

## LoveStruck Leadership Project Description, Goals & Outcomes

**Name Project:** LoveStruck Leadership Project

**Grant Amount:** \$40,000      **Total Project Budget:** \$49,300

**Start Date for Project:** Spring 2019      **End Date for Project:** Spring 2022

### **LoveStruck**

“Martin Luther King Jr. called for us to be lovestruck with each other, not colorblind toward each other. To be lovestruck is to care, to have deep compassion, and to be concerned for each and every individual, including the poor and vulnerable.”

— Cornel West in his Forward to Michelle Alexander’s *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (2012).

### **LoveStruck Leadership background in the New Jersey Synod**

For many years the New Jersey Synod has intentionally worked to foster relationships among many of our urban congregations whose primary populations are people of color. Many of these congregations are in communities of poverty.

This relationship building included intentional youth leadership mentoring within the congregations and the opportunities for leadership roles during our annual Synodical Multicultural Youth Leadership Event (SMYLE).

In 2014 we formed a team of 23 young leaders of color and their pastors from 5 inner-city congregations which led two activities at the 2015 ELCA Youth Gathering in Detroit. One activity was focussed on peace-building, called *Peace Puppets*, the other was focussed on safe conversations about race, racism and God, called *LoveStruck*. This two year project taught us much about developing young leaders of color with a 4-point partnership of synod, pastor (or other key adult leader), congregation, and young leaders.

We built on this learning by creating a new LoveStruck team of 21 young leaders of color and their pastors from 7 inner-city congregations (5 of which were a part of the previous LoveStruck team) which led a similar LoveStruck activity at the 2018 ELCA Youth Gathering in Houston.

### **LoveStruck Leadership Project**

The LoveStruck Leadership Project (LLP) will build on the strong foundations of these previous ministry efforts, both on what we have learned from them and on the ministry relationships that have been formed and strengthened.

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LLP will be a 5-point partnership to raise up, strengthen and walk alongside young leaders of color in 6 New Jersey Synod congregations as they live out their call by a God of extravagant love to accompany and lead a church and world that needs them. Each congregation will identify 2-6 young people of color, ages 12-19, who exhibits gifts of leadership, maturity, faithfulness and a loving heart.

The partners are:

1. Young Adult River Guides. Two young adults of color will serve as primary leaders for the project. They'll foster the necessary relationships between all of the partners, as well as serving as faith-leader models.
2. LoveStruck Congregations. Six congregations of the New Jersey Synod which are led and populated primarily by people of color. All are in either working class neighborhoods or in communities of poverty and/or immigrants communities.
3. Multi-congregation Cohorts. The LoveStruck Congregations will be place into two cohort groups along ethnic or geographic lines.
4. New Jersey Synod & Churchwide. Key leaders and ministry opportunities within the wider church will be identified and cultivated.
5. Family & Home. The family/home of the Young LoveStruck Leaders will be intentionally engaged, both in an effort to strengthen them as communities of faith and to help them in supporting and growing their young leaders.

This project will strengthen and transform the ministry life of all partner organizations with which our young LoveStruck Leaders will learn from, teach, walk with, serve shoulder-to-shoulder, and dream holy dreams.

The attached diagram shows ways in which the LoveStruck Partners will work together to grow in faith while accompanying young leaders of color and their congregations as together we live out our call to nurture life-giving relationships with God, each other, and the world.

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### **Project Goals:**

1. Raise up and strengthen young faith-filled leaders of color.
  - a. Surround these young leaders with multiple individuals and communities who are intentionally walking with them in faith.
  - b. Give them multiple leadership opportunities that will utilize and grow their gifts as young faith-filled people of color.
2. Strengthen and equip congregations to accompany young faith-filled leaders of color.
3. Deepen our church's commitment and capacity to name, accompany, and lead with young faith-filled leaders of color.

### **Project Outcomes**

We expect to increase the number of young leaders of color in our congregations and in the New Jersey Synod. We expect that these leaders of color will have stronger faith communities to support them.

We expect to increase the capacity of our congregations and pastors in mentoring young leaders and their capacity to be served and led by them. We expect stronger congregations of vibrant faith in communities of color. We expect our congregations, synod and the wider church to be more deeply LoveStruck by a God who is alive and on fire to transform this world through everyone, including young people of color.