

The Young Clergy Initiative 2017-2020

Request for Proposals

In the year 2032, if trends continue, the United Methodist Church will face a shortage of trained ordained elders for appointment to local congregations. This was just one of the factors which led the 2012 General Conference to create a \$7 million Young Clergy Initiative Fund designed to increase the number of young clergy among the jurisdictional conferences, to be administered by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

The Young Clergy Initiative is charged with increasing the number of young clergy within jurisdictional conferences of The United Methodist Church by encouraging opportunities that leverage for denominational change on systemic and cultural levels through various conversations, events, experiments, resources, research, and training.

INVITATION

The General Board of Higher Education invites United Methodist-related groups, organizations, and institutions to submit proposals to receive a Young Clergy Initiative grant to increase effectiveness in vocational discernment toward ordained ministry in the jurisdictional conferences.

Typically, applicants are groups, organizations, and institutions of varying size and scale. These might include, but are not limited to, seminaries, UM-related colleges and universities, annual conferences, districts, local congregations, and UM-related non-profit organizations.

The foundation of the application is a strong focus on vocational discernment in children, youth, and young adults and especially vocational discernment toward ordained ministry. Successful projects tend to connect participants with each other and with other groups, e. g., a district-wide event connecting youth from different local churches with seminaries and various annual conference leaders.

The YCI invites grant requests that assist young people to listen for, discern, and respond well to God's call to ordained ministry.

TIMELINE

Because project reporting begins in August of the year awarded, apply for a grant in January of the year your project is scheduled to begin.

January 15 – Application opens

March 15 – Application closes

April 30 – Award notification

PREVIOUS PROJECT TYPES

Call Exploration Event – a short-term, retreat opportunity for participants to engage speakers, attend in workshops and/or panel discussions, or participate in group conversations.

Educational Experience – a longer-term opportunity for participants to engage facilitators and other participants while studying vocational ministry. These projects might be offered through an academic setting at various levels.

Missional Experience – a short-term missional opportunity for participants to engage those in need to discern a call to vocational ministry.

Internship Experience – a short or long-term opportunity for participants to experience vocational ministry in a hands-on fashion.

Small Group Experience – a long-term opportunity for participants to engage facilitators and other participants while processing a call to vocational ministry.

KEY FINDINGS FROM PREVIOUS PROJECTS

Change takes time and many influencers. Meaningful change does not happen overnight and should involve various voices.

Personal relationship are key in discernment. A program or project is not as important as the relationships they will create.

Culture and context matters. There is no “one size fits all” experience. Where you are matters. Who you are with matters.

Youth are sensing a call. The church has a young clergy shortage, not a call shortage.

Youth need to speak with other youth. Connection with mentors is valuable but do not overlook the value of connecting youth with other youth.

The most effective churches ask early and ask often. Churches with a healthy “culture of call” begin the vocation conversation early. Young children are told they are created for a purpose. That purpose is intentionally explored throughout their development.

Faith communities need help in framing the vocation conversation. Faith communities understand the importance of vocational discernment but they do not all have the resources to lead those conversations effectively.

Read more about 2012-2016 projects at www.Explorecalling.org/YCI/projects.

APPLICATION

The 2017-2020 application has been simplified from the previous quadrennium and is managed online through the *Fluid Review* interface. Information is collected through eight short sections: (1) Project Information, (2) Contact Information, (3) Partners (work), (4) Partners (prayer), (5) Purpose, (6) Project Details, (7) Finances, and (8) Reporting Acknowledgment.

Proposals must be submitted online at Explorecalling.org/YCI. Applications open January 15. The deadline for submission is March 15.

Read more about the application questions at Explorecalling.org/YCI/application/questions.

SELECTION CRITERIA

When reviewing grant applications, these 4 questions will be considered:

- (1) How well does this project connect with other organizations? (*agencies, BOMs, seminaries, bishops, annual conferences, and cabinets*)
- (2) How tightly is the project's purpose tied to the purpose of the YCI? (*to increase the # of young clergy*)
- (3) Are the project's goals clearly defined?
- (4) Are the project's finances feasible?

REPORTS AND EVALUATION

One of the challenges we face in evaluating the success of the Young Clergy Initiative is our primary outcome of interest – to “increase the number of young clergy among the jurisdictional conferences” – may not fully come to fruition for a number of years given the long road to ordination many YCI participants will still have to travel. As we wait for a measurement of our primary outcome of interest, we can measure attitudes, behaviors, and intentions as early indicators of success.

Project Directors are required to complete three simple reports every twelve months: (1) August 15, (2) December 15, and (3) April 15 (of the following year).

These reports ask questions about participant numbers, pre/post survey acknowledgement, your project's story, and your observations.

Project Participants are required to complete surveys to measure attitudes, behaviors, and intentions related to ordained ministry at the beginning and end of their project experience. All participant surveys must be submitted online. Participant responses are anonymous though they will indicate which project they are participating in.

Read more about reports and evaluations at Explorecalling.org/YCI/evaluation.