



Background, Preparation and Support

(for ELCA Federal Credit Union)



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

July 2017

Introduction to the Resourceful Servants Initiative

In the church, we often speak of the many dimensions of wellness in our lives – spiritual, intellectual, emotional, social and physical, for instance. Financial well-being is another vital component in our endeavor to live well. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) will focus on this concept in the months and years ahead as we take the next steps in assisting those exploring call, rostered ministers and congregations in enhancing their financial acumen and preparedness.

The ELCA is embarking on “Resourceful Servants,” an initiative to encourage habits that strengthen and sustain individual and congregational financial wellness and growth. Each of the four Resourceful Servants projects focuses on financial well-being.

- **Fund for Leaders** – The ELCA churchwide organization hired an Associate Director of the ELCA Fund for Leaders to increase its fundraising capacity, so it can more rapidly expand the number of full- and partial-tuition scholarships it distributes to ELCA seminarians.
- **Financial Counseling** – The emphasis of this project is to open the conversation of financial wellness and literacy early in the career of those exploring call, including candidates for ministry, seminarians not in candidacy, applicants and inquirers. Students and inquirers are encouraged to participate in financial counseling with Lutheran Social Service (LSS) Financial Counseling. This organization is part of Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota and serves the entire nation through counseling by phone.
- **Financial Wellness** – This project focuses on improving the financial wellness of rostered ministers in the ELCA. Resources around managing debt and increasing financial literacy are available at no cost. The project also includes programs to address two immediate financial needs of pastors, namely lack of emergency savings and lack of retirement savings, and include matching dollars for increased contributions.
- **Congregational Certificate** – This project focuses on the financial health of congregations by providing a website-based program targeting five financial areas: Accounting, Finance, Human Resources, Risk Management and Stewardship. Congregations will receive a certificate by implementing and maintaining a set of financially healthy behaviors, and reporting them through the Resourceful Servants website (resourcefulservants.org).

Supporting us financially in these efforts are our church partners, the Mission Investment Fund and the employees and trustees of Portico Benefit Services. The ELCA Federal Credit Union and LSS Financial Counseling are implementation partners. A generous grant from the Lilly Endowment also makes this initiative possible.

Project Deep Dive

The Financial Wellness project has implications for the staff of the ELCA Federal Credit Union, as implementation partners.

Financial Wellness

Financial wellness is a vital part of a healthy life. Ministers who are financially well experience greater satisfaction in their work and their relationships and are more able to freely serve the church and its mission without being encumbered by financial anxiety.

The Financial Wellness project brings together a variety of financial wellness resources which are available at no cost to rostered ministers in the ELCA. Engaging with these resources can provide rostered ministers the information they need to make well-informed financial decisions and the

confidence to share their perspective. This competence and confidence not only affects a minister's personal financial well-being but also that of the congregations and organizations they serve.

Through this project, the church also seeks to address specific needs pastors have raised about their personal financial and stewardship health. Two Savings Matching Pilot Programs share financial resources with pastors on the road to improved financial wellness.

- The Emergency Savings Matching Pilot Program is designed for pastors who have less than 6 months income in emergency savings. The program will match selected pastors' contributions of up to \$50 per month to a dedicated emergency savings account (up to \$1,200 over two years).
- The Readiness for Retirement Savings Matching Pilot Program is designed for pastors who have less than 15 percent of their compensation contributed into their existing personal retirement account with Portico Benefit Services (when combining employer and individual contributions). This program matches pastors' increased contributions of \$50 per month to their existing personal retirement accounts with Portico (\$600 over one year).

To qualify for either of the Savings Matching Pilot Programs, pastors must complete the Financial Wellness Assessment—accessed through resourcefulservants.org—which asks about several aspects of a pastor's financial life, including behaviors and attitudes, level of emergency savings, level of retirement savings and credit score. The date to complete the Financial Wellness Assessment is September 15, 2017.

Qualifying pastors will be directed to the appropriate program application(s) as part of the Financial Wellness Assessment. The date to complete program applications is October 15, 2017. Applicants will be informed if they have been selected into either both or neither Savings Matching Pilot Program(s) by November 1, 2017.

It is at this point that selected recipients need to complete the requirements for participation in the Savings Matching Pilot Programs. (The requirements for participation listed below pertain specifically to the Emergency Savings Matching Pilot Program.) During the implementation phase of this program, selected recipients need to:

- Open a dedicated savings account with the ELCA Federal Credit Union. This must be set up in time for the first payroll of January 2018. To ensure that this happens, a recipient must call or visit the ELCA Federal Credit Union by December 1, 2017. If he or she already has a savings account with the ELCA Federal Credit Union, he or she will work with Credit Union staff to open a dedicated account for the Savings Matching Pilot Program.
- Set up automatic withdrawals of up to \$50 per month (or up to \$25 per pay period if paid bi-monthly) from the recipient's paycheck or primary checking account to be deposited into his or her dedicated account with the ELCA Federal Credit Union. This must be set up in time for the first payroll of January 2018. To ensure that this happens, a recipient must call or visit the ELCA Federal Credit Union by December 1, 2017.
- Schedule an appointment with LSS Financial Counseling. Up to six financial counseling sessions are provided per calendar year at no cost to rostered ministers and their spouses, as a benefit from Portico Benefit Services. At least one session must be held with a financial counselor at LSS Financial Counseling by Feb. 1, 2018.

On a monthly basis, beginning in February 2018, the ELCA Federal Credit Union will deposit matching funding into the dedicated emergency savings accounts of the selected recipients if the recipients have made their monthly contribution. This process will continue for up to two years, provided recipients continue to make monthly contributions.

Implications and Expectations for the ELCA Federal Credit Union

Questions about the Emergency Savings Matching Pilot Program

Throughout the Emergency Savings Matching Pilot Program, applicants and recipients may direct some of their questions about the program to the ELCA Federal Credit Union. Included here is a set of questions we believe may be asked with some frequency.

1. What if I already have an account with the ELCA Federal Credit Union?

If you already have a savings account with the ELCA Federal Credit Union, you need to open a dedicated account for the Savings Matching Pilot Program, and we can help you do that.

2. Can I make an increase of less than \$50 and still receive matching funding?

Yes, you may. In order to qualify for matching funding, you need to make a monthly contribution of at least \$10. However, if you are able to make a monthly contribution of \$50, this will provide the greatest matching opportunity.

3. What if I make a monthly contribution of more than \$50?

If you make a monthly contribution of more than \$50, the program will match your contribution up to \$50 per month.

4. For how long will my contribution be matched?

Your contribution of up to \$50 will be matched on a monthly basis for a period of up to two years. After two years, you will have received up to \$1,200 in matching funding. (\$600 per year)

5. What would disqualify me from the Emergency Savings Matching Pilot Program after it has begun?

You would be disqualified from the Emergency Savings Matching Pilot Program for any of the following:

- withdrawing money from the dedicated account (personal contribution or matching funding). As a recipient, you are entitled to withdraw any amount from your dedicated account but doing so will disqualify you from receiving additional matching funding;
- ceasing contributions to your emergency savings account (Unless you are between calls. If so, see What if I need to contribute less or stop contributing for a few months? below.); or
- leaving the ELCA roster;
- failing to remain a member in good standing with the ELCA Federal Credit Union.

6. What if I need to contribute less or stop contributing for a few months?

In most cases, this means that you will be disqualified from the program.

The *only* case where this does not apply is if you go on leave from call. If you go on leave from call, you can apply for a program waiver of up to six months by contacting Resourceful Servants at **resourceful.servants@elca.org**. When you receive a new call, you need to contact the Resourceful Servants team to again become an active recipient.

During the months missed, you will not be required to contribute. Once you return to active call, you would return to the normal procedure of monthly contributions. To receive the full matching amount, you would need to continue contributing beyond the timeframe originally set for a number of months equal to your time on leave from call. For example, the Emergency Savings Matching Pilot Program is designed to last for two years. If you went on leave from call for three months, you would be required to contribute for three additional months beyond those two years in order to receive the full amount of matching funding.

7. How do I get in touch with the Resourceful Servants program directly?

If you still have questions not answered here, you can contact Resourceful Servants by email at **resourceful.servants@elca.org**.

Timeline/Due dates

Program Launch

Resourceful Servants has an official public launch date of August 14, 2017, when an email initiative featuring Presiding Bishop of the ELCA Elizabeth Eaton will be sent out to rostered ministers in the ELCA. This email will include a link to the Resourceful Servants website (resourcefulservants.org), which contains information about these programs and other services and resources available to people across the church.

Qualification

The due date to complete the Financial Wellness Assessment to qualify for program application is September 15, 2017.

Application

The due date to complete the Emergency Savings Matching Pilot Program application is October 15, 2017.

Notification

On November 1, 2017, the ELCA churchwide organization will notify applicants if they have been selected into the Emergency Savings Matching Pilot Program or not. On or around this day, the ELCA churchwide organization will provide the names of all the pastors receiving matching funding through the Emergency Savings Matching Pilot Program to the ELCA Federal Credit Union in a spreadsheet.

Implementation

Selected applicants must:

- open a dedicated savings account with the ELCA Federal Credit Union. This must be set up by Dec. 1, 2017, to be in time for the first payroll of January 2018
- set up automatic withdrawals from their paycheck or primary checking account to be deposited into that account. This must be set up by Dec. 1, 2017, to be in time for the first payroll of January 2018.
- complete at least one financial counseling session with LSS Financial Counseling by February 1, 2018.

Data Transfer: Participant Verification

As indicated above, on or about November 1, 2017, the ELCA churchwide organization will provide the names of all the pastors receiving matching funding through the Emergency Savings Matching Pilot Program to the ELCA Federal Credit Union in a spreadsheet.

The ELCA Federal Credit Union will be responsible for verifying that the recipients of matching funding have made monthly contributions of up to \$50 to their dedicated emergency savings accounts. The credit union will track the contributions of the selected recipients monthly throughout 2018 and 2019. Each month, the credit union will confirm that each pastor listed in the spreadsheet has contributed the required funding to his or her dedicated emergency savings account, or note that the pastor has not done so. As part of the application process, all applicants will provide their consent to this verification process. The credit union will return the completed spreadsheet to the ELCA churchwide organization on a monthly basis.

Funding Distribution

The funding for the Emergency Savings Matching Pilot Program is held in an ELCA-owned account with the Mission Investment Fund. Each month beginning in February 2018 and ending in January 2020, the ELCA will authorize an electronic transfer from this account to the ELCA Federal Credit Union in the amount needed to match recipients' contributions. The ELCA Federal Credit Union will then distribute funding to individual ministers.

Contact Resourceful Servants

If there are questions not answered here, please contact Resourceful Servants by email at **resourceful.servants@elca.org**. You can direct any inquiries to the same email address.