

Mi Casa – Su Casa "my house is your house": a new Mission Program you are invited to participate in!

The Synod of the Covenant has funded a Matthew 25 Grant to First Presbyterian Church of Paw Paw for a mission project. The project, called Mi Casa – Su Casa (my house – your house), was submitted last fall and selected from over 70 applicants to receive a \$5,000 stipend for bringing the project to life. The Mission Committee is planning a path to move ahead with our plan.

The application described three areas of impact to address in order to qualify.

- Building congregational vitality by challenging people and congregations to deepen their faith and get actively and joyfully engaged with their community and the world.
- Dismantling structural racism by advocating and acting to break down the systems, practices and thinking that underlie discrimination, bias, prejudice and oppression of people of color.
- Eradicating systemic poverty by working to change laws, policies, plans and structures in our society that perpetuate economic exploitation of people who are poor.

The project submitted outlined an effort to work with local fruit growers to provide items and an atmosphere to make seasonal migrant workers more comfortable in the “home away from home” settings during their residence in our area. We have identified one grower who provides housing to migrant families, and presently are identifying a second grower in the Decatur area who offers family accommodations. We are also seeking a committee of advisors who have a depth of knowledge with the migrant community. It is our plan to involve both congregations from Paw Paw and Decatur in support of this mission. This project comes as a response pointed out at a Pub Theology gathering concerning the difficulties encountered by families and individuals who work as migrants engaged in field and harvest work.

We are working on a list of items to be stocked in the migrant homes. Some of these items include dishes, glasses, silverware, pots & pans, laundry soap, dish soap, linens, etc. We will be publishing a list shortly and we will accept donations. But please remember we not only have grant money, but this is a project for which we intend to involve the entire community. There is no intention for our congregation to underwrite the entire cost of this project.

If you do have items you would like to contribute though, Eleda Zygadlo from Paw Paw, who will be the gatekeeper for that effort. Please contact her with the items you would like to donate, and she'll be able to tell you if we are in need of same.

I try and imagine myself in a situation where I would be moving my family to another state or country to work my fingers to the bone every day and then come home to make a meal, help kids with schoolwork, do the daily tasks, fall into bed exhausted only to get up the next day and repeat. All while living and working amongst people who speak a

different language. Additionally, the country where I am working is violently divided regarding immigrants (which some folks confuse with migrants).

For all the gifts we have been given, the lives we are privileged to live, the church where we worship without interference, and the relative safety we find in our community, we are asked to give back. Helping to support this mission project is one small way we can help a rather invisible population become more comfortable in their seasonal living experience.

Although such a well-known verse, it bears repeating especially in the context of the Mi Casa Su Casa grant:

"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.

I am telling the solemn truth: Whenever you failed to do one of these things to someone who was being overlooked or ignored, that was me – you failed to do it to me" Matthew 25

Please help us support the Mi Casa Su Casa grant. There will be some activities coming up needing participation, speak to your neighbors and friends about the importance of caring for the seasonal workers who enable our are to enjoy a bountiful harvest, and pray not only for the workers but for their grace in accepting our help.

First Presbyterian Paw Paw Elders, Tom Shoemaker and Wendy Mickle