

UNITED
CHURCH
OF CHRIST
Communitas
 PENNSYLVANIA SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE

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Renewal Through Partnership

The Strengthen the Church Offering provided crucial support to congregations and their community partners during the Covid Pandemic. Moving forward, grants from the Strengthen the Church offering will help congregations pivot towards church renewal and community engagement.

Plymouth Congregational Church in Lawrence, Kansas, partnered with the Haskell Foundation, a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit whose sole mission is to support Haskell Indian Nations University, to address the needs of Haskell students during the pandemic.

Covid-19 deeply affected Indigenous people. The students and staff of Haskell suffered hardships. One Navajo student received help for an emergency flight and quarantine accommodations because he needed to return to bury five family members.

Plymouth continued to aid students throughout the year. Sara Taliferro, of Plymouth, explained, "One young Lakota woman traveled back from her reservation to off-campus housing in Lawrence, KS, last September. Her car broke down on the way. She had managed to scrape together the first month's rent and deposit for the off-campus apartment. But she had to spend her rent money on car repairs. Emergency funds helped her make the rent deposit, so she had a place to live when she got back here."

Drawing on her 25-years of work with people experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity, Sara knew, "complex community problems can't be fixed with a simple checklist of actions." Instead, the congregation focused on developing meaningful community relationships on the Haskell campus. Sara worked closely with Manny King (Northern Cheyenne), a university counselor. Even as they help specific students, Sara and Manny build the kind of community solidarity that affects lasting change.

The renewal of our congregations takes many forms. In Lawrence, Kansas, it meant forming meaningful relationships to support students affected by the Covid-19 Pandemic.



Through this partnership, people gathered to honor those who have died from the coronavirus. The photo shows tobacco that will be offered during prayers by placing it in the fire. Many people participated in the ceremony virtually.

**Gifts to the
Strengthen the Church Offering
Renew the
United Church of Christ.**

