

ENDURING WITNESS FUND

Proposal for the “Enduring Witness Fund” For Congregational Vitality, Pastoral Assistance and Community Engagement

The Presbytery of Baltimore is privileged to receive funds from congregations whose ministries have come to a close either through the sale of church property or where the Presbytery of Baltimore receives assets. The legacy of the faithful members of these congregations can continue through the life and ministry of remaining congregations in the Presbytery. This generous legacy can be used for two primary purposes: support of transforming congregations and support for Teaching Elders in crisis.

Many churches in our presbytery are seeking to transform themselves through the development of viable and vibrant ministries, yet some lack the current leadership or membership capacity to fully realize their goals. The Committee on Ministry and The Commission on Thriving Congregations are aware of the growing number of congregations where assessment, planning and grant assistance may make the difference between continued ministry and closing.

In addition, Teaching Elders are experiencing more burnout and high levels of stress for various reasons necessitating: coaching, counseling and leaves of absence. This situation often puts a severe burden on both pastors and congregations to cover the cost of needed support and healing. The Presbytery also has member Teaching Elders not enrolled in the Board of Pensions and therefore ineligible for emergency assistance from the Board.

The current policy of the Presbytery Baltimore states the assets received from congregations are deposited in the Presbytery’s Endowment. On behalf of the Commission on Thriving Congregations (CTC) and the Committee on Ministry (COM), we submit the following proposal to the Board of Trustees:

The Trustees provide 66% of aforementioned funds toward a grant program administered by the Commission on Thriving Congregations and the Committee on Ministry and the Commission on Reconciliation respectively. The following are the criteria for these grants.

1. CTC Vitality Grants

Grants shall be available for congregations embarking on the following:

- **Continued support for new worshipping communities**
- **Congregations embarking on intentional evangelism based on congregational Assessment outcomes. Grant would cover:**
 1. **BOP dues for ½ - ¾ pastoral leadership for up to 3 years**
 2. **Three-year programmatic expenses on a descending basis related to congregational transformation initiatives**

3. **Match for one-time capital expenses directly related to program**
4. **In conjunction with Spiritual Leadership Development, funds may be available for coaching/mentorship of clergy**

A maximum of \$100,000 shall be available to CTC. An individual grant shall not exceed \$35,000 in one year. Grants would be administered through CTC.

2. COM Crises and Assistance Grants

Grants would be available for Teaching Elders and CRE's experiencing a need for emergency financial assistance due to:

- **Loss of employment**
- **Medical crisis not immediately covered by insurance**
- **Administrative leave due to mental health issues including assisting congregations with pulpit supply when pastor is on leave**
- **Coaching/counseling support for pastors and interim pastors where a leave of absence is necessary.**
- **Other emergencies as deemed appropriate by the Chair of COM, the Stated Clerk and/or the General Presbyter.**

The balance of this fund should be maintained at \$15,000 per year. Grants for coaching/counseling may be awarded up to \$2000. Grants for emergency assistance shall not exceed \$2000.

An amount, not to exceed \$2000 would be available to congregations whose pastors are on leave but still receiving salary and benefits.

3. Community Engagement

This grant protocol will involve grants directed for community outreach, more specifically for community organizing and community engagement. These funds shall be disturbed by the Commission on Reconciliation. This amount will be budgeted at \$25,000 per year.

If this proposal is approved, it would be subject to an evaluation after three years.