

Healthy Congregations

Workshops Encourage Effective Leaders

Could this happen at your church?

Your worship and music committee decides to adopt a contemporary worship style. Maybe it includes electric guitars and a drum kit, and unfamiliar hymns with words projected on a screen above the altar. Maybe they change communion too, and bring in a loaf of bread instead of the traditional wafers.

Half the congregation loves it. The other half doesn't. They start muttering in their pews, and suggesting the worship-and-music committee doesn't respect their traditions. The other faction insists we need to attract young people, a thing that simply can't be done with dusty old hymns from before the Flood.

Before you know it, you've got a full-blown war on your hands, with established members threatening to leave the church. Your church Council calls an emergency meeting to deal with the controversy.

Are your leaders equipped to defuse an explosive situation like this? Probably not. Council members are usually just ordinary people, some of whom might be serving on a volunteer board for the very first time. This is the last thing they expected.

Leadership training for Church Councils

At the Synod office, we see the fallout from situations like these all the time. And we realised we could help by teaching lay people how to be more effective leaders in their congregations.

So one of the things your benevolence offerings supports is a series of workshops that does just this. The series also includes training for church treasurers and administrators, along with a seminar called "Nurturing Generous Giving." This helps congregations find ways to increase giving so the church can thrive in mission.

In 2014 alone Synod staff has presented 13 workshops for treasurers and others involved in congregational finances, six for church council members, and one for church administrators. In addition, the Nurturing Generous Giving seminar has been presented to leaders from one-third of all synodical congregations since 2012.

These workshops have helped empower congregations to better resolve conflict, to better steward their financial resources, and – ultimately – to be healthier and more effective agents of God's mission in the world.

"Resolving church conflict" might not be on your mind when you make your gift to your congregation's benevolence fund. But none of this good work could happen without you. Thank you!

How to Give to the Benevolence Fund

A. Some congregations provide offering envelopes with a separate line for Benevolence. If your congregation is one of these, you can add a special gift to your regular offering and mark the amount on the Benevolence line. If you use pre-authorized remittances (known as PAR or POP), ask your congregation's financial secretary how to add to your benevolence giving.

B. Some congregations build a congregational Benevolence commitment into their annual budget. When you increase the total amount of your regular giving, whether by envelope or by PAR/POP, your congregation will be able to make a more generous benevolence gift to the wider church.



Please know **your gifts are appreciated beyond measure**, and are doing good works across the Synod and around the world. We hope you will continue to give generously to support this important work. Thank you!