

## **Missions Committee Funding: 2023**

**Community Health and Education for Rural Africa, Inc. (CHERA)** (**new**) works to improve the lives of people in some of Sub-Saharan Africa's most impoverished communities via improved access to education and health care. This focus arises from the belief that improvements in education and health care can bring about exponential and sustainable long term improvements in the well-being of such communities. In particular, our funding would assist CHERA's partner, Kasese Community Health and Education Foundation, which focuses on Kasese and the Rwenzori district of southwestern Uganda. The KCHEF Medical Center, responds to the most pressing need of Kasese: to reduce the number of women who die in childbirth and to ensure that all children see their 5th birthday. As a locally-led organization, KCHEF represents the single most effective way to empower a community in a region severely impacted by conflict, disease, and extreme poverty.

**Good Shepherd Mission**, Fort Defiance, AZ, a devoted church community in the Episcopal Diocese of Navajoland serving the needs of the Navajo people, received a missions grant in 2021 with particular emphasis on its Food Box program, which provided food and household supplies to Navajo families across the Southeast Region. Covid had been a serious challenge across Navajoland, resulting in many cases and deaths, and requiring closing the Mission at times because of the spread of the disease. But Food Boxes continued to be delivered to the people during this very difficult time. Life in Navajoland has now largely recovered from Covid, but major challenges remain, particularly related to old buildings and infrastructure, loss of rental income, and continuing to serve the needs of a low-income community.

**Borderland Ministries of the Episcopal Diocese of the Rio Grande** is located along 800 miles of the Texas and New Mexico borders, where hundreds of thousands of asylum seekers cross each year in order to escape the tragic and inhumane situation in their countries of origin. Borderland Ministries engages with complex long-term systemic needs by feeding, sheltering, and caring for people on both sides of the Texas/New Mexico border. They provide relief services, supporting shelters and providing a Bridge Chaplain who seeks to welcome our neighbors at the border with dignity. In addition, they work in partnership with Episcopal Migration Ministry's Asylum and Detention Ministry Network to engage in opportunities to advocate, learn, and pray in support of our immigrant siblings. They also support programs which provide sustainable food plan for shelters and development of solar power in rural areas.

**Lay Ministers Education in Lesotho** supports training of Lay Education Ministers in mountain regions of the country. Lesotho had 43 parishes, many with outstations in remote locations, and less than 30 full time priests. Without an adequate number of priests, the Diocese has relied heavily on Lay Ministers to run the church and lead congregations. Although enthusiastic, these Lay Ministers are not trained in theology, the basic work of leading worship on Sundays or preaching. Our contribution provides funding for study materials for the Lesotho Theological Education by Extension Programme (LTEE), a nondenominational course of study designed for Christians who cannot attend traditional Bible Schools and Seminaries. It has four important components. The first one is the TEE books. A student does one lesson per day five days a week. The second important component is weekly group meetings where students discuss what they learned. The third part of the programme is practical experience. Each student is encouraged to be involved in some kind of ministry through his or her local church each week. The fourth component is seminars which are organized three to five times a year by the LTEE Committee. Students come to these seminars to write exams for the books they have studied and participate in other learning activities.

**The Outdoor Church—Cambridge** is a ministry to homeless men and women in the Harvard and Porter Square areas. The core of the mission is the outdoor prayer service held at 9:00 AM in Porter Square every Sunday, regardless of season or weather. Outdoor Church volunteers join people who are homeless and housed in ecumenical worship and pastoral care. As part of street outreach, lay and ordained ministers carry sandwiches, pastry, coffee, juice and socks around the squares, where communion and pastoral care is offered. Memorial services are provided for parishioners who have died. The Outdoor Church is also a partner in the Friday Café at First Church Congregational in Harvard Square.

**Partakers**—Partakers advances the education of women and men in prison and bridges the divide that separates those inside and outside of prison. Partakers supports Massachusetts prison education by coordinating teams of volunteers who mentor incarcerated women and men as they pursue higher education through the Boston University Prison Education Program, the Tufts Prison Initiative, the Emerson Prison Initiative, and The Boston College Prison Program. Through the

College Behind Bars Mentoring Program, incarcerated men and women enhance the skills critical to completing a college degree, build trusting personal relationships, and become empowered with a stronger sense of self and hope for their future while significantly increasing their chances for success when they return to their community. Partakers also collaborates with the Brandeis Educational Justice Initiative in a unique reentry program--The Partakers Empowerment Program, PEP. PEP provides workshops that focus on the vital topics of access and use of technology, financial literacy, civic re-engagement, career and job readiness, professionalism, education, and wellness to provide support and hope to returning citizens.

**Abraço Negro (“Black Embrace”)** is a program of the Episcopal-Anglican Church in Brazil (IEAB) designed to promote Afro-Centric theological dialogue. The Reverend Lilian Conceição da Silva started Abraço Negro in 2019 as a way to focus more attention on the problems and needs of indigenous and African-heritage women in Brazil, who have long faced disproportionate levels of poverty and violence. Her aim is to affirm their cultural heritage while providing support for Christian formation and the struggle against gender violence. Most ordained ministries in Brazil are non-stipendiary, meaning that clergy need to find a way to support themselves while serving their communities. Lilian has facilitated online discussions among South American women clergy of African and Indigenous heritage. With her partner, Antonio, who produces art and images, she has created mini-courses for lay people on Black intellectuals and theologians. Under the former Brazilian president, many governmental organizations concerned with the welfare of girls and women had been eliminated. With the new presidency, those organizations have been restored, and Lilian now holds the position of head of board of directors for combating gender violence at the Secretariat for Policies for Women in the city of São Leopoldo, Rio Grande do Sul.

**Nuevo Amanecer, East Boston, MA** is an initiative of the Lutheran Church that seeks to create a network of base communities among the largely Latino, immigrant community of East Boston and that equips individuals to connect their Christian faith with their desire for a more just world and to empower them to transform their communities through love, service, and social change. Their ministry focuses on four main areas: 1) Chaplaincy to the East Boston Community Soup Kitchen, 2) Chaplaincy to and ongoing development of the community at 28 Paris St, a building of faith-based and nonprofit groups, 3) joint bilingual worship with Our Saviour's Lutheran Church 4) broader community responses including involvement with the Eastie Mutual Aid network and PUEBLO (People United in East Boston for Liberation and Organizing.) These organizing and direct response initiatives are an attempt to usher in the love of God's justice, and systemic change necessary to stabilize our members in the long term.

**Ruth and Jim Padilla DeBorst** –The DeBorst are St. James’s parishioners in Costa Rica, providing leadership in four areas: 1) Casa Adobe. Living as members of this intentional Christian community in which and through which they seek to live out the Good News of God’s good creation: in their relationship to one another, in their neighborhood, and with the rest of creation. Casa Adobe is expanding its Creation Care activities, including a local community composting project and a plan to recover one of Casa Adobe’s most neglected ‘neighbours’, the Virilla River. The Virilla flows down from its source in the cloud forests through densely populated areas where it is impacted by sewage, litter and degraded riverine forest. Casa Adobe is re-engaging the community with the river and liaising with other stakeholders. 2) The Cohort of Missioners. This program brings young people from North and Central America together to live, serve, and learn alongside one another in a year of intense discovery of how their lives tie into God’s purposes for the world. 3) The Center for Interdisciplinary Theological Studies Jim is president and Ruth serves as provost of CETI, a learning community of students, faculty, and administrators that uses a Master’s and Certificate program to strengthen the capacity of church people, leaders, pastors, and professionals from many different fields to build bridges between their faith and their life for the sake of integral transformation of their families, churches, work, and society.