

Multigenerational Disciples Serving as the Hands & Feet of Jesus in Jamaica

In mid-July, 33 multigenerational volunteers traveled to St. Mary's Parish, Jamaica to work, serve and provide hope to the community of Galina. Rev. Sondra Ladd, Senior Minister at First Christian Stillwater was the team leader of this trip. Over the years, she has led more than 20 teams to support this mission



Stone Mesa greeting children. This was his third trip.

where bonds and relationships have been formed. Participants for the July trip ranged in age from nine to 83. Several of the young adults were college students, college graduates or students taking a year off from studies.

Disciples volunteers were from FCC Stillwater, FCC Chandler and Central Christian Church, Enid as well as individuals from Oklahoma City, Edmond, Austin and Indiana.

ODF grants provided funding support for this year's mission work as well as trips prior to the pandemic.

The mission trip, organized through ACE (American-Caribbean Experience), is a Christ-based outreach ministry dedicated to transforming the community in the parish of St. Mary through education, healthcare, enterprise and discipleship. The ministry relies on volunteers from all over the world to come and share hands-on talents and spiritual gifts to empower the people of St. Mary, Jamaica.

ACE acquired a large parcel of land in Galina as a means to serve

"We faced challenges together; worked really hard and bonded deeply into a community of faith outside the walls of a building," said Rev. Ladd.

the community through increased job opportunities. The local hotel is the community's largest employer. However, once the land is cleared and ready, Galina will be a tourist stop for connecting cruise ships allowing for increased jobs and revenue. Plans for the grounds include a chocolate shop to be staffed by single moms who have learned the trade, purchased the



Vacation Bible School children.

equipment and make chocolate from a cocoa grove on the land. There will also be a farm, historic ruins tour and hiking trails.

Due to the pandemic and COVID restrictions, minimal work has been accomplished in Galina over the past two years. The ACE staff is currently at six full-time employees, down from a pre-pandemic staff of 30-40. The Oklahoma team spent the week working construction, farming, making home visits and hosting 200 children at VBS.

"The last day we took the kids on a field trip (150+) to the ruins for a hike," reported Rev. Ladd. "There are not words to describe the success of the day. Our team bonded, worked together, studied scripture, prayed and experienced the miraculous every day."

SEPTEMBER 14, 2022 INFORMATIONAL MEETING FOR JAMAICA MISSION TRIP AND ODF GRANTS FUNDING PROGRAM

Disciples church Pastors, do you or your congregational members have special talents to share on a mission trip? Would you like to learn more about the ACE, American Caribbean Experience, Jamaica Mission Trip? Would you like more information on the Oklahoma Disciples Foundation grants program to help fund your ministries and missions? There will be a brief informational meeting at the Region's Disciples Center in Oklahoma City on Wednesday, September 14, 2022 at 10 a.m. The meeting will probably last 1 ½ hours. Send an email to Julie Bowers (jabowers@okdfd.org) if you are planning to attend the meeting or would like additional information.

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2023 ODF Grant Applications and Guidelines are located on our website at <https://okdfd.org>. The application deadline is February 15, 2023.

Yale Avenue Christian Church, Tulsa On a Mission of Hope for the Future

Yale Avenue Christian Church (YACC) in Tulsa, Oklahoma is on a mission...or, better yet, several missions. The ODF Grants Committee has awarded 2022 grant funding for two of these emerging missions to support the growth of children and families and hope for the future.

YACC has been hosting The Village Fosters Support Meetings at the church since June 2021. This program serves foster children, foster parents, DHS workers and others interested in being a part of the village that helps with the foster system. Approximately 30-40 people attend these weekly support meetings. The goals are to raise awareness and erase stigmas about the foster system as well as support those involved. The mission advocates for better lives for foster children.

Since hosting the meetings, Rev. Andy Campbell noted a separate non-profit organization has been established, [The Village Fosters](#). The work of this group is to raise funds to plant additional chapters in other locations. The goal is to have 100 chapters by the end of 2032. Recently, a new host site was established at Disciples Christian Church in Bartlesville. It does take a village!

Another ministry of the church to help improve children's lives and self-esteem is a tutoring program for refugee children in Tulsa and surrounding communities. Rev. Sei Touthang has been instrumental in establishing and promoting this program. Sei and his wife, Ching, have established a non-profit called [International Love Ministries](#) to 1) provide training to Christian leaders in developing countries to become messengers in sharing God's love to people and lead them to Christ, and 2) provide tutoring programs for refugee children in Tulsa and surrounding areas.

On Saturday, August 20, 2022, YACC hosted a tutoring program "Kickoff Event" for students, families, teachers and supporters of the program. The fellowship hall was filled with more than 100 active children and hopeful adults. Guest speaker Rodger Randle, Professor and Director of the Center for Studies in Democracy and Culture at the University of Oklahoma, Tulsa, welcomed the students and parents. He shared with them the importance of education and how it can open many doors in life. Sei thanked his Board of Directors, donors, Rev. Andy Campbell and YACC staff as well as the Regional staff. He also thanked Rev. Don Johnson and Central Christian Church, Enid, OK, for providing new shoes from their Foster's Feet program to all the students. The highlight of the evening was cultural dances performed by groups of children and youth. The evening ended with a fellowship meal for all present. It takes love and a village.

The initial tutoring plan allowed for three paid teachers and several volunteers to tutor about 50 Burmese and Afghan refugee children in grades 5th through 9th. However, during the Kickoff event, Rev. Sei introduced five paid tutors and five volunteer mentors/tutors as well as numerous church and staff volunteers who will be assisting with this mission to tutor 59 children.

"Over 7,000 refugees live in the greater Tulsa area with the number increasing annually," said Sei. "Most refugee parents are uneducated and cannot help their children with their education. As a result, refugee students drop out of high school at a high rate and experience negative consequences."

In addition to sharing God's love and inspiring these children to want to graduate from high school, Sei said the long-term goal of this ministry is to prepare these students to be the future leaders in their communities.



Top & Left: Children performing traditional cultural dances. Above: Rev. Sei Touthang, YACC Minister.

