

Heather Johnston

From: chip@synodofthecovenant.org <noreply@digital-55.com>
Sent: Saturday, September 30, 2023 6:51 PM
To: grants; Heather Johnston
Subject: New submission from Matthew 25 Grant 2023

Matthew 25 Grant Application

Church/Institution Name

First Presbyterian Church of Paw Paw

Address

120 Pine St.
Paw Paw, Michigan 49079
United States
[Map It](#)

Telephone

(269) 657-3111

Email

firstpres120@gmail.com

Person responsible for administering the grant

Tom Shoemaker/Wendy Mckle

Phone Number of Administer

(269) 808-3240

Pastor/Executive Director

Rev Gail Monsma

Clerk of Session/Board Chair

Andy Thorburn

Associated Presbytery

Lake Michigan

Presbytery Leader Who Will Write Letter of Endorsement

Fran Lane Lawrence, Executive Presbyter

Presbytery Leader's Email

Flanelawrenceplm@gmail.com

Matthew 25 objective addressed

- Building congregational vitality
- Dismantling structural racism
- Eradicating systemic poverty

First Time Application?

Yes

Request for continuing grant?

No

A complete application includes the following pieces

Upload Files Here

- [Pastor-recommendation-for-Matt-25-grant-PDF.pdf](#)

- [Grant-Ap-Mi-Casa-amended.docx](#)

eSignature



affirm that the above information is accurate and submitted to the Synod of the Covenant for the purpose of determining my eligibility for the Matthew 25 Grant.

1Point List ID

28

Mi Casa Su Casa Project

The First Presbyterian Church of Paw Paw, Michigan is located in the center of the "fruit belt" of Michigan. As other small-town churches, we lost membership during COVID, yet we remain a congregation of approximately 120 members who are not only committed to mission and justice but are strong, compassionate people who are drawn to the needs of others.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Mi Casa Su Casa project is to improve the living conditions of the migrant workers who come to our area five months every year to help assure bountiful crops for the growers in our community. Van Buren County is the site of one the largest summer migrant populations in the state due to its variety of fruit and agriculture jobs. Even though the population of Migrant workers is great during the growing and harvesting months, they seldom have any interaction with the community and many are isolated at their camps due to absence of transportation, language difficulties and lack of opportunity to socialize with community members. We will offer support to the workers and their families by designating activities in which our church members can attend, helping to care for their homes while they are with us, and provide staples for daily living. Our mission follows Matthew 25: 34-38. "Then the King will say to those on his right. 'Enter, you

who are blessed by my Father! Take what's coming to you in this kingdom. It's been ready for you since the world's foundation. And here's why: I was hungry, and you fed me, I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink, I was homeless, and you gave me a room, I was shivering, and you gave me clothes, I was sick, and you stopped to visit, I was in prison, and you came to me.'

Vision Statement

Our vision is to adopt a "camp" (many growers provide housing for the migrant workers in the form of simple cabins and/or mobile homes. Several of these together form a camp). We will tend to some of the simple maintenance needs of the camp as well as providing support to the families. We also will have scheduled activities which will involve members of our congregation as well as the workers and their families. This will occur for the time in which the migrant workers are living in Michigan. As the following year approaches, we will take our success to other churches, and ask them to also adopt a camp. As we move through the community, our vision is that other churches will follow our lead and adopt the Mi Cas Su Casa project enabling more and more of the migrant families to sustain a more comfortable life physically and socially.

Project description

From May through September, there is a large migrant population residing in our community as they assist with the

crops. They are so valuable to the growers, yet their presence in the community is practically invisible - they tend to spend most of the time at their camps with little or no interaction with folks from the community. There are no community programs directed to the migrant workers, and there are many of the workers without access to vehicles. Some of the growers have established cabins and or mobile homes for the migrant families to stay, but of course they need staples, bedding, and all the items necessary to live during their time in Michigan. It is a meager and isolated existence for these children of God.

Our project is to improve the living situation for migrant families who live in the camps, and also to engage with them in activities. We plan to furnish the homes with bedding, staples, as well as do small necessary repairs. The incidental repairs will be handled by our Building and Grounds Committee, strengthening communication between the workers and our church. It is the plan to spread the gospel through our actions and intentional visits, which will help break down the systems, practices and thinking that underlie discrimination.

We will strive to provide an atmosphere of caring that is consistent with Jesus' teachings.

Additionally we are establishing an advisory committee made up of growers, migrant recruiters from local school districts, a liaison from the migrant community, and members of our church. This committee will examine the true requirements of

the migrant community during their time in Michigan, which will give us a better measure of their needs. Through this committee we can work to change plans and structures in our society that perpetuate economic exploitation of people who are poor.

Finally the congregation will have the opportunity to engage with the migrants in two planned activities - one being a welcome dinner in May and the other a harvest dinner in September. There will also be opportunities through the five months they are with us to connect through more spontaneous events as well as events planned by the Southwest Michigan Migrant Resource Council. These occasions will build congregation vitality as the congregation members become joyfully and actively engaged in the migrant community.

This would be an ongoing annual project to help sustain and care for the folks who enter our community every year.

It is difficult to assess the number of folks this grant will affect. Each camp may have 20-100 people residing in it, which is easy to define. However, more difficult to measure is the ripple effect that will occur as our program progresses. Picture the ripples falling from the stone skipping across the water. We anticipate that the Mi Casa Su Casa project will create ripples affecting many others. Not only through the communication system between the migrants themselves, but also through the community as our congregation members go out spreading the gospel to others through their stories of

interactions with the folks at the camps. We are all children of God and deserve the love and respect of others, as we have been taught and now will teach. We can attempt to reduce this project to a numbers equation, but it is so much more than that, and unfortunately at the beginning anyway, unmeasurable.

There are many growers who maintain camps in the Van Buren County area. We have not yet chosen the first camp to be adopted. Our project would begin in January 2024 by solidifying our Advisory Panel as well as meeting with several camp owners to find the best partner for the initial adoption. The criteria would be one with at least ten housing units, and an active owner who shared our mission, plus had a camp located within a 30 mile radius of Paw Paw. If we do not receive a grant, these are pipe dreams because our congregation won't be able to financially sustain the project without help. If we do obtain a grant, we will immediately begin a matching contribution effort to raise another \$5,000 to kick off the inaugural year of the Mi Casa Su Casa project.

Budget

We are requesting \$5,000 to start our project with the intent of matching those funds within our community. With a budget of \$10,000 we would allocate those funds in the following manner:

\$1000 for camp renovations (working with the local grower)

\$1000 for literature, printing, Bibles in Spanish, gas cards

\$500 for supplies for welcome dinner and harvest dinner

\$7500 for room items, including but not limited to, food, cleaning supplies, hygiene supplies, laundry items, linens, and cooking supplies.

There will be no personnel costs. Operating costs would include only the cost of printing information and flyers.

Persons responsible for administration of the grant would be:

Tom Shoemaker - (269) 808-3240 Project Director and liaison with local agencies. Tom has worked in the migrant community for several summers and has connections with area growers and other migrant advocates in our area.

Wendy Mickle - (269) 491-2911 Assistant Director

Additionally, Steve McCloskey, the treasurer of the First Presbyterian Church of Paw Paw, Michigan would be responsible for all monies regarding the Mi Casa Su Casa project.

Friday, September 29, 2023

My name is Rev. Gail Monsma, and I am writing this endorsement letter for First Presbyterian Church of Paw Paw, MI for a Matthew 25 Synod of the Covenant Grant.

I've been the interim/transitional pastor for this church since June 2022. I arrived at a church eager to heal after conflicts regarding its former pastor had taken a heavy toll. And they are doing so; this a resilient congregation striving to live into a life focused on mission, justice, and spiritual growth. Additionally, I see this grant paving the way for them to become a Matthew 25 congregation. They are a vital and alive congregation seeking to become more active in their community.

This grant is the initiative of two elders, Wendy Mickle and Tom Shoemaker, yet has support within the congregation. In fact, the first day after my July vacation, Wendy called to tell me about their dreams to write a grant regarding local migrant/seasonal worker communities. I was delighted and impressed! I had intended to contact them about applying for a Matthew 25 Grant, but they had seen the information sent from our office assistant to elders, and they took the initiative to begin brainstorming about outreach to the isolated migrant community in Van Buren County, MI. Wendy, with input from Tom, wrote the grant. As their interim pastor, I am excited about this congregation's vision for mission and justice.

This grant will challenge the congregation to deepen their faith through active service within a migrant population that faces deep racism throughout the area. Working with migrant communities will also cause us to face our own unintentional bias and prejudices concerning people of color. And without a doubt, this grant will propel us to examine deep systematic poverty and structures that are often hidden within "shadow" communities within the surrounding areas.

First Presbyterian of Paw Paw has recently begun partnering with First Presbyterian of Decatur MI, in sharing me as their interim pastor, and we are exploring how to move forward in this relationship. We see this grant as an opportunity to involve both communities, not just the congregations.

This past year, First Presbyterian of Paw Paw began a monthly community dinner with outreach to local non-profits, particularly those working with people recently released from prison. Funding was sought from local businesses, which in fact provided enough money for almost all of next year. Each month 75-90 people from all walks of life gather in our Fellowship Hall for an excellent free dinner, and we glimpse a bit of the Kin-dom of God in our midst. Meals are also delivered to homebound members and a local hotel that houses men recently out of prison.

Without a doubt, this grant will help us grow into a more vital faith community. And I have complete trust in this congregation to live into this grant in spirit-filled creative and meaningful ways that make a difference in people's lives within migrant camps and at the same time encourages the community to be involved. This grant will allow us to be a better witness for Christ's love and justice.

So, it is my deepest hope, that First Presbyterian Church receive \$5,000 to live into this new outreach and mission.

In Christ's love, light, and hope,

Rev. Gail Monsma

Cell: 269.275,6998

Email: revgailfpcpawpaw@gmail.com

Heather Johnston

From: wmickle@comcast.net
Sent: Saturday, September 30, 2023 7:17 PM
To: grants
Subject: Mi Casa Su Casa grant application

Hi - I submitted our grant application and thought there might be a place to send a message with it. Not seeing that, I wanted to send an e-mail thanking you for the opportunity to apply for this Matthew 25 grant. It would help us add a new direction within our missional work that could include not only our entire congregation, but our partner congregation too. It was a great process to really define our mission and our vision, as well as firm up some details. We truly appreciate the opportunity.

Sincerely,

Wendy Mickle and Tom Shoemaker, Elders
First Presbyterian Church of Paw Paw



Presbytery of Lake Michigan

Presbyterian Church [U.S.A.]

October 5, 2023

Dear Granting Committee,

I am writing to endorse the Matthew 25 grant proposal submitted by the First Presbyterian Church of Paw Paw, Michigan. FPC's Mi Casa Su Casa project proposal seeks to connect the church, and its partner church FPC Decatur with the surrounding community in a vital way. The project idea grew out of experiences of several church members volunteering and working in a professional capacity with the migrant workers who spend half the year working on the abundant fruit farms in Van Buren County. These guest workers are largely isolated from the community around them and often find themselves in need of resources that they have no idea how to access, navigating an unfamiliar social services system and a language they do not speak fluently.

The fruit farmers who hire these workers often work on such a slim profit margin that it's all they can do to keep the farms afloat from year to year. They often provide simple housing for the workers, along with their wages, but are unable to offer much in the way of home comforts, or other basic necessities that would allow these guest workers to thrive in their work or in the community.

Through conversations with migrant workers, fruit farmers, and the adjacent communities, FPC Paw Paw has identified a need and a way to work toward meeting it. Their ultimate goal is to invite guest workers to form connections in the community and to encourage and educate the community to welcome and embrace the guest workers.

This proposal addresses all three aspects of the Matthew 25 vision. The church will work to be a vital part of its community and bring new energy to the congregation through this important work, address issues of systemic racism in the relationship between migrant workers, fruit farmers, and the surrounding communities, and, by meeting some of the basic needs of the guest workers, will allow them to save and send more home to their families in order to help them to break the chains of generational poverty.

The group facilitation this proposal has identified community and church partners who will financially support this program in order to raise the additional \$5000 beyond the requested grant that will be needed to launch the program.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Rev. Chrissy Westbury, Associate Presbyter