

Federated Family Coronavirus Relief Fund

Annual Report Addendum, June 2021

In March 2020, as the novel coronavirus swept across the globe it caused a pandemic unseen in at least a century, bringing our world to a standstill. Government shutdowns were implemented with short notice as our leaders, scientists and medical professionals struggled to grasp the scope of the situation. Especially hard-hit were small businesses and their employees, many of whom were already living paycheck to paycheck with little in savings.

At the time, our adult faith formation group was discussing the book *Falling Upward* by Richard Rohr. As we journeyed from Ash Wednesday to Easter, we grappled with questions like: Where is God when things “fall apart,” and how are we invited to grow in new ways in the midst of it? As the world began to literally fall apart around us—with neighbors being furloughed or laid off *en masse*—our faith took on new life and urgency. “What would it look like to truly bear our neighbor’s burdens as scripture calls us to?” we wondered; “to be stretched as individuals and as a church as we loved our neighbor as ourselves in this historic moment?”

From those conversations—in tandem with the “stimulus checks” passed in the CARES Act by the US Congress—eventually grew the idea of coordinating a community effort to “pay our check forward.” Using our Pastoral Emergency Fund—and with oversight from our Executive Team (Moderator, Asst. Moderator, and Clerk), as designated by Council—we collected and disbursed these funds as efficiently, effectively, and faithfully as possible.

From May to October of 2020, Federated Church and community friends gathered 13 donations to raise and disburse a total of \$19,621.86.

Rather than giving money directly to individuals, we directed the aid through partnerships with our Federated Preschool, community social workers, pastors, and case managers at Safe Passage. **In the end, we made 30 distributions averaging \$654.06/distribution** to preschool families, community members, and Federated Church members.

Monies disbursed were used for: rental assistance, utility bills, medical bills, medical prescriptions, vehicle repair bills, a security deposit, and Walmart/grocery gift cards.

We were able to assist both newer immigrant neighbors, as well as those who’ve been in the community for generations. We helped individuals fleeing domestic abuse, those being crushed under growing medical bills, those struggling to get to their jobs as “essential workers,” and those struggling to feed and support their children. In short, at a time when the world fell apart and we could no longer “go to church,” we rediscovered what it means to “be the church.”

This was a profound example of what it looks like to choose faith over fear; love of neighbor over polarization and hostility; following Jesus and bearing one another’s burdens over self-preservation. Thank you for your faithfulness!

Together on the Journey,
Pastor Eric