

How Hiram Christian Church Faithfully Used the COVID-19 NBA Response Grant

Rev. Chris McCreight, Hiram Christian Church, and Jennifer Williams, XPLORES Resident
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"What we need is here. And we pray, not for new earth or heaven, but to be quiet in heart, and in eye clear. What we need is here." ~ Wendell Berry, "The Wild Geese"

When news of the COVID-19 pandemic began to emerge, a small group of concerned members of [Hiram Christian Church](#) (HCC) gathered to prayerfully discern how the church could offer care to the community through this time. Three priorities emerged within the conversation:

1. Sharing accurate public health information about COVID-19.
2. Sharing up-to-date listings of public resources.
3. Connecting local needs with local resources.

Trusting in the abundance of God revealed in symbols of manna in the desert and baskets of bread and fish for the multitudes, there was good conviction that *"What we need is here"* as Berry faithfully described. Hiram Community Care was launched for these purposes, trusting in God's sacred abundance, and it has been a blessing to our whole community.

Neighbors have learned of the best practices for their own health and the health of the community. They have found public resources for unemployment and learned of restrictions against evictions. Lastly, neighbors have been caring for one another by picking up prescriptions and groceries, making and giving masks to one another, and sharing small joys that come about within daily life in the community.

When we learned that NBA was offering [COVID-19 Response Grants](#), we saw it as an opportunity to support Hiram Community Cares with a manager to oversee and develop its reach, and provide additional resources for distribution through the community. With the abundance of Christ's Church, we were able to create an opportunity for one of our NBA XPLORES Residents, Jennifer Williams, to take lead and manage HCC. Jennifer had been serving with the [Hiram Farm](#), but the pandemic required that [her service to this XPLORES partner cease](#). Within a week of concluding service to the Hiram Farm, Jennifer was researching information about COVID-19,

public services available from Federal, state and local governments, and making connections in the community via social media and email.



Jennifer fostered more connection within Hiram Community Care, creating a deeper sense of relationship within this changed landscape. She created a resource bank of available gifts within the community, which allowed us to connect local resources with local needs in a timely manner. Jennifer also oversaw the requests of neighbors on our social platform and directed them to resources, utilizing gifts of the grant to assist neighbors with matters of shelter and utilities.

It has also been another growth experience within the NBA XPLORE program for Jennifer. She writes:

Being able to help a community that has helped me, has truly been a great way to end an interesting XPLORE year. From finding resources and linking support from neighbor to neighbor to just sharing news and keeping the community alert of changes, I have been able to see how we can and will help each other. At first I was nervous to take on a title like 'manager,' but now I am glad to continue the work to see how a well-established community like Hiram and surrounding areas help each other out during these difficult times and the developing of a "new normal." It is quite the sight to see as members on our social media share gardening tips and supplies, keep up with power and water issues affecting the community, and try to find the positive art culprit that leaves around uplifting words of encouragement. The only thing I wish is I could have done this for all eight months!

This continues to be a revealing and trying time for our community and the world. The generosity of NBA and Christ's Church and all beloved children of God remind me that we have more than enough—and we are more than enough—to bring healing and justice to our neighborhood and world. *"What we need is here."*

Grace and Peace be with our Disciples siblings throughout the nation as they discern ways to serve in this time.

As the health and social services general ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the National Benevolent Association partners with congregations, regions, general ministries, and a variety of Disciples-related health and social service providers to create communities of compassion and care. Founded in 1887 by six women responding to the needs of the day and on their doorsteps, for more than 130 years the NBA has continued to serve "the least of these." Learn more at www.nbacares.org.