

*Therefore encourage one another and build each other up,  
just as in fact you are doing.*

— 1 Thessalonians 5:11

## **Momentum for Mission**

**Empowering Next-Level Congregational Vitality  
in the Ecumenical Catholic Communion  
the Nation's Largest Emergent Catholic Jurisdiction**

## Proposal Narrative

### Purpose

This proposal outlines how a whole-system, inclusive process of values and vision identification will unify and empower the Ecumenical Catholic Communion (ECC), the nation's largest emergent Catholic jurisdiction. By providing a consistent, compelling message across the national body that is the ECC, we anticipate a new burst of creative energy and congregational vitality among our 40 church communities and their respective missions.

The process will:

- Educate congregational leaders about the complex interwoven tapestry of Old Catholic and Roman Catholic culture and tradition that inform our self-understanding as a Communion, allowing for adaptive solutions to growth and evangelization not tied to the denominational past.
- Create a structure for discussing that content on a congregational basis with the intent of sending member-informed delegations to the 2026 Synod of the ECC.
- Provide resources for a full complement of delegates from all ECC communities to bring that “grassroots” discovered content to the Synod.
- At the Synod, use the Future Search methodology – a whole-system, stakeholder driven approach – to crystallize the mission and vision of the Communion as a whole.
- Help congregations translate the outputs of the synod into concrete local action plans that are sensitive to the cultural context and social location of their individual communities.
- In doing so, deepen and enrich the lives and enhance vitality of ECC congregations nationally and focus their messaging.
- Share all learning with the leading jurisdictions of the Emergent Catholic movement through partnerships with the *Extraordinary Catholics* coalition and others.

### Rationale

The Ecumenical Catholic Communion (ECC) is the largest of the growing number of “independent” Catholic “jurisdictions” (micro denominations) in the United States. These jurisdictions are described with modifiers like “inclusive,” “independent,” and “emergent.” For the purposes of this proposal, we will refer to the greater movement as *Emergent Catholicism*.

In the United States, the ECC is the largest and most vital Emergent Catholic jurisdiction. Members are carving out sacramentally inclusive, democratically structured ways of being Catholic that honor the richness of their liturgical, ecclesial, and spiritual history while updating to meet the needs of our context. Democratic and synodal structures have been in place since our founding.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The ECC Constitution can be found here.

In describing ourselves:

We recall the words of the second century church father, St. Ignatius of Antioch, when referring to the Church: we are a “communion of communities” joined together by the Spirit to form a household of faith.

We serve the poor, the outcast, the sick, the disabled, the old, the young, and the imprisoned. We offer a refuge in Christ for those who suffer prejudice because of race, color, culture, philosophy, gender, sexual orientation, or educational deprivation. We conform our lives to the life and teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ through prayer and study, service, and the celebration of the liturgy and the sacraments. We do as Christ commanded, “Love one another as I have loved you.”

We profess our faith in Christ in the living Catholic Tradition handed to us from the Apostles through many generations. And we stand open to a dialogue with those of other religious identities and faith traditions.

Like all Catholic churches and many Christian churches, the ECC professes belief in one, holy catholic and apostolic Church as expressed in the Nicene creed.

The ECC is shaped by two powerful cultural streams. The first is the Old Catholicism of Europe, now gathered under the umbrella of the Union of Utrecht<sup>2</sup> (to which we trace our ordination lineage and our practices of synodality). The second is the transformative ecclesial, ecumenical, and liturgical vision of Roman Catholicism’s Second Vatican Ecumenical Council (Vatican II), which shaped the self-understanding of the vast majority of our members. Both streams build strongly on the practices and self-understanding of the first-century Christian church.

No Emergent Catholic jurisdiction in the U.S. is formally attached to either the Union or Utrecht or the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>3</sup> The ECC, like others, is working to discern a vital indigenous expression of Emergent Catholicism in our context. We consider our inward focused mission the health of the ECC, but our outwardly focused commitment is to the vitality of the entire movement.

### **The Significance of the ECC within the Emergent Catholic Movement**

Our commitment to the greater Emergent Catholic movement has inspired the ECC to play a lead role in convening leaders of the larger jurisdictions. Our leaders have played a significant role in bringing the independent Catholic voice into ecumenical conversations as one of the 38 member communions of the National Council of Churches (NCC). The ECC’s former presiding bishop, Most Rev. Francis Krebs, serves on its governing Board.

The ECC is currently engaged in developing relations with several NCC members, including the Episcopal Church USA, which is in full communion with the Old Catholic Churches of the

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix for background on Old Catholicism and its development

<sup>3</sup> Although in 2014, Pope Francis called for increased dialogue with the Old Catholics of Europe.

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/30844/pope-francis-reaches-out-to-schismatic-old-catholic-church>

Union of Utrecht, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, which is in full communion with the Episcopal Church.

Bishop Krebs is the convener of monthly meetings with bishops of other independent Catholic jurisdictions, working to forge pathways to cooperation and collaboration. Increasingly, the ECC is the group toward which the Emergent Catholic movement looks for inspiration on how to operationalize collaborative leadership models at all levels of ecclesial life.

### **Disaffiliation of Roman Catholics and Growth in Emergent Catholicism.**

In the West, the largest, most recognized form of Catholicism is Roman Catholicism. According to the Pew Forum, active Roman Catholics comprise 22% of the U.S. population; 13% of adults in the U.S. are former Catholics. CARA, the research operation funded by the USCCB, reports that of active Catholics, only 17.3% attend Mass on a weekly basis.

According to Pew:

Many U.S. Catholics say they want to see the church make significant changes. For example, six-in-ten say they think the church should allow priests to marry and allow women to become priests. And nearly half of U.S. Catholics say the church should recognize the marriages of gay and lesbian couples. Support for these kinds of changes is lower – though still substantial – among Catholics who attend Mass regularly than it is among those who attend Mass less often.<sup>4</sup>

The ECC is living that desired change, but we need to become clearer and more effective in communicating who we are to this target audience.

While the Roman Catholic community is experiencing drift,<sup>5</sup> the emergent inclusive Catholic movement is experiencing greater traction. There are currently approximately 250 Emergent Catholic communities under a variety of jurisdictions in the U.S. The challenge is growth, and we are optimistic that it can be achieved. For example, the Independent Filipino Church has scaled from a comparable number of Churches in the wake of the revolution in 1898 to a reported 7 million members today.

### **Congregational Vitality: Challenge and Opportunities**

The ECC has grown from the time our Constitution was ratified in 2003 to 40 communities in 2023 nationwide, structured in six dioceses/regions in the United States. Overwhelmingly, members of ECC have strong Roman Catholic roots. While they embrace the tradition in its beauty, particularly the liturgical practices and justice teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, they are committed to ejecting the “adiaphora” that doesn’t serve in our cultural context. We also attend to upholding the legacies of Old Catholicism, to which our roots are traced.

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<sup>4</sup> “7 facts about American Catholics,” <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2018/10/10/7-facts-about-american-catholics/>

<sup>5</sup> A significant portion of which is generational; for example, only 99K couples were married sacramentally in 2022, as compared with 347K in 1965). “Frequently Requested Church Statistics,” Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, <https://cara.georgetown.edu/faqs>

We are, however, encumbered by those roots as well. One series of challenges relate to our Roman Catholic roots; the other is our start-up, church planting nature.

For example, lay leadership in the Roman Catholic Church is largely disempowered; under Canon Law, lay people are strictly consultative in parish leadership processes. In the ECC, lay leaders are equally empowered decision makers alongside the ordained at all levels of the Communion. Making the transition to full ownership and leadership requires formation over time.

We also live with a cultural heritage of low giving (stewardship). In the Roman Catholic system, priest salaries are not living wages and housing, etc. generally are provided. Further, Roman Catholic churches are not owned congregationally but under the umbrella incorporation of their dioceses. Lack of ownership plus an experience of lower overhead has cemented a legacy of low giving that has carried over into the Emergent Catholic moment. Lack of financial resources at the congregational level is a significant challenge.<sup>6</sup>

Also, while Emergent Catholic Churches have increased in number in the past two decades, Catholics are not Church planters by religious enculturation. Almost without exception, Roman Catholic Churches are built and staffed based on congregational size and geographic boundaries by well-funded dioceses. ECC churches are startups led by lay leaders who call their ordained leaders into ministry.

Finally, Evangelization, a core element of Christian life, has not been in the foreground for those who are culturally Roman Catholic. Funding staff and salary without denominational support structures (seed money, initial salaries) has meant shoestring, all-volunteer efforts within the ECC.

While our “on fire” early priest clergy and lay leaders have been willing to sacrifice, including serving without salaries, to establish our communities, this model is not sustainable. While many came into their ecclesial role with credentials achieved (and often funded) in Roman Catholic settings, the next generation of congregational leaders will need salaries, benefits, etc. All these factors contribute to an imperative for growth in every one of our communities, and central to growth is a need to be able to articulate clearly, concisely, and compellingly who we are.

We are at a moment where describing ourselves in clear, positive terms is critical. We, like other denominations, address people that are increasingly distanced from Christianity as a whole. This process will allow us to develop Communion-wide language that describes our vision and mission in compelling terms with the intent of catalyzing pastoral plans throughout the Communion.

## **Program Design**

The project we are proposing is designed to deepen and enrich the lives of our members and enhance the vitality of our congregations by:

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<sup>6</sup> <https://balancingeverything.com/church-giving-statistics/> Research shows that fewer than 8% of Catholics give more than \$2,000 per year to their parish.

- Engaging our members, from the grassroots up, on questions of identity and purpose. This will involve sorting through the imperatives that come from our Old Catholic and our Roman Catholic roots is the growth edge of the ECC at our 20-year mark.
- Convene leaders of all our congregations to articulate vision and mission for the ECC beyond stating what we are not.
- Produce content and deliverables that will have crossover value beyond the ECC to benefit other jurisdictions within the Emergent Catholic Movement.

We will do this in **two phases**.

First, we will use the lead up to scheduled 2024 ECC Synod in Estes Park, Colorado, our biannual gathering, for education and formation around key issues of identity, practice, and culturally contextual challenges to growth. Then at the October 2024 Synod, our speakers and breakout sessions will take this initial learning to the next level of understanding and integration. Bios are included in Appendix C.

Then, we will empower full representation of every community of the ECC at the 2026 national Synod, which will focus on clearly articulating our collective identity, guiding the process for the design, development and acceptance of Communion-wide language that describes our vision and mission in compelling terms.

This will be followed by the creation of structure through which communities can create action plans centered on messaging targeted toward growth. The planning structure will be provided to individual churches in both English and Spanish.

These individual community goals might focus on the issues such as changing demographics; the causes of Roman Catholic drift and the evangelization of this demographic; building financial strength by attracting members with a strong participative stake in community life; living a vision of service to the greater community and sacramental justice; serving as a prophetic witness and voice in the local and national Emergent Catholic communities.

### **Phase One: Parish based Preparatory Work for Synod 2024 and Follow Up**

Provide videos/articles to all congregations, in both Spanish and English:

- The ECC: History – former Presiding Bishop Francis Krebs (February)
- The Distinctives of the Old Catholic Movement: One Legacy – Peter Ben Smit (March)
- The Distinctives of Vatican II: A Second Legacy – Trish Sullivan Vanni (April)
- The Distinctives of Our Spiritual and Liturgical Heritage as Catholics – Gianni Pasarelli
- Provide a framework for discussions within communities (Spanish and English) including a time-stamped facilitator recording (Jenn Reyes Lay, Trish Sullivan Vanni) (May)

At the Synod, we will welcome along with these voices leaders in the areas of Christian church demographic trends and Catholic Church demographic trends (Jon Poitevent), and planning for the future re succession and other issues (Dave Travis). Again, please see the faculty biographies in Appendix A.

Historically, the ECC Synod has been very well attended, but participation has not been 100% of communities due to lack of financial resources at the local level. Our intent is to fund all but travel for community representatives, allowing us to support a heightened level of representation

from throughout the Communion. Likewise, we will include simultaneous translation into Spanish at all points during the project, providing greater access to our many lay leaders for whom Spanish is their primary language.

In 2025, we will deliver the content of the 2024 Synod in various types of deliverables to all parishes and missions, empowering local discussion and preparation for the 2026 Synod.

### **Phase Two: Synod 2026 Future Search**

Synod 2026 will convene representatives of all ECC communities to dream, vision, and plan for congregational vitality. We will use the “Future Search” methodology.

Future Search<sup>7</sup> is a process designed to facilitate collaborative planning and decision-making in organizations or communities. It aims to bring together diverse stakeholders to create a shared vision and develop practical strategies for the future. While specific variations of Future Search may exist, the following values are commonly associated with the process:

1. Collaboration: Future Search emphasizes collaboration and the active involvement of all relevant stakeholders. It encourages open dialogue, collective intelligence, and the sharing of diverse perspectives and expertise.
2. Inclusion: The process seeks to include a wide range of stakeholders, representing different sectors, backgrounds, and interests. It aims to ensure that all voices are heard and that the outcomes reflect the collective wisdom of the group.
3. Shared responsibility: Future Search promotes the idea that everyone participating in the process shares responsibility for shaping the future. It recognizes that effective solutions often require collective action and the commitment of all involved parties.
4. Appreciative inquiry: Future Search focuses on appreciating and building upon the strengths and positive aspects of the system or community being examined. It encourages participants to identify and leverage existing assets and successful practices to create a more desirable future.
5. Long-term perspective: The process encourages participants to take a long-term view of the future, considering potential consequences, interdependencies, and sustainability. It aims to develop strategies and plans that are viable and adaptable over time.
6. Action orientation: Future Search aims to translate vision and strategy into action. It emphasizes the importance of identifying concrete steps and practical initiatives that can be implemented to move toward the desired future.
7. Learning and reflection: Future Search recognizes that learning is a continuous process and that reflection on past experiences can inform future actions. It encourages participants to learn from both successes and failures and to adjust strategies as needed.
8. Openness to change: The process acknowledges that change is a constant and that adaptation is necessary for success. It encourages participants to embrace innovation, flexibility, and the exploration of new possibilities.

These values form the foundation of the Future Search process, supporting the collaborative exploration of complex issues and the development of comprehensive, shared solutions. The structure also allows for the strong integration of spiritual practices drawn from the long history

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<sup>7</sup> See Appendix B for information on the ecclesial use of Future Search.

of the Catholic Christian community, including theological reflection, participation in liturgy, and prayer throughout the gathering.

Vision/Mission development and setting the attendant goals that come with them are best done by including a comprehensive array of stakeholders. The Future Search model, which is a whole-system, task-focused process, will bring to the table the full complement of ECC community representatives (stakeholders) in a planning meeting that is designed to produce results quickly. Our intention is to use the funding to have the most complete representation of the Communion of any synod in its history.

Our proposed facilitator, Dr. Fred Baumer<sup>8</sup> has successfully used Future Search with individual faith communities, religious orders, parish integration projects and many corporate business settings.

The consultant's work will be providing guidance to the Core Team in the weeks prior to and after the weekend Future Search convocation. The project Director and Associate Director will also be on-site to facilitate, guide and translate the weekend. After the event, the consultants will provide a report from the event, and assist the statement crafters in finalizing the goals.

We believe three data sets need to be present at the 2026 convocation to ensure that the vision/goals that come from this event are robust enough to be of service to the next five years of growth and potential:

1. **Grassroots informed representatives from all ECC communities.** This will be fostered by:
  - Post 2024 synod presentation videos for use in discussion groups
  - A survey mechanism for use by individual congregations
  - If desired, Diocesan/Regional gatherings (translated as needed)
2. **Discussion of the changing environment of the city and state civil needs, and the changing environment of the diocesan and global church in which the ECC lives.**
  - Interviews and research on key stakeholders
  - Will also be served by having convocation participants read selected articles sent to them in advance
3. **Identification of the “diamonds” and “stones” that reflect the lived experience of the ECC in recent years.**
  - Will be achieved by an exercise in the convocation itself.
  - Will contribute to the crafting of statements by a circle of attendees that stands on the collective outputs of the Future Search convocation.

The convocation itself has a detailed protocol, with a series of engaging exercises that keep the focus of the participants on the stretch goals/vision that are built collaboratively. We accomplish this in the context of prayer on Friday night, Saturday morning and mid-day, and Sunday liturgy and closing prayer. The consultant will guide the development of both the protocol and work with the Leadership Council and Synod Planning team on the prayer experiences and more.

After the 2026 Convocation, a small group of Statement Crafters will crystalize the thinking of the larger group. These statements will be sent for feedback to the need to be completed in a

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<sup>8</sup> See participant Bios, page 14 on.



timely manner so that the community can receive the final statements and react to them. The consultants will be available to facilitate a feedback session.

A total of 160 delegates will participate in the Future Search 2026 Synod convocation: two lay leaders and two ordained leaders from each ECC Community. The process will be simultaneously translated into Spanish.

Followup to the Synod 2026 will be distribution of all Synod outputs as well as materials for planning that will allow individual ECC communities to take the work of their representatives to the local level, improving websites and creating planning documents and processes to guide their ministries.

## **Evaluation**

At this juncture, we project evaluation of our project to take multiple forms. These will be refined and developed by our Project Evaluation Coordinator and our Evaluator. Here is our initial thinking.

In 2025, there will be a brief satisfaction survey sent to all Synod 2024 participants. This information will be consolidated and presented to the ECC Leadership Council, House of Laity Leadership Team, and House of Pastors Leadership Team. A Zoom call will be held to discuss findings and to see what recommendations should be included in the 2026 Synod Plan. Questions will focus on value, accessibility, usefulness, and pass-on ease of content.

In 2026, a measure of success that is critical is the degree to which ECC communities attend the Synod. Right now, the cost of attendance limits participation. Communities of greater size or with members that have their own financial resources are disproportionately represented. Critical to our success is the full representation of our Churches, particularly those that are Spanish speaking, as many of those congregations have the largest member numbers.

As we complete in 2027, we will collect both formal and anecdotal evidence that our Future Search has produced congregational fruit. Results of the initiative could take the form of greater clarity on websites and social media, the implementation of individual community or diocesan planning processes; greater harmony between communities as focus shifts from differences in practices (for example, liturgical approaches) to where there is common ground.

At the close of the project, all committee members as well as all process participants will be surveyed regarding their satisfaction level.

The External Evaluator, Paula Espinoza, PhD, will meet with the Evaluation Coordinator on a quarterly basis throughout the grant performance period to review the overall evaluation plan, quantitative and qualitative data collection methodology, instruments and tools, evaluation plan implementation progress. The External Evaluator will assist with challenges, problem-solving and troubleshooting, and provide alternative strategies based upon experience with other projects and overall standards of excellence Program Evaluation. At least two weeks prior to each meeting, the Evaluation Coordinator will send the External Evaluator an agenda with questions, problem issues, and progress made on the evaluation plan. At least once a year and more often if requested, the Project Director will join in quarterly meetings with the External Evaluator and invited to submit additional questions for input from the External Evaluator.

## Organizational Capacity: Key personnel

The grant will be under the supervision of Paul “Pablo” Burson, Presiding Bishop of the ECC and Director of Student Development and Community Partnerships at Regis University and the members of the ECC Leadership Council. Bishop Burson received his M.Div. in 1985 and has been working in the area of transformational education since 1990. He has worked extensively with the Latino community and is fluent in Spanish.

**Project management** will be under the direction of Trish Sullivan Vanni, PhD. Dr. Vanni holds an M.Div. from St. John’s University SOT in Collegeville, MN and an interdisciplinary PhD from the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, CA. She has led multiple national ministries in the Roman Catholic community and was the second-round director of the Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership project funded by the Lilly Endowment. She successfully ran a marketing communications firm prior to entering ministry in 1997. Dr. Vanni is currently the Vice Chair of the House of Pastors and serves on the Leadership Council of the ECC. We anticipate a half-time role for the Project director for four years.

**Project assistance** and translation for the project will be provided by Jennifer Reyes Lay<sup>9</sup> on a part-time basis.

**Administrative support** will also be provided by the Office of Presiding Bishop and the Charis ECC administrative assistant.

The **Project Evaluation Coordinator** will be responsible to the Project Director and will design and implement the overall Evaluation Plan for the proposed project in accordance with the program guidelines and reporting requirements. She will develop quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments and tools for project data collection that measure overall participation and satisfaction with the process, level of involvement and perceptions of feeling heard, and that their comments impact the overall process and outcome of the project. She will also meet on a quarterly basis with the External Evaluator to review Evaluation Plan and implementation progress and challenges, instruments, and strategies to be used in quantitative and qualitative instruments design and data collection methodology. (Year 1, month 12; Years 2-5, months 3,6,9 and 12.)

In preparing this grant, we have confirmed the participation of several faculty participants who will bring their expertise in the areas of Catholic spirituality and ecclesiology, Old Catholicism, Church planting, leadership development and more to the project. Please see Appendix B for their biographies.

This Project depends on considerable pro bono efforts by professional leaders at all levels of the ECC. These efforts, calculated at the equivalent of \$95 per hour, can be conservatively estimated as matching half funding request. The project’s effectiveness hinges on vibrant participation by congregations, diocese, and the four national leadership bodies of the ECC (Leadership Council, leadership teams of the House of Pastors and House of Laity, and the

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<sup>9</sup> Bio, page 15

Council of Bishops. Charis Ecumenical Catholic Community will provide an office pro bono for the Project Director should the project be funded, valued at \$38,400 over four years. Other pro bono contributions are noted on the budget form.

## Communication

The project will tap the electronic resources of the ECC in maintaining communication with all stakeholders, including use of the national Constant Contact email blast capability and the Communion's website. Trish Vanni will serve as the primary crafter of all messaging. She is an expert user of Constant Contact, WordPress, Adobe Premier Pro, Zoom, and the Microsoft Suite. Prior to entering ministry, Dr. Vanni had a successful career in marketing communications. Founder and principle of Sullivan Communications, her firm specialized in the development of marketing collateral of all kinds. The firm produced numerous award-winning corporate newsletters and magazines; provided turnkey services including product positioning; communications development, research, reporting, copywriting, and editing; and project and graphic production management for clients, including Dow Jones, McGraw Hill, The Associated Press, Merck & Co. and others.<sup>10</sup>

She will be supported by Beth Harvey on an as-needed basis. Beth is an experienced graphic design and marketing communications professional with proven results in design, communications, project management and marketing. She has an extensive resume of work for church communities in the Episcopal Church USA and currently supports Charis Ecumenical Catholic Community on a weekly basis.

Dr. Jayme Mathias, Director of the Extraordinary Catholics coalition, will be tapped to share ECC outputs, particularly those of Synod 2024, with the greater Emergent Catholic movement. Drs. Matthias and Vanni have collaborated in recent years on a number of books and convocation outputs tied to the *Extraordinary Catholics* (<https://extraordinarycatholics.faith/>) effort, in which both play a lead role. The project will tap into that collective's resources to create publications, articles, and podcasts for the greater Emergent Catholic movement.

## Sustainability

The proposed grant will allow the leadership of the ECC to take the ECC to a new level of self-understanding, effectiveness, and harmony. It will refresh and aid our ability to invite and reach new membership and to add to the number of existing communities and missions.

To aid in the sustainability of the project from the outset, the proposed grant work is specifically and intentionally built into the normal operating perimeters and modus operandi of the ECC. For example, the ECC has held biannual synods since its founding in 2003. The proposed grant project is built around the pre-synod, synod and post synod efforts of 2024 and 2026. After the funded efforts occur in the proposed funding time frame, our unfunded efforts on the project will intentionally flow and be assimilated into our normal ECC operations. Our unfunded work continues in 2027 and 2028 as we incorporate the communication messages and lessons learned

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<sup>10</sup> CV included in submission.

from this work into the normal and on-going operations of the ECC, including newsletters and professional education, and our local communities and their missions.

The sustained work will inform everything from our national ECC communications to our individual parish community marketing efforts but will be woven throughout our ongoing operations. It is also anticipated that the core work will provide a platform for better informed, more effective fundraising within communities and the Communion as a whole, thus also helping to sustain the work initiated here as part of our usual ongoing efforts.

The individuals whose staff time will be partially supported to do the proposed grant work understand that additional salary support provided by the grant is for the distinct work of the grant and that support will end at the conclusion of the grant. Each has walked in faith and had circumstances in which God has sustained them throughout the course of their lives and will continue to do so as grant funding comes to an end and as they continue their calls.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Thriving Congregations funding will provide a launch pad and heretofore inaccessible empowerment for our next chapter of life as a Communion. The will and faith to innovate even as we preserve and cherish a Tradition are part of our culture. These, along with the sweat equity that makes achieving dreams real, exist in every ECC local community, and will carry us into a bright future. We will undertake the work we propose with honesty, integrity, and diligence. We anticipate nurturing strong, healthy relationships with our funders and other grantees throughout the grant funding cycle and beyond, bringing the professionalism and excellence of this process forward across jurisdictional boundaries.

The Lilly Endowment has identified critical areas in which congregations must excel if they are to be vital and vibrant:

1. They adapt to their changing social and cultural contexts.
2. They exhibit clarity of their values and missions.
3. They cultivate Christian practices that deepen the faith of their congregants

If funded, this grant will provide a new level of clarity for the leaders of all participating congregations of the ECC. It will allow us to take collective time to step beyond pre-existent assumptions and past-based patterns of problem solving to new and creative ways to impact the changing cultural climate facing church communities.

This effort will both sustain and expand our capacity as vital, inclusive, and innovative Catholic communities nationwide – communities that are living a profoundly faith-filled Catholicism with all of its beautiful practices and traditions. It will support our vision of an updated Church that meets the challenges of our age, reading the “signs of the times” in the light of the Gospel, as envisioned at Vatican II.

## **APPENDIX A: What is Emergent Catholicism?**

Emergent Catholicism traces its roots to the Old Catholic movement across Europe, which came first to the United States in the form of the Polish National Church under the auspices of the Episcopal Church U.S.S. No emergent Catholic jurisdiction remains under ECUSA auspices or is governed by Rome.

Currently, the movement has a range of expressions, with many small communities in small jurisdictions. Recent efforts to identify the number of inclusive Catholic communities by the Extraordinary Catholics alliance estimates that there are approximately 250 such parishes/communities, not including mission churches, in the U.S.

Sociologist Rev. Dr. Alan Kemp PhD has described the emergent Catholic movement as a new zeitgeist.

Rev. Dr. Jayme Mathias, leader of the Extraordinary Catholics coalition, notes “Independent Catholicism is an independent sacramental movement of clergy and laity who self-identify as Catholic (most often as Old Catholic or as Independent Catholic) and form liturgical praying communities despite not being affiliated with the historic Catholic churches such as the Roman Catholic and Utrechter Old Catholic churches. The term 'Independent Catholic' derives from the fact that the various jurisdictions simultaneously operationalize independence from the Bishop of Rome while affirming their place in the greater Global Catholic community.”

Independent Catholics profess seven sacraments, and almost all practice sacramental justice, in which ordination is open to all persons, regardless of gender, marital state, or orientation; sacramental marriage for all, regardless of gender identity or orientation; and an open Eucharistic table without exclusions based on divorce or initiation in another Christian denomination.

Independent Catholicism is part of an even larger independent sacramental movement, in which clergy and laity of various faith traditions—including the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Anglican Communion and various non-Catholic Christian churches—have separated themselves from the institutions with which they previously identified.

Unlike Roman Catholicism, which is centered in its hierarchy, Independent Catholicism possesses no unifying structure, although the strongest and largest jurisdictions practice the Synodality of Old Catholicism. Currently, the leading efforts on creating healthy lines of communication between these jurisdictions are coming from the Extraordinary Catholics group and the efforts of ECC presiding Bishop emeritus, Francis Krebs (both described in this proposal).

## Appendix B: What is Future Search?

The developers of the Future Search methodology describe the process<sup>11</sup> as follows:

“Future Search is planning meeting that helps people transform their capability for action very quickly. The meeting is task focused. It brings together 60 to 80 people in one room or hundreds in parallel rooms.

“Future Search brings people from all walks of life into the same conversation - those with resources, expertise, formal authority, and need. They meet for 16 hours spread across three days. People tell stories about their past, present, and desired future. Through dialogue they discover their common ground. Only then do they make concrete action plans.

“The meeting design comes from theories and principles tested in many cultures for the past 50 years. It relies on mutual learning among stakeholders as a catalyst for voluntary action and follow-up. People devise new forms of cooperation that continue for months or years.”

Future Search has been used to help faith communities:

- Outline strategic plans and cast a collective vision
- Build unity of vision and deepening commitment to mission
- Address transitions in the size and scope of congregations
- Embrace changing demographics in a local community
- Address financial challenges
- Build alliances between congregations
- Bring in new leadership at all levels
- Increase the involvement of individual members in community activities
- Build stronger relationships with surrounding communities/organizations

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<sup>11</sup> Weisbord, M., Janoff, S. (2010). Future Search: Getting the Whole System in the Room for Vision, Commitment, and Action. Ukraine: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.