



Women's Giving Circle

Women's Giving Circle Invitation-Only Grant Application

Thank you for accepting our invitation to apply for a grant from the Women's Giving Circle (WGC), an initiative of the Catholic Community Foundation of the Diocese of Cleveland. Please respond clearly and concisely and adhere to the word limits below.

Organization Name: Office of Lay Ecclesial Ministry (Formation)

Address of Organization: 28700 Euclid Avenue; Wickliffe, OH 44092

Organization Snapshot (75 words max)

Briefly describe your organization's mission, whom you serve, and where you serve.

The Lay Ecclesial Ministry Office of the Diocese of Cleveland forms and certifies lay women and men for professional ministry in parishes and diocesan ministries throughout Northeast Ohio. As Bishop Edward C. Malesic affirms, this program is "critical for preparing lay women and men to serve our local Church." Through a three-year process of spiritual, pastoral, human, and academic formation, we prepare ministers who serve vibrant parish communities focused on worship, evangelization, and service.

Project Summary (100 words max)

Describe the specific project or program for which you are requesting Women's Giving Circle support.

The Lay Ecclesial Ministry Scholarship Fund provides tuition assistance for candidates pursuing required academic coursework for diocesan certification. Bishop Malesic emphasizes that forming lay ecclesial ministers is essential to strengthening the church's mission by ensuring ministers are "spiritually grounded, theologically prepared, and pastorally skilled." Women's Giving Circle support will offset university-level tuition costs so financial barriers do not hinder candidates—particularly women—called to serve in parish and diocesan ministry. Scholarship grants cover a portion of approved theology and ministry courses required for certification by the Bishop. This funding ensures that qualified lay leaders can receive comprehensive academic formation.

Community Need (100 words max)

What need does this project address, and why is it important at this time?

Parishes across the Diocese of Cleveland increasingly rely on well-formed lay ecclesial ministers to lead faith formation, pastoral care, OCIA, youth ministry, sacramental preparation, and parish administration. Many candidates are women serving in volunteer or part-time ministry roles while balancing family and professional responsibilities. Rising university tuition costs create significant financial strain and may discourage qualified leaders from completing certification. Without scholarship assistance, the cost of theological education can become a barrier to quality formation. This project ensures that those called to ministry can pursue rigorous academic preparation without financial hardship limiting their response.

Impact & Outcomes (100 words max)

What impact do you expect this project to have? Include one or two measurable outcomes

Women's Giving Circle support will directly increase access to academic formation for lay ecclesial ministry candidates. We anticipate funding multiple courses annually, enabling candidates to complete required theology and ministry coursework toward diocesan certification.

Measurable Outcomes:

- Provide tuition assistance for all 10 academic courses.
- Support 5 candidates (primarily women) progressing toward certification by the

Bishop.

The long-term impact includes stronger parish leadership, enhanced faith formation, and sustained pastoral vitality across the Diocese of Cleveland through well-formed, credentialed lay ministers.

Use of Women's Giving Circle Funds (75 words max)

How will Women's Giving Circle funds be used?

Women's Giving Circle funds will be used exclusively for tuition grants awarded through the Lay Ecclesial Ministry Scholarship Fund. Grants cover one-third of the cost of approved academic courses required for certification. Funds are paid directly toward tuition expenses for candidates in good standing. Support will reduce out-of-pocket educational costs and ensure continued progress toward diocesan certification.

Alignment with Catholic Values (75 words max)

How does this project align with Catholic values or Catholic Social Teaching?

This project advances Catholic Social Teaching and Catholic values by promoting the dignity of vocation, co-responsibility of the laity, and the formation of servant leaders for the Church. It strengthens the Church's mission by equipping lay women to serve faithfully and competently. By removing financial barriers to theological education, the project fosters stewardship, leadership development, and vibrant parish communities rooted in faith and service.

Partnerships (50 words max, if applicable)

Briefly describe any project partnerships.

The Scholarship Fund operates in collaboration with the Catholic Community Foundation and accredited Catholic universities, including St. Mary Seminary, John Carroll University, St. Joseph's College of Maine and the Mary Mother of the Good Shepherd Institute. Candidates also serve in partnership with local parishes and diocesan ministries throughout Northeast Ohio.

Funding Request:

Amount Requested: \$18,250

Total Project Budget: \$57,850

Signature:

Michelle Nowak

Name: Michelle Nowak

Title: Director of Lay Ecclesial Ministry Office