, 2024. Document and share the process of your project with your network as you go, posting pictures and updates while continuing to use the hashtag #NWOSrenewal on social media.



Impact reports must be received on time to qualify for future microgrant funding. Upon completion of your project, submit a report recapping the project and its impact. Guidelines for this short reporting process will be sent when grants are awarded. Reports are due on November 1, 2024. Photos and videos with permission for publication by the Synod are encouraged. For projects that continue beyond 2024, a one- year impact follow-up will be helpful. Celebrate with your community and lift up the impact through your communication efforts!



Unused funds must be returned to the Renewal Fund to be used for future microgrants by November 1, 2024.



Each awardee will be asked to prayerfully consider how in the future they will be able to join in the Cooperative Funding Structure and give back to the grant fund being created by aspiring to donate at least 10% of the grant monies awarded in the year following the completion of the proposed project.

# TIMELINE



Applications will be eagerly accepted on a rolling basis, opening March 18th closing April 29th.



Applicants will be contacted by a coach shortly after their application is received. Coaching conversations will support the further development of the proposed project.



Applicants will attend a picnic on May 21<sup>st</sup> to share the story of their projects and receive their awards and the June 1<sup>st</sup> worship service at Synod Assembly where they will be recognized.



Projects must be initiated no later than two weeks after receiving grant funding.



Funding should be spent by November 1, 2024, unless special circumstances are approved. Unused funds should be returned to the synod upon project completion.



Leaders of grant-funded projects are required to follow up with project summary and storytelling review by November 1, 2024. Failure to submit this report may result in future ineligibility.



Any projects that extend beyond the short-term proposal will receive a call one year later for continued storytelling and celebration.



Within one year of project completion, grant recipients are encouraged to prayerfully consider a gift of at least 10% of their original award, to grow the Renewal Fund.



# IMAGINING RENEWAL

MICROGRANTS

*The Year of Rest* | 2024



FUNDING MISSIONAL  
INNOVATION

IN OUR PARISHES

FOR THE RENEWAL OF  
NORTHWESTERN OHIO

AND THE WORLD

CONTACT

[GRANTS@NWOS-ELCA.ORG](mailto:GRANTS@NWOS-ELCA.ORG)

(419) 518-6069

