

Grace's Abundance In Action

In 2019, you gave generously toward Grace's mission, so generously that we had a surplus - an abundance - after all of our expenses were paid. Over the last several months, Grace's Council has discussed how to faithfully use this financial surplus. During the April Council meeting, the Holy Spirit guided the Council to give fifty percent of Grace's surplus to two charitable organizations in our community – HOPE of Rock Hill and Pathways Community Center – in response to the needs created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Last week, Pr. Gregg and Larry Winsch visited these organizations, presented both of them with checks for \$5,491.22, and heard about how this abundance is going to make an immediate difference in the community. [Click here to read about this abundant impact]

Pathways Community Center is a single point of entry that serves as a "pathway" to a continuum of care that provides stability, supportive services and shelter, to renew the lives of our neighbors in need.

Several aid organizations in our area have had to close their doors during the pandemic, making Pathways all the more needed in our community. The Day Center at Pathways has not closed during the pandemic and they do not have plans to close unless it is mandated by the government. Pathways continues to provide individual assistance and direction, as well as a safe place to be during the day, assistance for utilities, food, clothing, employment assistance, and more.

At Pathways, Pr. Gregg and Larry spoke to Grace Lewis, the Center Director. She shared that Pathways has only four employees, and they rely upon volunteers to do a significant amount of work. Because of the pandemic, the volunteers have not been allowed to come work, and so the four employees have taken on all of the load. This will likely continue to be necessary for a while. This means that the employees have had to work many overtime hours, and Pathways has needed to pay for that extra time, using funds that would otherwise have been used to provide for clients' needs (which have also increased in this time).

Ms. Lewis shared that Grace's gift to Pathways will provide enough funding for the employees at Pathways to continue working at this extended rate for about three months, freeing up needed funding to assist our neighbors Pathways serves. Our gift takes a significant burden off of some of the people who have been working the hardest in the midst of this health crisis, and it ensures that the holy work of this Center can continue without interruption for several more months. Our abundance-sharing has given them peace of mind and empowered them to continue being the hands and feet of Christ for the most vulnerable among us.

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HOPE of Rock Hill is our local food pantry and aid organization, located just one block from Grace, behind Oakland Presbyterian. Every week, HOPE collects pallets of food from Second Harvest Food Bank, along with direct donations from the community, and distributes that food to clients who come to HOPE House. On average, HOPE feeds between 120-135 families a week, which translates to about 900 people. On the day that Pr. Gregg and Larry visited, HOPE had already provided food to 35 families.

While the need for food assistance is growing in our area as a result of the economic impact of the pandemic, HOPE has had an unusual problem. The Rock Hill community has been generous in this time, looking for ways to provide for neighbors in need. And so, HOPE had food to give, but because they did not have adequate cooler space, some of the perishable food that was available was going bad before it could be distributed.

Gordon Bell, the Director of Operations at HOPE, shared that with the gift from Grace, they will be able to purchase a new walk-in freezer, which will allow them to roll in whole pallets of food which need to be kept cold. This will significantly reduce the amount of food waste that was otherwise unavoidable. This will simplify food deliveries and contribute to abundance being shared more fully with our neighbors.

The responses we received from Pathways and HOPE to this sharing of abundance show that the Holy Spirit indeed was moving in this decision. Grace's gifts are making an immediate impact for both of these groups, and they are excited about what that means for serving the community.

We are incredibly grateful for the blessings God has given this congregation. We are grateful that we can share these blessings with others. And we are thankful for each of you, faithfully taking care of the gifts God has given.