

2021 Collaborative Ministry Grant Report

Penfield Presbyterian Church

REACH Tiny Home Village Project Summary

REACH Tiny Home Village, a program of REACH Advocacy Inc, a 501(c) (3) organization, is creating an innovative and collaborative solution to homelessness targeted at people living at or below 20% of the Monroe County Area Median Income (AMI), currently \$12,015. We plan to build nine permanent tiny homes on foundations, meeting all City codes as a means to provide stable, safe, affordable housing for our target population. The REACH Tiny Home Village plan addresses the systemic issue of permanent, affordable housing options for people who are housing vulnerable. We plan to do this by infilling a vacant City-owned property with a village of nine tiny homes in the 14621 zip code, an area of the City that experienced the financial inequities of redlining. The village will provide an affordable housing option for those living at or below 20% of the Area Median Income (AMI). Each code-compliant, energy-efficient home of 384 sq. ft. will be built on a permanent foundation, and include a kitchen, bathroom, and living/sleeping space. The village will have a manager, support services, and a community gathering space for the residents. REACH's Tiny Home Village will provide a novel and innovative option for housing people living in extreme poverty in the Rochester area. REACH plans to build in three phases. The total cost for the entire project is estimated at \$930,785 (2020 dollars). Volunteer labor and donated materials have already and will continue to offset a significant percentage of the budget.

- **What were you hoping to accomplish?**

To engage the congregation in actions of learning, giving, and participating in solutions to the problem of chronic homelessness in Rochester.

To build our partnership with REACH as they begin a pilot program seeking solutions to the problem of chronic homelessness in Rochester.

- **Who was touched by your project or program?**

Our congregation

The Tiny Home project is intended to provide sustainable and affordable housing and will be a multi-year project. Construction will likely begin in the Spring of 2023, with hopes of occupancy by late Fall 2023 for the first phase of 3 or 4 tiny homes. The actual benefits of the efforts of REACH and the Tiny Homes Committee won't be felt by the homeless population until that time. In the meantime, we are partnering with REACH in other ways. We have collaborated on providing lunches for 2 of the shelters operated by REACH.



- **How did this grant energize or transform your congregation or community?**

The Congregation and Session of Penfield Presbyterian Church have been behind the project. Once the Tiny Home project was announced to our Congregation, there was excitement about helping. Congregation members have asked to help mentor future residents of the project.

Two members of the Congregation are currently volunteers of the Tiny Home Committee, sponsored by REACH Advocacy. Their dedication and enthusiasm are contagious.

The congregation indicated strong support for participation in the Matthew 25 Initiative. The Session voted to officially become designated as a Matthew 25 church.

The Session voted to match the PGV grant amount of \$3,000 for REACH in 2021 as part of Penfield's mission giving. This is likely to continue in 2022.

Our church school kids assembled 50 hygiene kits and the congregation donated food and beverage supplies to be distributed at area warming stations to folks without homes.

Members continue to be involved in making meals for the REACH satellite in Webster and bagged lunches for the Main St. shelter.

Our Harvest Team provided a book study focused on "Worldchanging 101: Changing the Myth of Powerlessness" by David LaMotte which provided a great foundation for participants to answer the question "what's mine to do?" to nurture the kingdom on earth.

- **What did you learn from this project and what obstacles did you experience?**

Homelessness is complicated.

The pandemic has impacted energy and participation in all aspects of church life.

When proposing a new idea or concept, such as a tiny home community, within an existing neighborhood, communication with neighbors is vitally important. The target land for the project is within the City of Rochester. Several parcels were identified, each with its own pros and cons. Access to stores and services is important, as is public transportation for future residents. Obstacles include the many levels and layers of government that must be negotiated. Another is how long this process takes before construction can even begin.

- **What are your next steps?**

Next steps include continued education through sermons, book study, e-news, and personal sharing by those actively participating with REACH. Sharing stories often has a very powerful impact.

We hope to strengthen our partnership in the coming year with hands-on activities when possible.

The session, pastor, and congregation will hopefully be intentional in working toward the Matthew 25 priorities.

Next steps also include continuing fundraising, meeting with City officials for Planning & Zoning approvals necessary to implement the planned housing, coordinating with YouthBuild and Edison Tech to introduce students to real world trades and skills, and hiring a Civil Engineer to begin designing the community of tiny homes.

- **Please share a story of where you saw God in this project.**

God has brought together a collaboration of dedicated volunteers who see a need in our community and are developing plans to meet that need in providing support and affordable housing for the chronically homeless. Going from temporary shelters, tents and street corners to code-compliant structures with heat, water and facilities necessary to meet basic human needs.