



HEARTLAND CONFERENCE

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
N. KY • OH • WV



The world is so full of possibilities and sometimes the greatest deed is the result of some small action. Fleming Road UCC was recently a party to such a deed.

Last summer, a group of Nepali families who lived in the neighboring area inquired about using the building for its worship services. The church leadership allowed them to worship, rent-free, in the building on a trial basis for a six-month period. If everything was mutually beneficial, a formal agreement would be created, which would include a rental fee. During this time, members of Fleming Road UCC's

leadership team assisted this group in obtaining organizational charter, non-profit tax status and insurance.


The trial was a success, and a formal agreement was created. At the time the agreement was signed, the senior elder of the Nepali spoke to our congregation. He told of how he and others had been held as refugees for up to 10 years before finally immigrating to the U.S., and how they found Christ during this period. The newly minted Nepali congregation, in an expression of appreciation, presented a check for rent for the six month trial basis that they used the building, something never asked by our church.

"Why not donate this money to the embattled people of Ukraine who were becoming war refugees?" Once refugees themselves, the Nepali felt a kinship. With additional funds raised by both congregations, over \$7,000 was donated.

That donation led to an even greater gift.

In late March, the Cincy4Ukraine group approached the church about using its kitchen and other areas to prepare food which would be sold to raise additional funds. Soon the kitchen and other areas of the building were bustling with people of all ages making Ukrainian food items. As freezers and food storage areas filled, the question was asked, "Why not create a festival, using the church property, and create a special event?" In addition to vending food, the festival would provide a Ukrainian-style dinner, demonstrate the country's traditions of dance, music, art, customs and of course create identity for the brave nation in its defense of the attacks by Russia.

In just a little over three weeks, a festival was organized. Part of the church's parking lot became a stage for dance, music, and artisans while people lined up by the hundreds for the meals. In all, the festival drew over 3,600 people and raised \$37,000 which was earmarked to



purchase and outfit an ambulance to care for the citizens of Ukraine—some of them family members in Cincinnati.

Had the Fleming Road UCC congregation attempted such a festival itself, which would have been a daunting task for the size and age-range of the membership, such an event might have attracted a fourth of the participants and revenue. Had it been a cooperative of the Fleming Road and Nepali congregations, slightly better.

With the involvement of all three parties, a special event was conducted that impacted far more people and exceeded all fundraising goals. All because the people involved were open to new possibilities. I wonder what creative partnerships might be presenting themselves to your ministry setting?

Tom Hathaway
Heartland Conference Moderator