



**British Columbia Synod**  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

## Guide to BC Synod Experiments



*I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. Isaiah 43:19*

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## **1. CHOOSING YOUR EXPERIMENT**

### **WHAT IS GOD UP TO IN THE BC SYNOD?**

*What is God up to in our communities?*

*How can we learn what the Spirit is doing in our world?*

*What experiments can help us get to know and journey with our neighbours?*



Stepping out and trying something new can be scary. Being brave, taking risks, and putting ourselves out there in our neighbourhoods can be daunting. Rooted in God's unconditional love, we are washed by the waters of grace that free us from striving for perfection and success. In Christ Jesus, we have the freedom to take risks and to discern God's presence that is alive and active in our world. So are you ready to explore and experiment? Have any ideas how to hear, see, learn, and join in what God is up to in your community?

### **EXPERIMENT CRITERIA**

We are inviting applications for grants to fund neighbourhood and community experiments and learning opportunities that meet one or more of the following criteria:

- a) explore what God is doing in your neighbourhood
- b) seek to develop relationships with others in your community
- c) encourage participation in God's mission in the local community
- d) encourage action and reflection learning

Through these experiments, we will continue to learn from and with each other as we share our stories, experiences, and our learning with the rest of our synod and the wider church.

## FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Experiments need not be large-scale or require the commitment of large dollar amounts. Successful applications are inspired by imagination and a curiosity about what God is up to in our midst. A congregation may have up to three open ongoing experiments at one time.

Grants are funded through the ELCIC Mission Fund, and are given on a one-time basis and are not intended to subsidize ongoing funding needs of regular church programming. Grant recipients will be asked to give an accounting of how the grant money is spent, and to return any unused funds.

## APPLICATION INTAKE DATES

Completed grant applications should be submitted to the BC Synod Office, [bcsynod@elcic.ca](mailto:bcsynod@elcic.ca) ahead of one of the three annual intake dates, **February 15, May 15 and October 15**. The Missions Committee oversees the process for reviewing applications, and for administering grant monies to support experiments undertaken by congregations.

As part of the granting process, applicants may be invited to meet with the Missions Committee in a scheduled ZOOM teleconference. Details of how the meeting will be arranged will be shared with applicants.

Grant recipients will also be invited to submit the “faith story” of their missional experiments, which will be shared with the synod and the communities. Throughout this guide you will find focusing and reflection questions to assist you with preparation, planning, and summarizing your learnings along the way. These questions are designed to assist you to create and explore possibilities. Please make use of the questions that are helpful and feel free to add your own as well.

If you have any other questions or would like to discuss your experiment prior to submitting an application, please feel free to contact our Synod's Mission Consultant through the BC Synod office, [bcsynod@elcic.ca](mailto:bcsynod@elcic.ca).

## **CHOOSING YOUR EXPERIMENT FOCUSING AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

What are people talking about in our community?

How is God already at work in our neighbourhood?

What changes have taken place recently that we are curious about?

Who in the community have we been thinking about reaching out to?

What relationships do we already have that could be strengthened?

What opportunities are there to participate in God's mission in our neighbourhood?

How does our experiment meet the criteria on page 3?



## 2. **PLANNING YOUR EXPERIMENT**

*Commit your work to the LORD, and your plans will be established. Proverbs 16:3*

### **PLANNING YOUR EXPERIMENT FOCUSING AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

What would be the ideal outcome of this experiment?

Who will be involved?

How do we plan to inform and/or engage our church council and congregation?

What is the timeline?

What funds will be required? What other sources of funding can we access?

What is important to our congregation and neighbourhood about this experiment?

How are we hoping people beyond our church community will be involved?

How will we share the learnings from this experiment with others?

What else do we need to consider before submitting the application form?

## APPLICATION FORM

Once you are ready to submit your application, you can access it here:

<https://bcsynod.org/resources/funds-grants>

A reminder that the annual deadlines for completed submissions are: **February 15, May 15 and October 15**. Application forms are to be submitted through the BC Synod office at [bcsynod@elcic.ca](mailto:bcsynod@elcic.ca).

## PREPARING FOR THE INITIAL MEETING

As part of the granting process, applicants may be invited to meet with the Missions Committee in a scheduled ZOOM teleconference. If we would like to meet with you, we will connect with you with with some options for setting up this meeting. In some cases we may require more information prior to considering your application. Here are a few questions to consider in advance of the meeting.

Who from our congregation and/or partners will attend?

What would we like to accomplish as a result of this meeting?

What information in addition to the application form may be helpful to the Committee?

What do we want the Missions Committee to understand about why we are passionate about this project?

What questions do we have for the Missions Committee?

What support do we need from the Missions Committee? From others?

### 3. MAKING IT HAPPEN

*Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. 1 Peter 4:10*



### MAKING IT HAPPEN FOCUS AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What are we noticing now that the experiment is underway?

How are we keeping track of our progress?

How has this experiment shifted from the original plan?

What is working well so far?

What unexpected challenges have come up?

What do we need to change or reevaluate?

Who else would benefit from becoming involved?

What new opportunities are opening up?

How are we embracing these opportunities?

What is still missing? What else?

What is our greatest learning so far?

What valuable feedback have we received from others?



What is the best way to share this experience with others?

What additional creative ideas do we have to document what we are learning?

What assistance do we need?

### **OPTIONAL MID POINT CHECK IN**

We invite you to use the questions above to reflect as a group and if you feel your team would benefit from a mid point check in with the Missions Committee please connect with us. If you have questions or require support along the way, please feel free to contact our Synod's Mission Consultant through the BC Synod office, [bcsynod@elcic.ca](mailto:bcsynod@elcic.ca).



## **4. REFLECTION AND LEARNING**

### **SHARED LEARNING**

### **SHARING YOUR FAITH STORY**

Grant recipients will be invited to submit their “faith story.” Through these experiments, we will continue to learn from and with each other as we share our stories, experiences, and our learning with the rest of our Synod, the communities, and the wider church.

### **REFLECTIONS FROM PAST EXPERIMENTS**

There may be a congregation at this very moment considering an experiment, and your experience could be an inspiration to them. There may also be past experiments where lessons learned can be of great value to you. You may wish to connect with our Synod's Mission Consultant through the BC Synod office, [bcsynod@elcic.ca](mailto:bcsynod@elcic.ca), as we have a library of faith stories and may be able to connect you with others who can offer wisdom and encouragement along the way.

## REPORTING FORM AND FOLLOW UP MEETING

When your experiment is complete you are required to fill out the reporting form. This form is available in word and pdf and can be found here: <https://bcsynod.org/resources/funds-grants>. The form contains the questions below along with a space for financial reporting. Just a reminder that any unused funds are to be returned to the BC Synod office.

In addition the Missions Committee may contact you to schedule a follow up meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to celebrate successes and reflect on learnings using these questions from the reporting form as a guide.

1. Briefly describe for us your experiment:
  - What was the intended outcome?
  - Who was involved?
  - What was the activity you planned?
2. How did you hope people beyond your church community would be involved?
3. Were there any challenges you faced in making your experiment happen? If so, can you share briefly what those were?
4. What did you learn or discover through this experiment?
  - Did it turn out the way you expected?
  - If not, how did it shift or change from what you set out to do?
5. Our God is a God of surprises. In the course of doing this experiment were there any surprises? If so, can you tell us a little more about what these surprises were and how you responded?
6. God is a God of connections. When you think about what you experienced and with whom you connected, what developed in your relationships with others in your community as a result of your experiment?

7. What has the impact of this experiment been on you as leaders of the experiment?

- How about the rest of your congregation and leadership?
- Did you hear any comments from people in your community?

8. Can you think of any times during your experiment where you had what you might call “God moments,” that is, times when it felt like you caught a glimpse of God’s presence?

- Perhaps in the neighbourhood, in the people you met, or the way that something unfolded?
- Or might there have been things that may have reminded you of a Bible story or given you a new insight into what Jesus/God/the Spirit might be up to with you, with us as church and those all around us?

9. Is there anything else you would like to share, or that you would like other people to know as a result of having done your experiment?