



South Dakota District HARVEST Grant Application

Introduction

In biblical times the harvesting of fruits, vegetables, and grains was an important activity. People's sustenance and survival were dependent upon a successful harvest. Because people understood the importance and significance of the harvest, God's Word uses the illustration of a harvest to talk about the gathering of God's people into the church and, in the end, the gathering of God's people into eternal life:

1. Those who enter the Christian Church are said to become a part of the harvest (Matthew 9:37-38; John 4:35; Romans 1:13)
2. The "harvest" is the gathering of God's people on the Last Day (Matthew 13:37-43)

People who live in South Dakota today also understand that the harvest season is an important time of year. The harvest comes only after much hard work has been done to make it possible. The seed that had been planted in the Spring of the year, cultivated throughout the Summer, is finally ready to be gathered into the barn in the Fall. Barring any natural disaster that may wipe out his crop, only when the harvest has been brought in will the farmer see the benefit of his time and hard work. Even for the ranchers of our state the harvest is important. The feed and hay that sustain their herds is dependent upon favorable weather and a good harvest.

While the Gospel harvest is flourishing in places like China and Africa, it appears that Christianity is experiencing a drought here in America. The statistics reveal that Christianity in America resembles a field that is dry and withered:

- 80% of Christian churches in America are stagnant or in decline.
- 18% fewer Sunday schools in America over the last 10 years.
- 21% fewer Vacation Bible Schools in America over the last 10 years.
- 31% or 65 million adult Americans are "de-churched," people who used to be active in church but are no longer.
- 15-20% of Millennials (those born 1980-2000) identify themselves as Christian. Only 11% of those 18-29 years old are members of an LCMS congregation.

The South Dakota District is not immune from this drought:

- In 2001 there were 116 congregations in the South Dakota District. In 2016 there are 108 active congregations in the District.
- In 2001 the South Dakota District had 31,634 baptized members. In 2015 baptized membership dropped to 30,205.
- In 2001 communicant membership in the South Dakota District was 24,832. In 2015 it had declined to 23,692.

It is time once again for our South Dakota District to tend to the harvest fields, fight against this drought, and reap a harvest of disciples committed to the Lord our God. Our Lord Jesus Christ commissions our District congregations, schools, and ministries to share His saving Gospel message with their communities and within their contexts. The Lord calls them to expand the harvest field by sowing the seed of the Gospel and reaping a harvest of believers, and to prepare people for the Final Harvest. The South Dakota District, for its part, is to support, facilitate, and encourage our District congregations, schools, and ministries to plant the seed of the Gospel, cultivate its work in their communities and contexts, and reap a harvest of believers from their labors. For this reason, the South Dakota District Board of Directors has created the HARVEST Grant Program.

It is the hope of the Board of Directors that this HARVEST Grant Program would encourage congregations, schools, and ministries within the South Dakota District to actively seek ways to engage their community with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Through participation in this program congregations, schools, and ministries in the South Dakota District will be:

- Provided opportunities to live out their faith in Jesus Christ, increase their participation in the planting of the Gospel, and practice their discipleship as they serve others.
- A more visible presence in their community.
- More intentional in reaching out to the unchurched in their community.
- More deliberate in seeking to meet the needs of those in their community.
- Creating greater opportunities to plant the seed of the Gospel in the hearts and lives of individuals.
- Working to expand the harvest of those who will receive eternal life on the Last Day.

Thank you for prayerfully considering the many opportunities the Lord has given you to plant the seed of the Gospel and to reap a harvest of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ. The South Dakota District Board of Directors is pleased to be able to partner with you on your project or activity. Along with you, we pray that God would bless your efforts to plant the Gospel in the hearts of people and reap a new harvest of disciples for our Lord Jesus Christ.

HARVEST Grant Information

Name of Program: HARVEST Grants

Program Goal: To support, facilitate, and encourage the congregations, schools, and ministries within the South Dakota District to plant the seed of the Gospel and reap a harvest of believers in their communities and contexts by providing financial grants to assist them in their ministry events and activities.

Program: The District will provide grants, of varying amounts, to congregations, schools, and ministries to be used for events and ministries that reach out into their communities and contexts with “the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:39). Criteria for receiving a grant include, but are not limited to:

- For congregations: an activity or ministry that would be targeted to reach the unchurched, reconnect with former LCMS members, or provide a ministry need within the community. (2009 District Convention Resolution 2-01: “To Recognize the Congregations of The South Dakota District as Mission Outposts”; 2012 District Convention Resolution 2-01: “To Understand That We Have Been Called into Partnership for Witness”; 2015 District Convention Resolution 2-01: “To Encourage Congregations in Works of Mercy in Their Communities”) Qualified activities and ministries may impact the local community, serve to meet the needs of another community in South Dakota, or make a difference in the lives of people somewhere in the world. Priority will be given to those applications whose activities and ministries are intended to impact their local community.
- For schools: an activity or ministry that enhances the mission of the school, attempts to increase enrollment, or meet the needs of school families.
- The activity or ministry should include the involvement of lay members of the congregation or of school families/faculty members of the school. Preference will be shown to activities and ministries that employ multi-generations in the same effort.
- An explanation of the activity or ministry and its goals.
- Provide an itemized budget of expenses for the activity or ministry.
- The activity or ministry will provide people with the opportunity to “give an answer to everyone who asks them to give the reason for the hope that they have” (1 Peter 3:15).
- Grants may be given for one-time events or activities or may be given for multi-year partnerships (2-3 years).
- Priority will be given to ministries and activities that will be carried on from year to year as opposed to one-time events.

Eligible Applicants:

- Missouri Synod congregations of The South Dakota District. Grant applications may be initiated by congregational boards (church councils, board of elders, board of evangelism, etc.), congregational groups (youth group, men’s group, women’s group, older adults group, etc.), or congregational ministries (food pantry, medical ministry, etc.), but their applications must have the official approval of the congregation, through the church council or the congregation’s voters assembly. Grants will be limited to one grant per congregation per year.

- Missouri Synod early childhood centers, preschools, elementary, middle, and high schools of The South Dakota District

Total Grant Funds Available: \$100,000 per year

- \$60,000/year designated for congregations
- \$40,000/year designated for Lutheran early childhood centers, preschools, elementary, middle, and high schools

Source of Funds:

This HARVEST Grant Program is made possible by the generous unrestricted financial offerings of the congregations of the South Dakota District and by the generous unrestricted financial gifts which individuals or families have donated to the South Dakota District.

Program Management:

- Applications will be received and managed by the District Executive Secretary.
- The Executive Secretary will appoint 2 laypeople from the District to consider the grant applications. One layperson will reside in a rural area and the other will reside in a larger community.
- The final decision on grant proposals and grant amounts resides with the South Dakota District Board of Directors.

APPLICATION

Name of congregation_____

Address_____

Contact person's name_____

Position_____

Signature_____

Telephone () _____

E-mail_____

Pastor's name_____

Signature_____

Telephone () _____

E-mail_____

Application Deadline: October 1, 2017

Return Application and Accompanying Materials To:

Electronically: sdexec@midco.net

**Mail: South Dakota District, LCMS
C/O Executive Secretary
PO Box 89110
Sioux Falls, SD 57109-9110**

I. Proposal (Please use other side or separate sheets of paper to provide information)

A. What is the plan for your activity or ministry? Provide such information as:

An explanation of your activity or ministry.

What people will be involved in your activity or ministry?

How will the activity or ministry be carried out?

How will the people of your congregation or school be impacted by this activity or ministry?

What demographic will you be serving and who will be impacted by your activity or ministry? (e.g. low income families, elderly, youth, young adults, handicapped, military veterans, homeless, etc.)

What need or opportunity for outreach is being fulfilled through this activity or ministry?

Will you partner with any other group or organization in this activity or ministry? (e.g. other congregations, community groups, businesses, etc.)

B. What will be the impact of your activity or ministry? Provide such information as:

What types of critical events will take place through this activity or ministry?

(e.g. Will participants grow in their Christian faith; will participants be given opportunity to verbally witness their Christian faith to others; will there be one large event where many people are impacted; will there be a series of events that will effect people)

How, specifically, will this activity or ministry make an impact? What do you hope happens as a result of this activity or ministry?

If this is an existing activity or ministry, what have been the results of it in the past?

Do you foresee this activity or ministry increasing church attendance, church membership, or school enrollment? If so, in what way?

Budget Information Sheet

Total Project Budget

Itemize Project Budget Expenses

Amount

_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____

TOTAL EXPENSES \$ _____

What financial support is the congregation or school providing for this activity or ministry?

AMOUNT: \$ _____

What is the congregation's or school's plan for continued funding of this activity or ministry?

What is your grant request:

One Year Grant: \$ _____

Multi-year Partnership Grant (2-3 years): Total: \$ _____

Year 1: \$ _____

Year 2: \$ _____

Year 3: \$ _____

HARVEST Grant Examples

- Father/Son, Mother/Daughter, Mother/Son, Father/Daughter Event
- “Holy Smokers”: Men’s barbecue group and community meal
- Rent out a movie theater for a religious movie, invite community
- Lutheran Hour Broadcast time on local radio station
- Broadcast time on tv/radio for congregation’s worship services
- Partner with congregation for a church planter
- Partner with a congregation for a Director of Christian Outreach summer intern
- Congregation Life Team to volunteer at a crisis pregnancy center
- Summer lunch program for low income children
- Monthly community movie night at a congregation or rent out a theater
- Financial Peace University at a congregation, public invited to attend
- Recognition of public servants from the community
- Outreach to a particular ethnic population in the community
- Provide services to military personnel through Operation Barnabas
- Provide winter clothes to low income families in the community
- Provide tracts, promotion materials, Bibles for congregation canvassing neighborhood
- End of life seminar, community is invited
- Food pantry that is open to the public
- Partner with school for an admission counselor
- School promotions on tv/radio
- Tuition assistance to low-income families
- School hosts a parenting class, seminar, or event
- School provides students with an opportunity for witness/mercy in community

- Put on a “how to fix-it” that teaches people how to make their own simple home repairs
- Hold a tax preparation event that helps people prepare their taxes
- Prepare meals ahead of time that can be frozen and provided to people or families in times of crisis
- Conduct a teddy bear drive for hospitalized children
- Host a Veteran’s Day event as a thank you to area military veterans
- Put on a cross-cultural event where people are introduced to new cultures and their food
- Conduct a health fair for the community
- Host a community Thanksgiving dinner for community members who have nowhere or no one to celebrate the holiday with
- Host, on a regular basis, “parents night out” by providing childcare for children so that parents can have a “date night.” Make the childcare time a sort of mini-VBS for the kids.