

From Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA)

PDA approves more than \$1.1 million in COVID-19 grants

Staff members say they have seen churches 'rising to the occasion' in midst of pandemic
by Rich Copley | Presbyterian News Service



Presbyterian Disaster Assistance COVID-19 grants have helped support services such as food delivery to people in need.

LEXINGTON, Kentucky — In less than a month, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) has granted 208 requests for assistance in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic for a total of \$1,119,688 in grants. Those grants cover domestic, refugee, and international requests in an unprecedented crisis for PDA to address. "We take this extremely seriously and we're working very quickly," said the Rev. Dr. Laurie Kraus, director of PDA. "Nine people, working remotely, approved that many grants in a week and half, and the money is already out the door. This is a very quick, urgent response done in an extremely diligent manner."

In late March, as the scope of the crisis began to take shape, PDA announced it would be making \$2.7 million in grants available to mid councils (synods and presbyteries), congregations and international partners to support work in response to and impacted by COVID-19. The following week, Presbyterian Mission Agency President and Executive Director the Rev. Dr. Diane Moffett announced her office was setting aside \$300,000 for Matthew 25 Continuity of Ministry Grants to be administered by PDA. In both instances, PDA made it clear that funds would be granted over time, as COVID-19 is an ongoing crisis and new needs will develop; 114 domestic assistance grants had been awarded for a total of \$553,700. Thus far, grants have been widespread geographically, but there are some consistencies.

"In developing the criteria for domestic grants, PDA recognized that churches have a unique opportunity to reach people who are from historically marginalized communities. And so it is encouraging to see so many of the grant requests are for services that are very much in line with the priorities." The Rev. Jim Kirk, PDA Associate for National Disaster Response, says grants have already been awarded in 80 presbyteries, representing every synod in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Kraus says she is particularly impressed with how churches have continued to reach out and do the work of Matthew 25, providing food and clothing and shelter to vulnerable communities with nowhere else to turn, while the churches themselves face struggles in maintaining continuity for their own congregations and staffs.

Kraus says, "I just think the churches and the presbyteries have really risen to the occasion and stayed focused on how the church is the body of Jesus Christ in the world."



Presbyterian Disaster Assistance is one of the Compassion, Peace & Justice ministries of the Presbyterian Mission Agency.

To support PDA's response to COVID-19, designate gifts to DR000148.

Give to One Great Hour of Sharing to enable Presbyterian Disaster Assistance to respond quickly to catastrophic events.