

Mission Partnership Grant Update

April 12, 2021

Well, I guess it's an understatement to say that a lot has happened in the last year, since we were granted funding through the Mission Partnership. As every individual and numerous businesses have been affected, so has Presbyterian Preschool Ministry of First Presbyterian Church of Lebanon.

As you now childcare has been a major concern for the country. How do we continue to provide care, when we may have to close due to mandates or exposure? How do we continue to pay our staff without tuition coming in? We were forced to close last school year due to governmental mandatory shut downs from March 16th through April 24th. We were allowed to reopen for essential workers on April 27th. We re-opened with 8 students attending.

This closer meant a major shift in staffing, curriculum, distance learning, and thousands of dollars of tuition reimbursement to families who paid in advance for the semester. The church and preschool applied for a PPP. Then I, as Director, started searching for additional grant opportunities through the state of Indiana, Family Social Services Administration, The Office of Out of School and Early Learning, United Way of Central Indiana, Indiana Association for the Education of Young Children, National Association for the Education of Young Children, and other agencies. We have been very successful bringing in approximately \$92,000 in grants in 2021. We have been very fortunate that our state agencies have worked diligently and continue to do so to provide grant opportunities for Early Childhood Education.

All the staff began working on distance learning through zoom, providing weekly/monthly learning packets, setting up closed Facebook accounts for students and parents. The building was closed and completely disinfected. Supplies were purchased through the grants for PPE, sanitation, changing of schedules to accommodate longer transition times and reduced group sizes, numerous individual class supplies for each child, not to mention monthly packets for students who were choosing not to return to the building, but to learn remotely. We also prerecorded all our programs this year, with the help of the church's technician and were able to show them on YouTube for the parents, as the building has not been opened to parents and large groups.

Somehow, we were able to continue our program on the path of competency. We were able to achieve Level 4 with the State of Indiana, and become NAEYC nationally accredited in 2021. We are the only ministry in the county with this distinction.

The Presbytery of Wabash Valley Mission funds were not only used for scholarships, but also to fund families who had a temporary reduction in income due to Covid 19. We are happy to say, all those families are back on track.

This year, we participated in two new community projects in conjunction with Boone County Solid Waste Management Recycling. The first community project was the REUSE Heart & Sole Annual Shoe Collection. REUSE Heart & Sole is a District wide shoe collection event where shoes can be provided to a new pair of feet! We typically don't think much about our shoes. We outgrow them, wear them out, or change styles without much thought as to what happens when we discard them. The truth is that discarded shoes can take over 200 years to decompose in a landfill which is a shame when there are so many people in need of shoes locally and all over the world. The District supports Changing Footprints, a Central Indiana non-profit that redistributes shoes to those in need all over Central Indiana.

The second is ABC, A Bench for Caps. To work towards the District's mission, the District is pleased to offer an opportunity for youth to learn about recycling and earn a recycled plastic bench for their school or other affiliated organization. The District sponsors the fee (up to \$300) for a six foot colored bench with back. The bench earned through the program must remain at an organization located in Boone County. It takes 500 pounds of caps to produce a bench. PPM has a goal of two benches, one for the playground and one for the courtyard.

Another school wide project that we received a grant for was establishing and maintaining a literacy project. Each child was given free books with the help of Hachette Books, book bag, and tracking sheet. Each child's goal was to read 40 books, 1200 as a school. The children would receive a prize for each 10 books read: playground chalk, Dairy Queen Coupon, bubble wand, and a Chick-fil-a meal. Dairy Queen and Chick-fil-a donated their prizes to the school. So far we have surpassed our goal and read 1950 books! We also had books donated from United Way of Central Indiana that the children can take home for free on a weekly basis until we run out. The 2nd part of the grant will help us set up a Literacy Lending Library for our students. We hope to have that up and running this summer.

We also received two Big Wheels from Indiana Members Credit Union and the Pacers to help encourage play and physical fitness.

We are always looking to improve our program, its impact on our community, and our relationship with the congregation. We continue to see God's hand in maintaining and sustaining our program. Many times in awe of what He has already taken care of, despite our worries. We give thanks to The Presbytery Mission Committee for supporting us in this difficult year. We look forward to a continued relationship in the future.