July 13, 2021

Last week, the Centers for Disease Control extended the federal moratorium on evictions until July 31 and the Supreme Court is allowing it despite an appeal from landlords. This is welcome news for renters who have been hit hard economically by the pandemic. But the administration has said that it will not extend the moratorium again and Pennsylvania does not have a ban on evictions. [Soon, many of our neighbors will be facing the loss of their homes](https://www.publicsource.org/developpghbulletins-pittsburgh-allegheny-county/).

Some good news here is that the Lazarus Fund can equip congregations in Pittsburgh Presbytery to provide direct financial support to their neighbors to help them avoid the disruption of eviction. Distributing this direct aid can be a significant ministry for congregations who feel called to serve people who are poor, and especially those churches who are committed to the Matthew 25 Initiative principle of eradicating systemic poverty. The Lazarus Fund leadership team is hoping that new churches will join the program for the summer to address the coming eviction crisis.

Becoming a Lazarus Fund church is simple. [Congregations apply online](https://www.jotform.com/pghpresby/lazarus_fund_church_application) for block grants of up to $2400. From those block grants they distribute individual grants for overdue rent and utilities with a maximum amount of $400 each. Interviews with applicants are done over the phone. And checks are made payable directly to the bank, property management company, or utility company on behalf of the applicant. Once a block grant is depleted, a church can apply for another one.

There is already a huge amount of need in Allegheny County. And even though our current Lazarus Fund churches are working overtime to get this money to people who can use it, it is just not possible for them to answer all the calls. By becoming a Lazarus Fund church this summer, you will help stabilize local households and join a community of supportive Presbyterian leaders. And if you are not able to make that commitment at this time you can still help by contributing money to the fund or by volunteering for administrative tasks.

To get started, contact the Lazarus Fund co-chairs Rev. Mike Holohan ([mike@oaklandcommonwealth.com](mailto:mike@oaklandcommonwealth.com)) and deacon Jason Shifflet ([jason.shifflet@gmail.com](mailto:jason.shifflet@gmail.com)) who will guide you through the process, share collective wisdom, and offer trouble-shooting assistance if you experience challenges.   
  
Sincerely,   
  
Text, whiteboard

Description automatically generated

Ralph Lowe  
Director of Justice Ministries