Outreach Committee Report for 2021

This year we received funding requests from seven agencies/organizations, each of which we saw as incredibly important and needed ministry. We preformed our due diligence to make sure that all the agencies requesting funding meet the criteria presented below and that our total proposed grants meets the funding cap given. The Association Council proposed for the funding year 2022 that around $90,500 in total be distributed to grant recipients.

The Outreach Committee in dialogue with the St Louis Association Council has continued to use the criteria below to approve agencies and congregational outreach programs for funding support. The criteria for approval of funding from the St. Louis Association include the following:

1. The requesting agency or program must have structural affiliation with a UCC church or be a UCC agency which is listed in the most recent year book of the United Church of Christ. This structural affiliation is defined as having a seated UCC Board representative, which represents the UCC and the St. Louis Association on the Board.

**OR**

1. The requesting agency or program must have two or more representatives from two or more UCC congregations, one of which is a member of the St. Louis Association of the Missouri Mid-South Conference of the United Church of Christ.
2. The main office of the requesting agency or program must be located within the community served by the member churches of the St. Louis Association.
3. The agency or program must have an affirmative action emphasis in their policies, practices, procedures and programs that encourage participation in their mission by persons of all ages, colors, abilities, genders, socio-economic status, housing status, veteran status, and sexual orientation.
4. The agency or program must certify that it will use the grant for the purposes specified in the application.
5. The agency or program will provide a brief written report to the St. Louis Association at the end of the program calendar year. The report will contain a brief summary of the program that was supported by the funds received from the St. Louis Association.
6. The program will be aligned with the mission and purpose of the St. Louis Association.

One-time grants for initiation must have two or more churches involved in the project and meet the guidelines above. The goal with the support of these projects is to encourage churches to work together in mission in the community. Additional Outreach dollars support projects in Memphis, TN and Arkansas that meet the criteria.

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| Ministry | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | Requested 2022 | Proposed 2022 |
| Unleashing Potential | $67,300 | $66,500 | $64,000 | $64,000 | $64,000 | $64,000 |
| Isaiah 58 | $11,000 | $6,500 | $6,500 | $9,000 | $12,000 | $10,000 |
| Lydia's House | $6,000 | $4,000 | $4,000 | $5,000 | $7,000 | $6,000 |
| Holy Trinity Food Pantry | $4,000 | $2,000 | $2,000 | $3,000 | $4,000 | $3,000 |
| Eden Seminary |  |  |  |  | $5,000 | $5,000 |
| Interfaith Partnership |  |  | $2,500 | $2,500 | $2,500 | $2,500 |
| TEAM Food Pantry |  |  |  | $1,000 |  |  |
| Union Communion | $5,000 | $2,000 |  |  |  |  |
| St. John's Community Services Ministry | $6,000 | $4,000 |  |  |  |  |
| Deaconess Foundation - Freedom Schools |  | $5,000 | $1,000 | $6,000 |  |  |
| Joint Neighborhood Ministries | $700 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Total | $100,000 | $90,000 | $80,000 | $90,500 | $94,500 | $90,500 |

Doorways receives funding in another part of the Association budget.

**Agency Summaries** - All of these agencies are recommended for funding.

**Unleashing Potential**

The mission of Unleashing Potential is to close the opportunity gap for children and youth by building on their strengths. They create educational and empowering experiences through early childhood education, after school programs, youth development and enrichment camps. With the continued impact of the pandemic on after-school programming, UP celebrates that their staff has been incredibly nimble. They have provided support for families through phone calls, safely distanced meetings with families, virtual meetings, and updating technology as needed.

The early childhood program has continued with only a couple weeks off in order to make sure the space was safe and protocols were established. Unleashing Potential even served as a PPE, diaper, and food distribution hub for families that needed them. The nurse on staff at UP also provided virtual support to parents in an open forum for parents to ask their questions, and the staff as a whole is ready and gearing up to advocate for better funding and resources for their families.

The St. Louis Association is a needed and integral partner in their programming and Unleashing Potential is deeply grateful for the support! Unleashing Potential is asking for funding for their operations, but especially for continuing upgrades to their technology infrastructure.

**Lydia’s House**

Lydia’s house assists women and children who have been affected by domestic violence with safe transitional housing. Family members are also provided with supportive services such as case management, food, education, counseling, employment and spiritual support. Families can stay with Lydia’s House for up to two years while they work to develop long term goals and safety plans. Lydia’s House also provides educational awareness regarding the dangers of domestic violence. They are the only transitional housing for women and children in Eastern Missouri.

Over the past year the staff has shifted to support those women and families in new ways due to the pandemic. Some of the new supports have been installing computers for kids to learn virtually, increase internet speeds, having flexibility with lengths of stay in the Lydia’s House program, and much more. Lydia’s Ladle (their employment and job training program) is expanding its sales of their pot pies to Kansas City and Memphis, and even looking to a new kitchen in a different facility! All the pet friendly apartments have been renovated, and the organization will start a new strategic planning session in October with an eye towards a new location in a different part of town in response to the continual waiting list in recent years to enter Lydia’s House.

Lydia’s House is grateful for the continued support by the association and is again requesting funding for operation of their programming.

**Isaiah 58**

Isaiah 58 is an ecumenical organization with a mission to support folks experiencing poverty by connecting, advocating, referring, educating, and supplying folks their basic needs and provisions.

This past year they served 600-800 families a month through their food pantry. Due to COVID the Choice Pantry was changed to boxed shelf-safe food and produce in a quick pick-up format. The boundaries that they served were suspended this past year because so many pantries closed and they served any family in need in the St. Louis Metropolitan area. Those boundaries have been reinstated but instead of serving parts of four zip codes they serves families in those entire zip codes. Once the pandemic is under control, they will return to their Choice Pantry.

Isaiah 58 also served families with kids this year through their Back to School Fair (150 backpacks and various school supplies were distributed!) and their clothing room which is currently by appointment only.

Isaiah 58 is requesting funding for operations on their expanded service area, and are incredibly grateful for the partnership in numerous ways of the St. Louis Association!

**Interfaith Partnership of Greater St. Louis**

The mission of Interfaith Partnership of Greater St. Louis is to deepen understanding, respect and appreciation among all persons across lines of religious difference. It is an organization of 34 different religious groups in the St. Louis metropolitan area committed to reaching people of all ages. IPSTL is a leading trusted source on interfaith relations and provides platforms for diverse religious voices to be better understood. They are a connector for religious, community, and civic leaders and play a role in shaping public discourse and contribute to the common good of the region.

As a response to the COVID-19 crisis, IPSTL created a weekly Virtual Interfaith Prayer Circle via Zoom and Facebook. Also, during the pandemic, their Sprouts of Peace program continued, with virtual gatherings and a new home library program, facilitating the discussion of different faith traditions between children and their parents. Most impressively, in fall 2020 and spring 2021, IPSTL offered virtual courses on world religions. More than 700 people, from 25 U.S. states and 4 countries, were enrolled.

Interfaith Partnership shares with the St. Louis Association of the MMSCUCC a deep commitment to a more just, compassionate, and inclusive community in our mutual alliances, practices, and programs. IPSTL staff appears to have well-adapted to doing their work in a difficult time. Their requested funding will help fund the operations of the organization as they continue to expand and build on the success of their virtual courses.

**Holy Trinity Food Pantry**

Holy Trinity Food Pantry is a ministry of Holy Trinity Community Church, UCC in Memphis, TN. It is run entirely by volunteers, with the church council serving as its board of directors. The pantry is located in the second poorest zip code in the state of Tennessee with average household income equal to or less than $20,000. Historically, in addition to addressing food insecurity, through partnerships with other local organizations the pantry has offered Social Security benefits assistance, HIV/AIDS testing, and sexual health education and supplies, and vaccination clinics. The active need and request for these material supports and services have increased due to the global COVID-19 pandemic; simultaneously, they have had to fundamentally shift operations to be delivery based to maintain the health and safety of volunteers and clients.

Operational demands and volunteer support remain variable, so to address increasing demand the pantry has made more robust its collaborative efforts with other service organizations in the region, including the Food Bank and First Congregational Church, Memphis among others. These partnerships have proven vital and show opportunity for continued growth and greater collective impact.

This ministry emerged out of a Missouri Mid-South congregation as a lived expression of their commitment to the demands of the gospel of Jesus Christ to transform the world toward greater justice and mercy, to practice radical hospitality, and to be in solidarity with those on the margins of societal privilege structures. Now with over fifteen years of experience this ministry continues to been recognized locally for their valuable mission and outreach. Their requested funding will help this mission and outreach continue!

**Eden Theological Seminary**

The mission of Eden Theological Seminary, an institution of the United Church of Christ, is to strengthen the life of the church by educating women and men for ministry, enlivening critical reflection on faith, and supporting bold Christian discipleship. During the pandemic, Eden Seminary’s classes, community life, contextual education and worship life were all adapted for online participation. Over this past school year, 122 students were enrolled for degree programs and 150 students were part of non-degree classes. In addition, 1,790 registered for online events. These numbers reflect a substantial increase in participation in non-degree experiences, as well as a slight increase in the degree-based student body.

For the 2021-2022 school year, Eden plans to create a hybrid mode of community experience and learning, through offering both in-person and online options, and is seeking funding from a variety of sources in order to make this transition. Their request for funding is specifically focused to make sure the technology and infrastructure for the hybrid mode of teaching and community is top notch.