

## \$90K in ODF Grants Funds Helps Provide Security During Challenging Times

In early March, the Foundation's Grants Committee met to allocate funding for the 52 grant requests received this year. Eight volunteer Disciples' committee members had the arduous task of allocating more than \$90,000 to requests of more than \$297,000. Many of the requests were for community feeding programs for children, families and seniors experiencing food insecurity.

After a full day of discussion and review, the committee awarded 12 programs full funding, 30 programs partial funding and 10 programs

example, the community feeding programs at Central Christian Church, Enid; First Christian-Presbyterian Church, Pryor; and Southern Hills Christian Church, Edmond, continue to provide meals via carry-out and drive-up services. Central Christian Church, Enid's "Foster Feet" program is providing hundreds of new shoes to students and non-profit groups so individuals have new proper fitting footwear. First Christian Church, Lawton, constructed an exterior food pantry for easier access to necessary food items for

*"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." — Matthew 25:35-36, NIV*

received no funding this year. Prior to the meeting, committee members and staff spent days reviewing each application on the merits of the program or mission, the individuals impacted, whether the program was a duplicate of similar ongoing Regional programs and the funding necessary to support the program.

Grant checks were mailed to churches during the same time Oklahoman's were being urged to "shelter in place" due to the worldwide Coronavirus outbreak. Gatherings of more than 10 individuals were being discouraged. Churches and businesses closed and people lost their jobs or were being furloughed.

Although church buildings closed, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Churches in Oklahoma continued to serve in amazing ways through community outreach and virtual worship. They shared the message of Jesus Christ through open hands, open hearts and innovative actions.

This year's grant funds have already made a difference during this unsettling time for many. For

the homeless and food insecure. Western Oaks Christian Church, Oklahoma City, utilized grant funds to assist senior students at Putnam City West High School with purchase of internet services during the "sheltering in place" so they could complete online class work in order to graduate.

Other, churches stepped up to provide sacks of food to students while school was no longer in session. Forest Park Christian Church, Tulsa, in conjunction with Family Promise of Tulsa County used grant funds for transportation resources for families within the program who were seeking jobs or schooling.

This year marks the fourth year of ODF's Grants Program. Milestones were set with a record number of applications and funding.

Thanks to the churches and donors who have supported the Grants Program. ODF is very blessed to have the committee members who support the program and have graciously given their time and expertise to review applications and recommend funding.



Central Christian Church, Enid "Welcome Table" Serving Meals to the Community

A complete list of 2020 grant recipients, programs and funding awards is posted on the ODF website at [www.okdfd.org](http://www.okdfd.org).

View this same website later in the year for updates and a downloadable grant form for the 2021 grant cycle.

Please send an email to [grants@okdfd.org](mailto:grants@okdfd.org) if you would like to be added to the 2021 grants interest list for future correspondence.

**Support ODF**  
**Your gifts help the work of the Oklahoma Disciples Foundation to provide perpetual funding for the missions, ministry and grants for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Churches in Oklahoma.**

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*"Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth." — 1 John 3:18, NIV*

# CAN THE CHURCH SURVIVE?

COVID-19 has affected every person in the world. Daily lives and the way we do business have changed drastically and will continue to change. Church pastors and leaders have had to become innovative to reach their congregations.

While some Oklahoma Disciple Churches were equipped with the technology, knowledge and staff to stream services on such platforms as Zoom and Facebook, other churches scrambled to update video equipment and software in order to host virtual worship and meetings. Church ministry will survive and evolve if all do their part and we remain hopeful; however, the new normal may not reside in a church building.

It has been a learning process for all as well as an unexpected expense for churches. To top it off, church giving is down because people are not physically in church. Giving online or via a mobile application does not feel the same or is not as easy an option for some like dropping a check or envelope in the weekly offering plate.

However, a recent study from Givelify, a popular mobile giving app, reports faith-based groups that had already adopted online and mobile giving thrived during the pandemic. Of those surveyed, giving remained

consistent or increased slightly.

Dr. Bill Wilson, director for The Center for Healthy Churches in Clemmons, North Carolina, noted in an April 28, 2020, article on Faith & Leadership's website that given the unprecedented nature and unknown length of the pandemic shutdown, his best guess is that churches will suffer a 33% decline in giving in 2020. Drawing upon his work with several hundred churches over the past decade, he estimated that one-quarter to one-third of churches operate on thin or no reserves.

"As churches and faith communities find ways to innovatively engage one another virtually and in ways new to us, we can extend that care to all of our community, not just our church members. Doing so will show our world that we are the ones who enter when many others exit their life," wrote Dr. Wilson in his March 18, 2020 post on the Center of Healthy Churches website.

An April 28, 2020 article from Faith & Leadership (Duke Divinity) magazine stated, "The COVID-19 pandemic will surely have a long-term impact on the financial life of congregations, regardless of their denomination, size or makeup. How can churches survive and even thrive in a post-pandemic landscape?"

The Lake Institute on Faith & Giving at the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy is well known for the importance of addressing money in theological terms. Over the years, the Oklahoma Disciples Foundation (ODF) has sponsored guest speakers from The Lake Institute on Faith & Giving.

"The time for being humble and shy in making your case is over," noted institute director David King. "The time for talking about money as if it's taboo in a congregation should be over."

Rev. Bruce Barkhauer, director for the Center for Faith and Giving for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), has also been a guest speaker at several ODF stewardship programs and seminars. In 2019, Rev. Barkhauer made presentations on "Joyful Giving and Sharing God's Abundance" at three Oklahoma Disciple Churches and a dinner program in Oklahoma City.

In a recent article entitled, "What's Next," Rev. Barkhauer reminds the church that change has always been with us and that the true mission of the church will remain relevant.

"As an act of discipleship and response to a loving and grace-filled God, followers of Jesus will still need to faithfully steward their time, talents and resources to sustain the common good," Rev. Barkhauer wrote.




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Mail this form and check to the Foundation at the address listed above. Gifts may also be made via PayPal or credit card on our website listed above. Or, use the Givelify mobile app to donate to ODF.

**THANK YOU!**

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I am interested in receiving information on making a bequest to the Foundation.

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