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Good afternoon everyone!

My name is Britney Winn Lee, and I'm honored to be with you today to talk about Grant Writing. I am an author, editor, nonprofit professional, and soon-to-be-seminarian who's had the immense privilege of working with our Louisiana United Methodist conference in a variety of ways over the last few years.

Typically, my connection has been as a liturgist for Annual Conference or events like the upcoming clergy retreat. However, I'm thrilled to be getting to use a different muscle today by sharing with you some experience and insight in the world of grant writing. Since graduating college, I have had opportunities over the last twelve years to facilitate grant programs from the vantage point of the organization processing applications and awarding proposals, as well as apply for program and operating grants as a director for both church and nonprofit work. In addition, I've applied for and received personal writing grants to fund book and research projects, including grants powered by the Lily Foundation at both Collegeville and Louisville Institutes. This past March I received my masters in Nonprofit Administration through Louisiana State University Shreveport which provided a comprehensive understanding of grant writing, funding ethics, accounting and reporting, and legality, among other areas in the field.

However, I promise not to try and condense a masters program into a 2hr seminar today. And instead, with my church experience in tow, I've synthesized some of the information and resources that I think are most pertinent for clergy and lay leaders in our conference at this time.

As we get started, please take a second to introduce yourself in the chat. Let us know who you are and what community and/or church you're a part of. Alright! Let's get started!

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To begin, let's take a brief look at what you can expect for our time together. In this first hour, we will be focusing on the reasoning for grants, establishing need or intent, and identifying grant opportunities. After that, we'll take a short break

around the hour mark before coming back to discuss proposals and narratives, data systems, ethics and reporting. What I hope you'll leave with here today is a less theoretical and more practical understanding of grant writing, some resources for what grants are available to you, concrete ideas for your next steps, and connections among the group and the foundation for ideas and collaboration.

Any questions about the outline of our time together?

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Abraham Lincoln said: "The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew."

I do not have to tell most of you here that we are in uncomfortable financial times as individuals, as a country, and as the church. Speaking to church finances specifically, on top of the Pew Research Center's report *before* the pandemic in 2019 that 65% of Americans do not attend church—adding to the conversation of what some are calling a "mass exodus" from organized religion—we are also faced with the challenges of COVID and for some hurricane upheaval.

In their article "8 Financial Lessons for the Post-Pandemic Church," writers Lovett Weems and Ann Michel from the Lewis Center for Church Leadership share that "In the aftershocks of the COVID-19 crisis, many churches [are facing] a period of financial reckoning. [And the following] eight principles can help right the ship. They are all sound practices in the best of times, but are even more critical now as the church navigates uncharted territory in the post-pandemic world."

Their eight lessons include: knowing your givers, continuing to ask people to give while doing so in sensitive ways, extending generosity efforts beyond the walls of the church, developing multiple streams of income, taking the opportunity to reassess expenses, being realistic when setting your budget, maintaining a reserve fund, and knowing where you stand.

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These of course can all be applied to areas and homes outside of the church. For the purposes of this webinar, we are focusing today on the fourth lesson: developing multiple streams of income. Weems and Michel write, “In the post-pandemic era, many more churches will find it necessary to develop funding sources beyond tithes and offerings . . .

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“ . . . Churches often see their financial circumstances through the lens of scarcity, failing to recognize assets and opportunities within their grasp. A more holistic approach to economic sustainability can involve greater creativity in deploying physical assets, seeking new partners and sources of support, and embracing more efficient ways of sustaining the [mission].”

Maybe this means reimagining and repurposing our spaces. Maybe this means taking notes from some of the things we learned when we had to be virtual in order to better share the load or slough off what’s not really serving us. Maybe this means assessing our programs and visions with our leadership and finance teams in order to see what types of grant opportunities are out there just waiting on communities and ideas like ours to support.

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Typically, when people think “grants,” they think nonprofit organizations that qualify for 501c3 status. They do not always realize that churches are automatically recognized as 501c3 charitable organizations by the IRS; and they do not always realize that there are grants available as well to individuals outside of or in conjunction with 501c3 statuses.

Let me give you a couple of examples.

On the church 501c3 status side, I worked for five years as the director of Noel Community Arts Program which was a mission outreach of Noel Memorial UMC in Shreveport. Noel Community Arts Program is currently working toward establishing its own 501c3 status aside from the church in order to expand its fundraising and programming efforts, but for its first 12 years it functioned under the umbrella of the church’s 501c3 and for years now has run the outreach side

of its art and music lessons in the neighborhood through a consistently awarded foundation grant. Now would this particular foundation be willing to award money for Noel to keep the lights on during low donation seasons? I'm not sure, but I would think it is unlikely. However, Noel was able to identify one niche area of ministry that honed in on the arts as well as the local under-resourced neighborhood in order to qualify for those dollars, thereby freeing up other funding within the church to run operations.

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Now on an individual level, three years ago I set out to compile a call and response liturgy book for people interested in content that fell at the intersection of faith and justice. On account of my limited experience, I knew that to do right by the topics, the book would need to contain voices from multiple marginalized areas of society. And by nature of the ethics surrounding fair pay for fair work, especially when requesting contributions from marginalized writers, I knew that there would need to be a funding source in order to offer compensation—a funding source that I could not personally provide but for which I might be able to write a grant.

Knowing my dilemma, a friend of mine told me about a grant opportunity called the Louisville Institute's Pastoral Project Grant, which awarded up to \$15K for pastors or ministry leaders who were engaged in projects that were adding to the conversation of a changing church. And though I was a lay leader who was applying as an individual, the grant was set up in such a way that —while it asked for information about my affiliated faith community—it did not require funding to funnel through a 501c3.

And these are just two very specific examples of countless opportunities out there for your organizations or personal projects alike.

The folks at fundingforgood.org share: "There are many foundations that exist specifically to advance the mission of specific churches, denominations, religious beliefs, schools of theology, sabbaticals for clergy and faith-based nonprofits. How can you locate these funds? This type of research is the same as all the rest, you just have to know where to look.

There are funds for building, renovation, education, programs, projects and community services that churches and missions provide. One specific example is The Duke Endowment. One of their priority areas is Rural Methodist Churches. That is a super-specific type of funding that they provide in NC.

Don't assume that you can always find funding for your church need. As with all churches and grants, the organizational need(s) and the foundation priorities must be a match before success can happen.

Initially, all grant research involves realistically determining your research criteria (your needs, your area of impact, your area of service, etc.). Then you begin searching for the foundations that want to support those specific things."

This brings us to intent.

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It would be a mistake to run headfirst into a grant opportunity simply because you've heard there are funds available or because you are seeing more red than black in your organization's accounts. Developing a clear picture for exactly what will be accomplished with the grant money is truly the first step. Here are some questions that can help you as individuals, groups, or churches develop a clear pictures from the get-go (source: *Managing a Nonprofit* by John Riddle, p136):

- Is this project necessary? Why?
- How am I or how is our organization uniquely qualified to meet this need?
- What specific objective do I/we want to accomplish?
- How will I/we know whether we have achieved those goals?
- What group of people will be served?
- How will those people benefit from this program?
- How will I/we let them know that our program is available?
- How will I/we spend each dime of the grant money, exactly?
- Who will be in charge of the project and budget?
- Who will assist that person?
- Does someone need to be hired to carry out this work?
- When will we start?
- When will the project end (or will it continue indefinitely)?
- What systems for recording and reporting numbers and narratives will we use?

Once this framework is established and addressed, your funding source research will be equipped with the necessary information for finding the best match for your project. An additional benefit is that many proposals will require you to outline much of the information you'll have already gathered, so that work will be completed on the front end.

Now, how to identify funding agencies . . . This is the big question.

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- A. Google. I cannot even imagine a time of grant-writing when Google was not a thing. A simple google search such as “United Methodist Grants” will offer your applicable results such as Website Development Grants or Peace with Justice Project Grants or Confidential Clergy Counseling Grants. Most funding opportunities will be clear and explicit in both their title and explanation of what they're supporting, who qualifies, and when an application is due. These are the main things to identify at first.
- B. Contact your local foundations. Whether that's the methodist foundation, a private family foundation, or your regional community foundation—reach out to see what types of grants they are currently awarding and whether or not you qualify as an organization or individual.
- C. Ask for new leads. Lastly, do not hesitate to ask any of the above contacts through phone or email what other opportunities are out there that they are familiar with that may suit your needs at this time. No one is in that world and aware of other funding sources like them, and most of the time if you are not a good match for their dollars, they can point you in the direction of a better match who is.

Any questions about that before we move on?

Once you have the grant application or applications selected, it's time to study the requirements and make a punch list of what you will need and from whom. Typically this will be things like a timeline, itemized budget, bio and qualifications of person who will be directing this project and managing the funds, testimonies, stories, and if it is an already established program, the stats that correlate with

who has been served, how often, and in what ways. If it is not already established, these numbers will need to be projected.

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Let's put a little note in here about creating budgets: details are king. Make sure that the areas for which you are asking for support and those you anticipate reporting on are represented in your budget. This will inform your data collection later on. An example of a budget might include:

- Travel expenses
- Event supplies
- Contract worker payments
- Utilities
- Location rental
- Supplemental salary
- Copies, print, postage
- Misc.

And each of these examples could have subitems underneath.

Grant applications vary widely and they're all determined by the organization needs and stipulations set forth by the funder. I have written grants that have taken months to collect all necessary pieces including half a year's worth of data, a secretary of state office's letter of good standing, letters of recommendation, and a detailed calendar of projected events. These have also often come with a strict reporting schedule and hours of time commitment.

AND I have written grants that ask for a loose budget (that can be subject to change as needed) along with a narrative and willingness to send a final report once all money is spent.

Two things to consider at this point in the process are:

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1. Is the funding worth the requirements to receive it? If it is going to take 500hrs of your time and only save your organization \$1300 (which is an experience I had), then it is likely not worth it and there are likely other avenues that make more sense for your schedule and needs.
2. Are the grant specifics aligned *enough* with my purposes or our ministry to help move us forward in mission?

To that second point, there may be instances where the program or project that you're pitching would be more highly considered *if* a certain aspect of your proposal were highlighted more explicitly. For instance, maybe you would like to write a grant to fund a community betterment program in your church's neighborhood and originally this project included afterschool childcare and beautification projects such as community murals. However, the specific grant you are writing is being awarded by a funding source that puts high priority on environmental care. This is where you must ask yourself if crafting your project's proposal to include such a direction fits with your capabilities, your area's needs, and the general mission of the effort. Maybe in addition to community murals, you also write in a community garden or a few days for leading neighbors in a fruit tree planting or trash pickup opportunity.

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Curating your application to better fit a funder's interest is only troublesome when it takes away from the forward movement of your particular mission. Which is why it's so important to have that established ahead of time.

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Ok, before we take a break and speak to narrative writing, I'd like to take some minutes to have you share (in the chat?) what types of personal or organizational projects you are considering at the moment for grant applications and/or what types of projects are you aware of that have been funding by grants if you do not currently have one in the works. (share...Debra will also share)

A few reasons I think it's so important to share these ideas with one another are that, well, I don't want you to fall asleep. But also, this is how we gain inspiration for our own context *and* how we identify opportunities for potential collaboration.

Which makes this a great time to point out that funders *love* when collaboration can happen among organizations or individuals through a specific grant. A few years ago, I wrote a grant for a mosaic community mural which ended up being facilitated by an arts program, located at a local health center and affordable pharmacy, and incorporated the service hours of local elementary kids, elderly nonprofits, and afterschool care facilities. It was highly appealing to the funders that three nonprofits would be involved and that ultimately, 600-1000 community members would be engaged through those nonprofits' differing circles. If you can collaborate, do.

Okay, this is a lot of information and seems like a good place to take a stretch break. So let's take about 7 minutes and let's come back at ____ .

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Alright, let's talk for a minute about narratives. Almost every grant I have ever written or awarded has included a narrative. This is typically a 1-5 page written essay inviting funders into a better understanding of who you or your organization or congregation are, what you know, what research and organizing work you've done up to this point, and how you believe this will benefit the common good should you be awarded the money.

A typical template to follow when writing a narrative looks like this:

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- Project Summary (1-2 sentences, the elevator pitch, can start with a stat from a study or quote from a scholar or well known voice)
- Project Scope (1-2 pages, includes need, activities, and deliverables, it's good to include some personalized testimonies or quotes here)
- Project personnel and schedule (2-3 paragraphs)
- Numbers (budget in paragraph form if not specified as itemized or if itemized is requested later)
- Projected effects (1-2 paragraphs summarizing anticipated impact)

There are countless narrative examples online. *And* if you are applying for an annual grant or multiple grants that are similar, you do not have to have a completely new narrative for them. It is good to shift some of the language and not just copy and paste, but you do not need to reinvent the wheel every time you sit down to work on an application.

The narrative is similar to the reporting in that this is your opportunity to infuse some humanity into a process that can easily become sterile and lifeless. For many of us, grants are not the end but the means—and they should be! Grants are the vehicles that help carry our projects and passions into the world. They are the resource that enables the story. So any opportunity you have to tell the story, do. This is one of them, and reporting is definitely another.

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When it comes to reporting on a grant, similar to how each grant has a different application process and requirements, every grant will vary in what it expects regarding reporting. However, most will ask for something once all the funds have been spent. This might look like a simple email that confirms that the projected budget was indeed how the dollars were spent or it may look like a file of receipts, a breakdown of attendance, another narrative explaining outcome, etc. Again, make sure before you apply that you're aware of what is expected of you and whether or not that fits with your needs and capabilities.

To report well, regardless of expectations, these are some good rules of thumb.

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1. Create a data system. Data equals dollars. Even if the numbers aren't expected for your current grant's funders, there may come a time when they are needed for another application. Utilize google docs and excel, have people sign in or counted at your events, keep up with attendants, keep up with expenses, keep up with financial tracking. Revisit it at least monthly which will save you so much time in the end.
2. Make your reports personalized. Send pictures. Send thank you notes. Add your funders/foundations to your website or event brochures. Gather testimonies. Those who run the grant programs are not robots. They likely

do what they do because they want to see goodness multiplied in the world. They likely care far more if not just as much about knowing that your pottery program became a safe haven for those navigating divorce or diagnoses as they are about knowing how many hours you served how many people. Again, the story matters most.

3. Report more often than is required. This is not mandatory, but it is a nice rule of thumb. If a granter asks that you send a final report at the end of the year, consider sending a quarterly report of some sort—a thank you card, a collage of pictures, an invitation to upcoming event, etc.

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Now, before we move on to a question and answer time, I want to make sure we cover some basic rules of thumb for grant proposals. Some of these can be found in John Riddle's book *Managing Nonprofits* while some I have added.

1. Do not ask for more than you need.
2. Take your time writing the proposal.
3. Never lie.
4. Never use the exact same proposal twice.
5. Be upfront about asking for money. This is not the time to be inconspicuous—everyone understands what's happening.
6. Don't waste time getting to the point.
7. Do not use grant funds for anything other than what was written in the proposal and agreed upon by granters.
8. Contact funders with questions about amendments.
9. Collect more data than you think you need.
10. Prioritize the story.

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Kelly shares what follow-up will come.

Ok again, this presentation, its notes, recording, and grant list will all be sent you following this call. But I do want to take some time for any questions about any of the content we've covered today. I cannot promise that I'll have an answer, but I can promise that I will research your question if I do not and be in touch.

Debra will plug next three webinars.