February 6, 2017

Glen Oak Christian Church in Peoria, Illinois has over a 90 year history of ministries that build relationships, foster inclusion and provide hospitality to our neighbors and community. Therefore, we are very interested in the CCIW Mission First grant opportunities. Glen Oak strives to identify emerging needs as we redefine traditional community ministries within the challenge of our urban setting and the reduction of our traditional membership in terms of Sunday morning worship.

We have submitted three different grant requests which address a variety of emerging ministry opportunities:

Sculpting Lives in Clay

Community Meal

Vacation Bible School for All

In the past few years, we have also developed a weekend snack pack program that is in its fourth year serving 1200 students each week with a total of over 30,000 snack packs each school year; a one day home rehab ministry (Operation INASMUCH) and a weekday evening program (Weekday Wonders). The Regional Church Council of the Christian Church of Illinois and Wisconsin has been supportive of these ministries and we are hoping that these efforts will continue as we request funds for the following three Mission First requests.

Thank You.

Sincerely,

James Cotner

Chair of the Congregation

Glen Oak Christian Church

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1. **Sculpting Lives in Clay** – Use pottery to transition self-identified unemployed men from poverty into lives they find more fulfilling.* This will include life skills, job training, life-coaching, plus spiritual and economic development. Four to six men from the Glen Oak neighborhood will be trained in pottery as they participate in a 16 week group and individual coaching sessions. After the 16 weeks, these life groups will be encouraged and supported to continue; conventional job placement will be sought; and a new group of potters will be recruited. Upon the success of this project, Glen Oak expects to launch other targeted ministries for women and children. Presently, the studio at the church is equipped with two kilns, a wheel, and a clay slab roller. Warren Rayford, a volunteer from the community will assist Dr. Williams with coaching. Rev. Jeff Goard of Galva, a professional potter, will assist with pottery instruction and sells. Potter interns will be paid a minimum wage during their development and then have opportunity to sell their personal art as they become more accomplished. Rev. Greg Turk of Seattle wrote our curriculum based on his 12 years of successful work in LA at All Peoples Christian Center. There he created a soap business called "Homie Accents" to employ gang members. The Glen Oak "Sculpting Lives in Clay" is part of the National Benevolent Association incubator start up initiative. (*Please see our attached, Future Story)

   Glen Oak "Sculpting Lives in Clay" relates to the five values identified by the region in the following ways:

   1) <u>Engaged discipleship--deepening spiritual living connections with Christ.</u> Targets men with little if any connection with Christ and his power in their lives. Through group process, hands-on activities, study and personal growth we expect interns to experience catharsis and a deepening of their spirits.
   2) <u>Meaningful authentic relationships--encouraging connections.</u> Targets men forgotten by our society and a drift particularly by their poor decisions in the past and/or criminal records. "Sculpting Lives in Clay" will include one-on-one life-coaching and create an alternative family (hopefully, beyond the 16 weeks) for life-lines of mutual support.
   3) <u>Creative ministry-willing to take risks.</u> In 1970, Michelle Alexander, author of *The New Jim Crow*, says that 70% of black men in this country had blue color jobs. Now prison and gangs occupy so many. We have seen the devastation to families when the man is unemployed. We recognize the challenges, but are compelled to take this risk in developing this ministry.
   4) <u>Mission focused-outward focused beyond our doors.</u> Glen Oak's DNA requires us to engage in and with our neighborhood. Interns are from the community. While the initial 16 weeks will largely be spent in our building, the ministry is a failure if outcomes don't stretch far beyond us. We are seeking to give opportunity the guys on the street corners and the dads who drop their kids off at school, but have no place to go until school is out. They

are the guys who work for cash since they do not have skills to maintain a "regular" job and often their prison records are of putting.

5) Multi-cultural and interconnected worldview-recognition of the beloved community. Our Glen Oak motto is *All are Welcome and All Means **ALL**!* We live this inclusivity in all we do. "Sculpting Lives in Clay" is also a natural development beyond the compassion ministries listed in Matthew 25:44 and flows our compassion for those excluded from society's main stream.

Use of grant funds would be to provide clay, glazes, supplies, and intern stipends. It would not include the pastor's salary or any coach-mentoring compensation.

**** Future Story***

My life has been turned around by my experience as a potter with Glen Oak Enterprises. I am Harold Wannamaker and I live 2107 N. Maryland. Let me tell you how it went down. My friend, Shawn, told me about the program and he thought we ought to do it together. We had grown up together, gone to jail together, and now it seemed we were going to do something good together. So we walked over to Glen Oak Church and got our applications.

Deb Golden at the church showed a video on the program and then showed us how to fill the aps. She set us to work on them there in the office. The application was required first before we got an interview. It took us about twenty minutes and then we had to go get some references. My parole officer actually gave me a great reference. How about that! I was interview by Sam Johnson and Rev. Williams. They wanted to know how serious I was about this before investing a lot of time in me. Shawn lost it in his interview and walked out. I passed the interview and Sam Johnson became my coach. I hadn't had a coach since Jr. High.

Well Sam is the greatest and he kept our little group together. There were six of us plus Sam and we became tight. One guy in my group showed up sporting Latin King colors. So I naturally thought I was going to hate him. But Sam made it work and before the 16 weeks were over we had each other's back. I carry my pouch every day. It helped me become someone I never thought I could. I came out different and liking it. Besides that I'm a really good potter. Our group still meets every week at the church, but Sam only comes every couple of months or so. He always shows up if we are going out to eat or if Max is cooking.

I also run into him in the pottery studio. The other guys drop by there as well. Max grew through the pottery, but he is a landscape artist running his own business now. Mike has a water color studio and is selling his paintings on the internet. Fred got a good job at Kroger and he has been there 5 years with 3 promotions. Jason struggles with his health and it is such blessing for him to work from his home setting up websites sites. He markets them through InfoTeam, the church's IT provider. Zack, the last of our six is the most impressive. He got his GED, and then an associate's at ICC. He is now a coach in the program. He can really shape a guy up. So there you have it; that's our success story. All six of us doing pretty well with our lives, however, I'm still the best looking. - Harold

2. **Community Meal** – Hunger in America is a statistical fact that faces children, families and communities. The East Bluff of Peoria where Glen Oak Christian Church has ministered for over 90 years has identified that in their very local neighborhood, hunger is an issue. For the past four years the church has collaborated with the local neighborhood public elementary school by providing Weekend Snack Packs plus a Sunday Snack Pack for every child who attends Sunday morning worship and or Sunday School. Within the last three months, Glen Oak has identified a need to offer a family style community meal to all who come on Thursday evenings from 5:45-6:30. This Community Meal is open to families, seniors, children both from the neighborhood and congregation. The guests are greeted at the door, welcomed to the church and escorted to the large dining room where they are seated at tables, five to six friends together. A volunteer table host welcomes them and explains that we will be eating family style while the food is served by other volunteers. Each child has a name tag to better develop one-on-one relationships. Although at first we thought name tags might be awkward to the adults, the adult guests also want to be recognized and included. Over the last ten weeks, 120 guests have been to the community meal at least one time as demonstrated by the name tag board. Table conversation is encouraged and when the table has finished they are able to leave. Most evenings there is a take home food item such as fruit, vegetable, loaf of bread, popcorn which has been provided by the local food bank as part of the monthly Snack Pack distribution program. There is no charge to attend the community meal and the cost runs approximately $200 each week for the hot, nutritious meal which is designed for both adults and children. Menus include meat, fruit, vegetable and dessert. All are made at the church by volunteers on Thursday afternoon.

   Glen Oak Community Meal relates to the five values identified by the region in the following ways:

   1) <u>Engaged relationship-deepening spiritual living connections with Christ.</u> "When I was hungry, did you feed me"? Glen Oak continues to try and answer the question in a positive and supportive way. Through our history of the Snack Pack program and our mission of reaching out to our neighborhood, we recognize that serving others strengthens both the hungry and the volunteers who serve. In only a few months, we have seen new adults coming to our doors, families who have never been at the church and children who have developed a strong faith throughout many weekly programs, returning to enjoy a meal with their friends and neighbors. A calm warm, dry setting where food is served to you is a welcome event to many. To know that someone cares about them and is willing to serve them is a Christ connection.

2) Meaningful authentic relationships-encouraging connections. The welcoming faces at the door, name tag station, table hosts and meal serves reinforce that the "church" and the people of the church do care and want to work together to better strengthen the community one person or family at a time. The open door welcomes all and as Glen Oak says, ***All means All***! Many of the individuals have few friendly faces throughout their days and one night a week they are included in the family of faith.
3) Creative ministry-willing to take risks. Glen Oak has offered a variety of weekday programs in the past. Youth groups, after school tutoring, Christian Education evening program (Weekday Wonders) but the sense in the fall of 2016 was that there was a basic need to "feed the soul by feeding the person" In a program changing step, Glen Oak opted to simply serve a meal to all. No strings, no requirements, just a simple Community Meal to all who would come. Our volunteers would welcome, serve and prepare for our guests and show God's love through our actions. The increase in food style and servings (change from primarily snack supper child/youth menu to a substantial balanced meal for hungry adults and children) increased the budget from $2000 or over $7000. This was a risk! Nearly 25% of our outreach budget would be designated for this Community Meal.
4) Mission focused-outward focused beyond our doors. Glen Oak has a long history of reaching out beyond our building and this ministry is another step to see positive change in our neighborhood. The new approach of simply feeding people in hopes of also feeding their lives and souls has great potential in our neighborhood. Through other ministries of the church including our annual Rummage Sale, Vacation Bible School and community events, we know that there are adults who have needs and will come to the church for assistance. We are looking forward to increasing this relationship and better connect with all in the community. From the welcoming faces at the door as they enter throughout the evening as table hosts welcome them to have a spot together to enjoy the meal and the friendly servers of food, all have the goal of building relationships that foster love, compassion and spiritual growth. Someone cares about them and wants to serve them without any judgement or criteria. All can enjoy a meal together.
5) Multi-cultural and interconnected worldview-recognition of the beloved community. Glen Oak welcomes a variety of socio-economic and racial groups into its ministries both on Sunday mornings and throughout the week. The Community Meal is another aspect of this mission and goal. Each week an invitation is included in the 1200 weekend snack packs that are shared with two local schools. Reaching out and inviting those to come continues to be a goal. During community events, emphasizing this ministry

will be a priority. Flyers and church bulletin boards show and invite all who come to the church building of this food ministry that is open to all.

Use of grant funds would be to partially fund Community Meals and provide food and supplies. It would not include the pastor's salary or building expenses.











3. **Vacation Bible School For All** – For decades Glen Oak Christian Church had a Vacation Bible School during one week in the summer from 9am-12 noon. We had congregational members and their families attending, volunteering and enjoying a morning activity related to Christian Education. Over the last few years, Glen Oak has come to realize that although this may have been a thriving ministry at one time, our neighborhood and primary focus was not being met and we needed to change. The children within walking distance of the church were not attending Vacation Bible School, it was too early for them during the summer. Many of our traditional volunteers worked during the morning hours and the parents and family members we wanted to include were not attending. After a great deal of discussion and struggle, we decided to offer Vacation Bible School in the evening with a prime focus on families, inclusion and community fellowship. Our Vacation Bible School operates from 5:00-8:15 beginning on Sunday evening through Thursday. We offer am Early Bird Supper to all who come. Not just children but neighbors, friends and the entire community. We host it on the parking lot. We serve nearly 120 guests each night and the number grows throughout the week. The meal is served by volunteers, many who want to be a part of the program but also want to be home before dark or early evening. They may also prefer this task then "child or youth oriented activities". A completely separate crew works on the mid program snack. Double the volunteers but an opportunity to serve many who had previously not found a place at Vacation Bible School.

   Many of the children that attend VBS also attend the neighborhood school while some have been placed in special need rooms in different schools. These children often need more intense one on one relationships and frequently a professional educator would be beneficial to both the child and the group that he would rotate with during the evening. We have reached out to the teachers at the neighborhood school inviting them to be a part of our volunteer team. The teacher rotates with the "crew" and serves as special assistant to those who are in need.

   Another opportunity developed as we needed a welcoming committee to escort parents and family members into the sanctuary as part of the closing worship. We discovered that there are individuals who work during the day, not available when VBS begins at 5:30 but could be available at 7:30 to simply say hello and welcome! Once again a brief task but an opportunity to be a part of an emerging ministry.

   We have also encouraged adults from the neighborhood to stay after the meal to be a part of the Vacation Bible School experience. Some have joined crews and serve as assistants to the leaders. Others have found a space in the kitchen or doing other tasks. We have also formed an adult Vacation Bible School class that follows the same daily story but with more adult responses and interaction.

   Our plans are to invite other congregations to partner with us as we serve more and more families. We believe there are others who have a passion for Vacation Bible School but not an opportunity to serve, possibly at their home church due to time or

scheduling conflicts. Through newsletters, direct contact and social media we hope to invite and encourage others to be a part of this ministry.

Glen Oak Vacation Bible School for All relates to the five values identified by the region in the following ways:

1) Engaged relationship-deepening spiritual living connections with Christ. Vacation Bible School provides more direct Christian Education in one week than many individuals experience in an entire year. The concentration of spiritual gifts, lessons and interactions among other believers is a value that all can benefit from throughout the week. The participants and the volunteers strengthen their faith, demonstrate it in a positive manner and share the love of Christ to all. The curriculum is geared for enrichment and learning for all ages.
2) Meaningful authentic relationships-encouraging connections. The welcoming faces at the Early Bird Snack Supper, Opening Worship Service, 90 minutes of in-depth instruction and closing with a meaningful wrap up and sending forth service, reinforces that the "church" and the people of the church do care and want to work together to better strengthen the community one person or family at a time. The open door welcomes all and as Glen Oak says, ***All means All***! Vacation Bible School gives an opportunity to many to demonstrate their faith in a way that they had previously been missing.
3) Creative ministry-willing to take risks. Glen Oak has a history of trying things that could be perceived as risky. The changing from a morning Vacation Bible School with long tradition and success to an evening program created struggles and challenges. Some of our adults were not available in the evening and some were hesitant to break with the traditional time. But after positive research and commitments from volunteers, Glen Oak ventured into these new waters. We found that with the evening time, children and adults were coming hungry for dinner. They struggled during the first half of the program and after the themed snack, still were hoping for more food. We identified this need and have initiated the Early Bird Supper. Originally designed to encourage timely arrivals by the children and youth (we serve from 5:00-5:20 and then close down the line so everyone is ready for the opening lesson in the sanctuary at 5:30) we discovered that the parents and adults who brought the children to be register on Sunday evening were also hungry, wanted to enjoy the meal and have meaningful fellowship with friends and neighbors.. Each day the number of children and adults grew for the meal.
4) Mission focused-outward focused beyond our doors. Glen Oak has a long history of reaching out beyond our building and this ministry is another step

to see positive change in our neighborhood. The offering of an Early Bird meal for all in the neighborhood was an entry into the Vacation Bible School program and an opportunity to develop more one on one relationships while enjoying a meal. The adult volunteers were able to meet the parents, talk informally with the children and youth and also be prepared to begin VBS in a timely manner.

5) <u>Multi-cultural and interconnected worldview-recognition of the beloved community.</u> Glen Oak welcomes a variety of socio-economic and racial groups into its ministries both on Sunday mornings and throughout the week. The welcoming of both adults and children into this week long intensive ministry can change lives. It is an informal but structured opportunity to meet and understand cultures and life styles.

Use of grant funds would be to partially fund food for the Early Bird Supper portion of Vacation Bible School and Vacation Bible School supplies. It would not include the pastor's salary or building expenses.







