

“Racial Equity and Reparations Fund”: Vision and Structure

What is this fund?

A colleague-to-colleague fund that provides financial reparations and support to BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) leaders and mission developers in the Northwest Washington Synod of the ELCA. This fund recognizes that all leaders do not experience seminary, candidacy and call processes in the same way. BIPOC leaders face long-standing racial inequities that result in less financial compensation throughout the course of their ministries. The variety of their stories and their full humanity have not been acknowledged, and this takes a significant toll over time. This fund seeks to take small steps in redressing financial disparities and making reparation for decades of systemic racism within the ELCA. This fund is not meant to be an endowment but a channel for leaders to offer reparations to those who have been harmed by the white supremacy culture of our Church.

What is the history of this fund?

Early ideas for the Racial Equity and Reparations Fund began as the Black Lives Matter movement increased awareness of systemic racism in the mid 2010's. In the summer of 2020, the murder of George Floyd opened the door to more focused conversation and plans for action. The idea was first proposed in summer 2020 to the Synod's STAD (Strategic Team for Authentic Diversity) team. It was discussed and BIPOC leaders of our Synod were consulted. With STAD endorsement, a designated fund was created by the Synod Council at its November 2020 meeting. A stewarding committee began to meet, and the fund was formally launched and announced to the Synod's rostered leaders and mission developers in April 2021.

Who are recipients?

If you are a BIPOC rostered leader or mission developer in the NWWA Synod, you are welcome to be a recipient of this fund. There is no application needed. Speak with a committee member or email nwwasynodreparations@gmail.com.

Who stewards this fund?

This fund is designated by the Synod Council and held by the Synod and ELCA Region 1 financial office. A committee of 6-12 Synod rostered leaders and mission developers stewards this fund, welcoming recipients and managing distributions. We seek to be a committee made up of diverse members and from the twelve clusters of our Synod. The committee meets quarterly; members commit to regular meeting attendance and to a relationship-based model of work. If you would like to serve on this committee, please email nwwasynodreparations@gmail.com. Committee members can also be fund recipients.

How do distributions work?

Requests are reviewed by the committee at its quarterly meetings. Distribution amounts fluctuate with availability of funds and will be different for each recipient. Here are some possible avenues for distributions:

- Extra payments into rostered leader's Portico pension fund
- Direct payments to household bills or debt
- Channeled through a colleague who takes on the tax burden of the payment
- Donations to a charity or non-profit of the leader's choosing

Who contributes to this fund?

All rostered leaders, congregations and individuals are invited to give to this fund through the Synod website. Select the fund in the drop-down menu of giving options. Checks can also be mailed to the Synod with "Racial Equity and Reparations" in the memo line. Regular, sustained giving is encouraged.

What has happened to date?

As of May 2021, the fund has distributed \$5300 to four recipients. The stewarding committee has met four times, incorporating new people and forming deeper relationships. We are in the process of reaching out to BIPOC leaders and offering a personal invitation to be a part of the fund. We continue to offer regular reports to the Synod Council.