

Grant Proposal – Audrey’s Closet

Scripture Focus

“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”

- Matthew 25:37-40, NIV

Executive Summary

Brook Park Community Church of the Brethren (BPCCoB) seeks funding from the Ohio Northern District towards the construction of a free-standing building to house five growing community outreach ministries, including a free clothing giveaway, a free food pantry, a community garden, a free meal center, and a house repair team for those in need. The total cost of the project is \$298,499. We understand that this project would require a significant level of funding, and as a result, we have taken great care to construct a project proposal we believe to be worthy of that investment.

Brook Park Community Church of the Brethren

The Brook Park Community Church of the Brethren is a community of believers dedicated to following the life, examples, and teachings of Jesus Christ. We seek to bring people into a closer relationship with God by sharing the Gospel through service and witnessing of our faith. As a peace-seeking congregation, we strive to spread the love of Jesus to people of all races, creeds, and backgrounds, and all are welcome to be a part of our fellowship.

Background and Problem Statement

Twenty years ago, Audrey Telep saw a need. As a BPCCoB member and local nurse, she witnessed firsthand the financial hardship and pain many community families are thrust into due to medical crises and other adversity, and she felt God’s call to do something to support them and ease their suffering. At one of the meetings of Audrey’s nursing association, it was brought up that many local low-income patients struggled to meet even meager clothing needs, especially during seasonal changes. Instantly, Audrey knew what God was calling her to do. Over the next few weeks, Audrey tirelessly championed her vision of holding totally free clothing giveaways at BPCCoB, and, after collecting clothing donations for a few months and getting the word out, the very first Clothing Giveaway was held in the church fellowship hall in 1992. People came from miles around to look through the stacks of gently-used clothing, and their gratitude was

astounding. Based on the attendance, it became obvious that the need was even greater than had been anticipated, so two more Clothing Giveaways were planned for that year.

Over the next decade, the Clothing Giveaway at BPCCoB grew and grew. In the mid-1990s, the frequency and duration of the Clothing Giveaways were increased to four times per year, two days per Giveaway, and eight hours per day. Church and community involvement in the form of clothing donations and volunteers to staff the events also increased, and approximately 100 adults were served at each event.

Though Audrey passed away in 2001, the ministry God began through her lives on and continues to grow. Since 2008, BPCCoB has held a Clothing Giveaway every-other month, and, by the request of attendees, the events are scheduled for Saturdays, each of which currently averages 150 people served. Even with the increased frequency of Clothing Giveaways, clothing donations have increased to the point that the shed currently used to store donated clothes often runs out of room, and makeshift overflow storage inside the church's fellowship hall is used. Starting in the summer of 2010, BPCCoB began growing several different types of fresh produce on a plot of land called God's Green Acres behind the church building and giving it away at the Clothing Giveaways. An additional help has come from local newspapers' willingness to spread the word about upcoming Clothing Giveaways to a larger group of community members than was reached previously.

God has blessed this ministry with sustained support and significant growth, and, thanks to that blessing, the ministry is now experiencing some welcome "growing pains." As mentioned previously, the 8'x10' outdoor shed currently used to store the donated clothes has become insufficient to hold all of the donations. When room runs out in the shed, space in the fellowship hall is used to accommodate additional clothes. As the bags of clothes pile up in the fellowship hall, they create an unsightly and unmanageable heap that directly detracts from the functionality of the fellowship hall, which is one of the most heavily-used rooms in the church. Additionally, because the fellowship hall is used six days per week by substance abuse rehabilitation groups such as AlAnon, AlaTeen, AA, Narcotics Anonymous, and Cocaine Anonymous, it impinges on the space they have available for conducting their meetings. Donations stored in the current storage shed have also been susceptible to mice and water damage.

Possibly the largest constraint imposed by our current clothes storage system is that it prevents us from meeting unplanned clothing needs. Because the clothes are stored in the shed in plastic bags and are not sorted by size, gender, and clothing item type, when a family in need contacts the church requesting clothes, we are rendered unable to meet that need. On occasion, the families have been in such desperate need of clothing that they have been willing to spend a few hours digging through the bags of clothes with the pastor and deacons to find clothes to meet their needs; however, often they are unable to dedicate that much time to delving through the piles of bagged clothes. Unfortunately, this scenario has occurred several times just over the past year. In the same vein, the Berea Children's Home, a local residential support and counseling center helping children and families in need, has approached us wondering if we are able to provide clothes for some of their incoming children when they enter the Home. Regrettably, as much as we do feel called to provide this service, our current storage constraints simply do not allow us to effectively accommodate urgent needs such as this.

When these storage issues were originally raised, BPCCoB decided to pursue building a free-standing structure exclusively for the Clothing Giveaway that would allow enough room for the clothes to be organized and laid out continuously, instead of unpacking them for Clothing

Giveaways and then re-bagging and storing the remaining clothes once the Giveaway was finished. At that time, a partially heated barn-type structure without gas, water or bathrooms was proposed, in order to keep costs low. A team of church members constructed plans and a cost estimate for the building, called Audrey's Closet, and the congregation approved their plans. After submission, the local zoning committee rejected that building proposal, requiring any free-standing structure built for that purpose to be of masonry construction and also have sewer, water, gas, and electrical utilities and a fire sprinkler system. Because of the new requirements, the planning team realized that, in order to get the most value from the building, it would make much more sense to rethink the purpose of Audrey's Closet to include accommodations for an expanded set of growing church ministries.

The second ministry that could benefit from Audrey's Closet is BPCCoB's Community Cupboard. This is an already-existing ministry that has been providing food for families in need for many years. Currently, we have two large cabinets to hold canned and dry goods donated by church members. These items are given to people who come to the church in need of food. If the new building contained additional storage space and freezer storage, the Community Cupboard could be expanded significantly. Because those that come to the church are often homeless and in need of a place to wash themselves, the optimal new building would include a full bathroom.

The third ministry to consider is God's Green Acres, a garden currently tended by church members, which provides fresh fruit and vegetables to those in need. God's Green Acres has been operating since the summer of 2010, and it has been paired with the Clothing Giveaways to provide individuals with both fresh produce and clothes for free. This year, we plan to double the size of the garden, and we would like to eventually open it up for individuals in the community to tend to their own plots and grow their own produce at the church. This would require additional space to store hand tools and gardening supplies. Another aspect of ministry that has been requested by recipients of the produce is some form of education on how to cook fresh produce. Therefore, it would be desirable that Audrey's Closet have a kitchen area capable of holding several people at once for lessons on cooking fresh produce. Our current church kitchen is galley-style and cannot accommodate more than 3-4 people at once.

The fourth ministry, the Community Kitchen, is just beginning. The goal of this ministry is to provide hot meals for people in need. In addition to providing meals for families and homeless adults, this ministry also focuses on school children. More than one third of all the children in our school district rely on the free and reduced lunch program. It has been made known to several teachers in our congregation that, for many of these students, these lunches are the only food they receive. Some children at one of the local schools have even requested to take Friday's scrap food home so that they will have something to eat over the weekend. During the summer, when school is out of session, these children will need help even more, and we feel called to meet that need. On February 12th, 2011, the first Community Kitchen meal will be hosted at the church. Because our fellowship hall can only hold 150 people, we have implemented a voucher system so that people will not be turned away due to poor planning. Food will be prepared from donations made by church members and outside donors. A second Community Kitchen meal is planned for April 16th, 2011. Additionally, beginning this summer, we plan to offer regular lunches to local school children in need.

Leaders from BPCCoB have initiated talks with the Cleveland Food Bank, a nonprofit organization working to alleviate hunger, and representatives from that organization have been extremely enthusiastic about supporting the Community Kitchen ministry through providing us

with fresh, frozen, and dry goods at minimal cost. As a member of their satellite ministry program, a modest amount of \$75 would purchase several pallets of fresh, dry, and frozen food from the Food Bank, as often as necessary – we just need the capabilities to store, prepare, and serve it. For this reason, Audrey’s Closet should have the kitchen facilities and food storage capabilities needed to prepare meals for 200 or more.

The fifth and final ministry currently planned to be housed in Audrey’s Closet is the Helping Hands group. For the past fifteen years, a group of more than a dozen volunteers from within the church has undertaken handyman and fix-it jobs for those in need, disabled, or elderly and unable to perform the work themselves. Projects have ranged from wheelchair ramps to electrical work, to plumbing, water damage repair, and even framing. The group has a sufficient set of tools and supplies that have been donated by church members and other outside donors; however, there is no room in the current church building to house a workshop for their ministry. All that would be needed is a small set aside area to work from, which would also be included in the optimal new building design.

In summary, five active and growing BPCCoB ministries would benefit greatly from the construction of Audrey’s Closet. The Clothing Giveaway would benefit from additional storage space, laundering capabilities, and the ability to display clothes continuously. The Community Cupboard and Community Kitchen would benefit greatly from storage space, food preparation area, cold storage, and showering capabilities. God’s Green Acres is in need of storage and food preparation instruction areas. Finally, a permanent workshop area would further the Helping Hands ministry.

Project Objectives

The ultimate goal of this project is to provide the resources necessary to continue and grow the ministries in which we feel God’s call, while balancing overall value with the Brethren values of simplicity and resource stewardship. The solution should be functional, effective, and versatile, but it should avoid extravagance and materialism. Given the requirements put on the project by the Brook Park zoning committee, we feel that the most reasonable building design, resulting in the greatest overall value, would include some form of accommodations for all five of the church’s growing outreach ministries.

As a result, we feel that Audrey’s Closet should meet these design criteria:

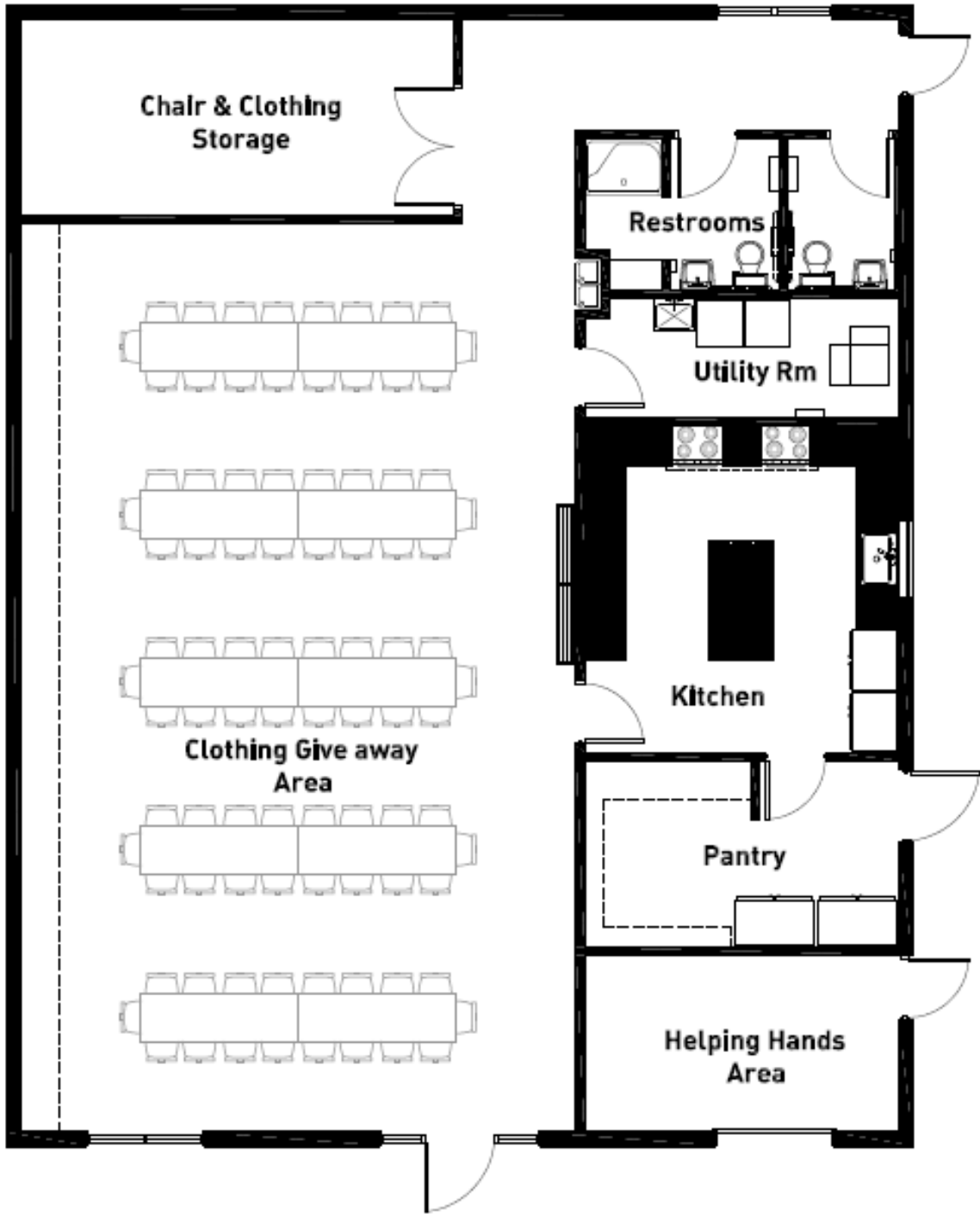
- Allow for continuous clothing organization and display, so that the Clothing Giveaway can meet urgent clothing needs.
- Have laundering facilities for donated clothes.
- Seat around 100 people for Community Kitchen meals (in addition to the 150 seats in our fellowship hall).
- Accommodate storage of a large amount of dry goods, fresh produce, and frozen food.
- Have an easily-accessible kitchen, with enough room to prepare a meal for up to 250 people.
- Contain handicap-accessible restrooms, which can double as fitting rooms. One bathroom should have a shower.
- Create a small workshop set aside for the Helping Hands group and for storage of gardening tools for God’s Green Acres.

Project Design

After determining the design criteria for this project, a team of church leaders began the process of drawing up plans for the building. Because designing a masonry structure with full utilities is beyond the expertise of the planning team, we selected a builder for the project: Simmons Brothers Construction. Bill Simmons, co-owner of the company, has become well-known in our district for working with other Church of the Brethren congregations to plan and successfully execute new building construction. Simmons Brothers Construction led the Maple Grove congregation through their recent expansion and renovation, and the company has a demonstrated track record of solid design, following through on agreements, and staying within budget. Additionally, as a Christian-owned company, they graciously donated their services to design and construct blueprints for the new building. They also worked especially closely with the zoning committee during the design process, to ensure that our plans meet zoning requirements in every way. Because of their diligence, the zoning committee recently gave full approval to the proposal described below.

Bill Simmons took to heart our goals of creating an economical, sustainable, ‘no-frills’ building that will provide excellent overall value and agree with our deeply-held belief in resource stewardship. For this reason, long-term economical solutions were given preference over shortsighted, initially less-expensive solutions. As a result, the building design includes features like 12” R-30 insulation, a 10-ton heat pump, and an efficient high energy factor electric water heater.

The building layout is fairly straightforward, and the blueprint on the next page illustrates the floor plan. The 2,784-square-foot building will be built 40’ to the South of (behind) the church building, adjacent to the current parking lot. The structure is a 58’ x 48’ rectangular building comprising eight rooms. The largest of these rooms, the Clothing Giveaway area, measures 48’ x 28’-3” and is capable of seating 90 people. Normally, the Clothing Giveaway clothes would be continuously organized and on display tables in this room, but for other events requiring additional seating (e.g., Community Kitchen meals), the clothes could be packed away and the large room could be used for other purposes. Adjacent to the main room is a 10’ x 22’-8” room for storage, generally used for keeping the main room’s tables and chairs when they are not in use. Immediately opposite the center of the Clothing Giveaway area is the kitchen, which measures 6’-8” x 16’. The kitchen features two sinks, two stoves with hoods, a refrigerator, a freezer, two dishwashers, an island for food preparation, and ample counter and cabinet space. A food service window between the kitchen and the Clothing Giveaway area will allow volunteers to easily serve Community Kitchen attendees. Adjoining the kitchen is a 9’-6” x 16’ pantry with a double refrigerator, a double freezer, and more than 25’ of deep pantry shelving. An exterior door allows for easy delivery of donated food items to the pantry. Adjacent but not connected to the pantry is the Helping Hands workshop, which measures 9’ x 16’. The workshop features an external swinging door and a 6’-wide garage-type door to allow for large building supplies to move in and out freely. God’s Green Acres will store its gardening implements in this area. At the opposite end of the building are one full bathroom and one half bathroom contained within a 7’-8” x 16’ block, both of which are handicap-accessible and situated for privacy from the Clothing Giveaway area. In between the bathrooms and the kitchen is the utility room, which contains a washer, dryer, utility sink, and water heater.



Below are a few simulated models of what the basic layout of the major rooms will look like.





Proposal Budget and Funding Sources

The total cost to realize the vision of Audrey's Closet is \$298,499. Of this amount, \$279,084 would go towards constructing the building itself; \$4,529 would be spent on 10 tables, 92 chairs, and 4 storage racks; and \$14,886 would be used to purchase appliances, specifically:

- 2 Dishwashers
- 2 Stoves
- 1 Single Refrigerator
- 1 Single Freezer
- 1 Double Refrigerator
- 1 Double Freezer
- 1 Washer
- 1 Dryer

An itemized construction budget can be found in the appendix section at the end of this document. BPCCoB has committed to funding the maintenance, upkeep, and operating costs of Audrey's Closet and the ministries it houses from within our annual church budget. Because this project requires a significant investment, we will be seeking funding from both individual donations via our website (<http://brookparkbrethren.org/AudreysCloset.shtml>) and a variety of grants, organizations, and endowments. Any stipulations placed on donations from grants, organizations, and endowments must be in agreement with the Church of the Brethren denominational views, as well as the mission of Audrey's Closet, in order to be accepted. We hope to eventually see many volunteers from across the community serving with us at Audrey's Closet, though we are committed to its ministries' remaining under the leadership of the Brook Park Community Church of the Brethren.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Brook Park Community Church of the Brethren is seeking funding for Audrey's Closet, a building that will house five active and growing ministries at the church: the Clothing Giveaway, the Community Kitchen, the Community Cupboard, God's Green Acres, and the Helping Hands group. The total cost of the project is \$298,499 (\$279,084 for building construction, \$4,529 for tables/chairs/storage racks, and \$14,886 for appliances). Given the zoning committee's requirements, we have created a proposal that we believe presents the greatest overall value to the community and also exercises resource stewardship.

We thank you for your time and consideration in reviewing this proposal. We understand that this project would require a significant level of funding, and as a result, we have taken great care to construct a project proposal we believe to be worthy of that investment. We hope you agree.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions you may have.

Appendix – Omitted from online publication for confidentiality reasons but available upon request.