



LET'S TALK ABOUT FAITHFUL GENEROSITY

Helping congregations have more meaningful
and creative conversations about resources.



HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

This tool is designed to facilitate creative and imaginative conversations about how congregations can use their resources in service to their local community.

This tool is designed to be used alongside Lake Institute's [Faithful Generosity Story Shelf](#), which highlights congregations and other religious organizations who have sought to use their assets and resources in creative—and sometimes surprising—ways as an expression of faithful giving. This tool can be used online or in person. To use it online, have one person open the PDF on their computer and share their screen, using Zoom, Whereby, Google Meet, or another online meeting platform. That person can then fill in the PDF as the group moves through the tool while everyone views their shared screen. In person, we recommend downloading and printing the tool.

SECTIONS

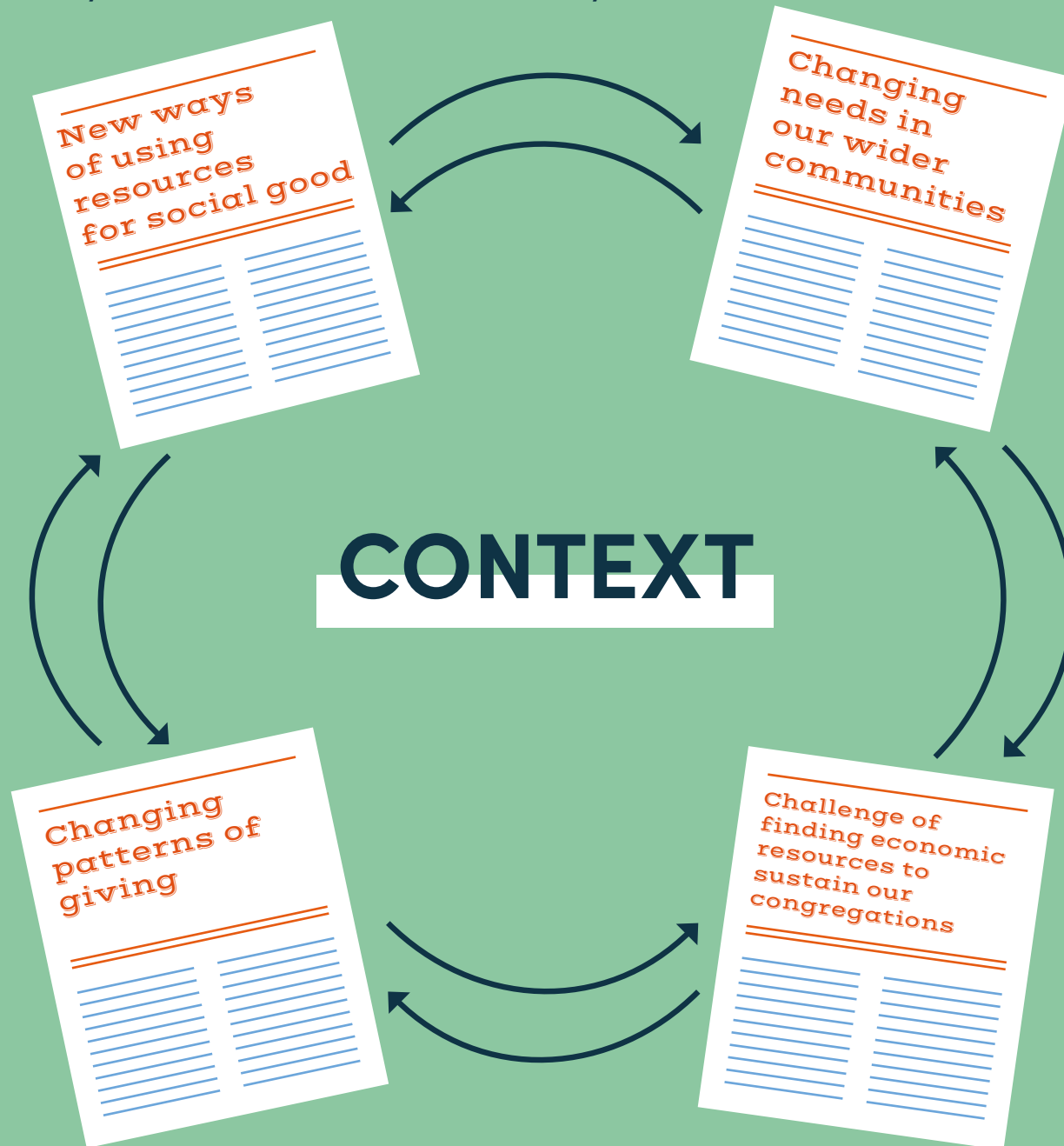
Introduction and context
Stories and discussion
Drive and Deploy game
Reflection questions

PREPARING TO HOST THE CONVERSATION

In order to use this tool effectively, we recommend:

- Appointing a scribe - someone who fills out the tool as the group moves through the different sections. If online, this will have to be the person sharing their screen. Participants might also want to make their own notes, capturing insights and deeper questions that surface during the course of the workshop.
- Preparing for the conversation. If online, make sure that everyone has an invite to the online meeting platform and the that scribe understands how to share their screen. If in person, make sure both the tool and the stories are printed out before you begin.
- Including different voices - whether it is reading what is on a page or discussing the different stories, it is always beneficial to mix up who is speaking. Encourage all participants to offer input. Invite thoughts from quieter participants.
- Keeping track of time - this should take between 90 minutes and 2 hours to complete. The one area where you could spend longer is in talking about the stories. While you need to read at least two or three together, you can circulate the remaining stories among the group after the workshop if there is interest.
- Having fun! The Drive and Deploy game will require imagination and creative thinking. You might find yourself having to think outside the box. There are no 'wrong' suggestions - have a go and enjoy the process!

The context for many congregations is changing and these changes affect how we receive and use resources for mission and ministry. Which of these resonate for you in your context?

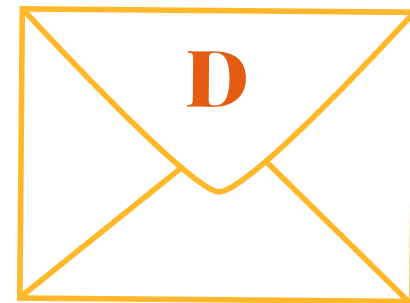
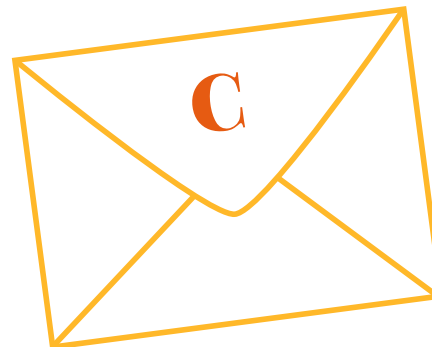
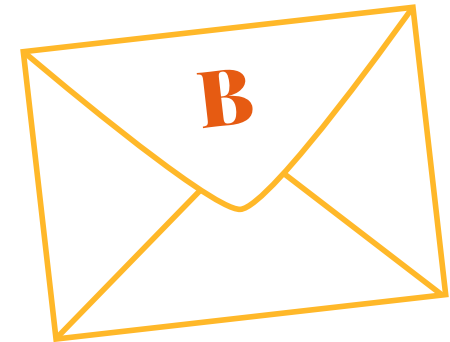
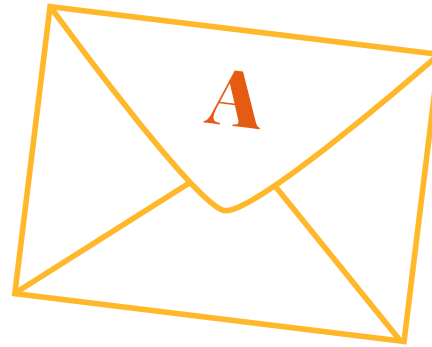


STORIES

Each of these stories unpacks an imaginative use of congregational resources. Pick three for discussion with your group. Read each aloud and then discuss, using the prompts on the following page.

As you read, be on the look-out for:

- 1 Different kinds of congregational resources
- 2 Imaginative use of those resources
- 3 Importance of new partnerships



Discussion questions for each story:

1 Initial observations:

What is going on here?

What in this story surprises you?

Who did the congregation/
community partner with?

How were resources deployed?

2 Dig a little deeper into connections with your own place:

In what ways does our community share the same values or vision as the congregation/community in this story?

Do we have similar resources or assets that we want to share with the world in new ways?

3 Together, name some questions for the future that might ground the next conversation: What questions does this story raise for us as we consider how God is moving in our own context?

Which story inspired you the most?



Why?

STORY:

A dotted orange line forms a large rectangular frame for writing.

Which story surprised you the most?



Why?

STORY:

A dotted orange line forms a large rectangular frame for writing.

Which story can you most relate to?



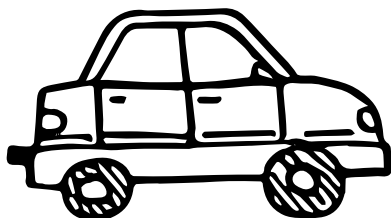
Why?

STORY:

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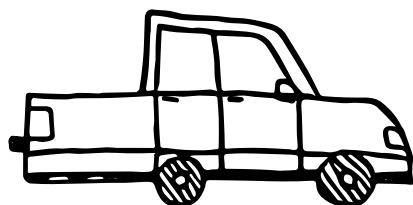
Let's unpack some of the themes in these stories, starting by naming the variety of ways that resources are being moved.

Four Vehicles for Moving Resources



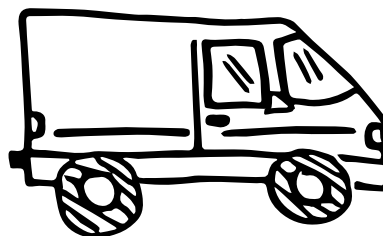
INVESTING FOR IMPACT

Investing for Impact invites us to invest money in ways that achieve social and environmental benefits while generating financial returns. This 'vehicle' strategically puts a community's investments to work for the common good.



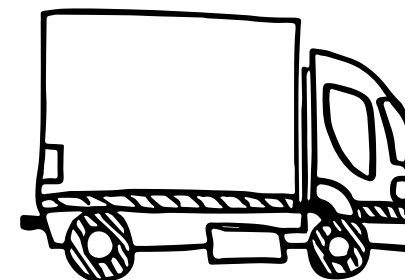
INNOVATIVE GIVING

Innovative Giving invites us to discover new ways to be generous with the resources in our care. The act of giving is age-old! But today's religious communities are innovating in what they give, how they give, and to whom they give. This 'vehicle' is fueled by imagination about what makes for a good gift.



SELLING/DONATING PROPERTY

Selling or Donating Property is a vehicle for moving resources like land and buildings when the owners no longer believe that they are the best stewards of a property, or the property no longer serves the congregation well. How can such resources be disposed of in a way that aligns with a community's faith and values and serves a greater good?



SHARING PROPERTY

Sharing Property is another vehicle for deploying resources like land and buildings, especially when the congregation still wants to use those resources too. This approach looks for ways to make assets available to other groups in ways that align with the congregation's own needs and values.

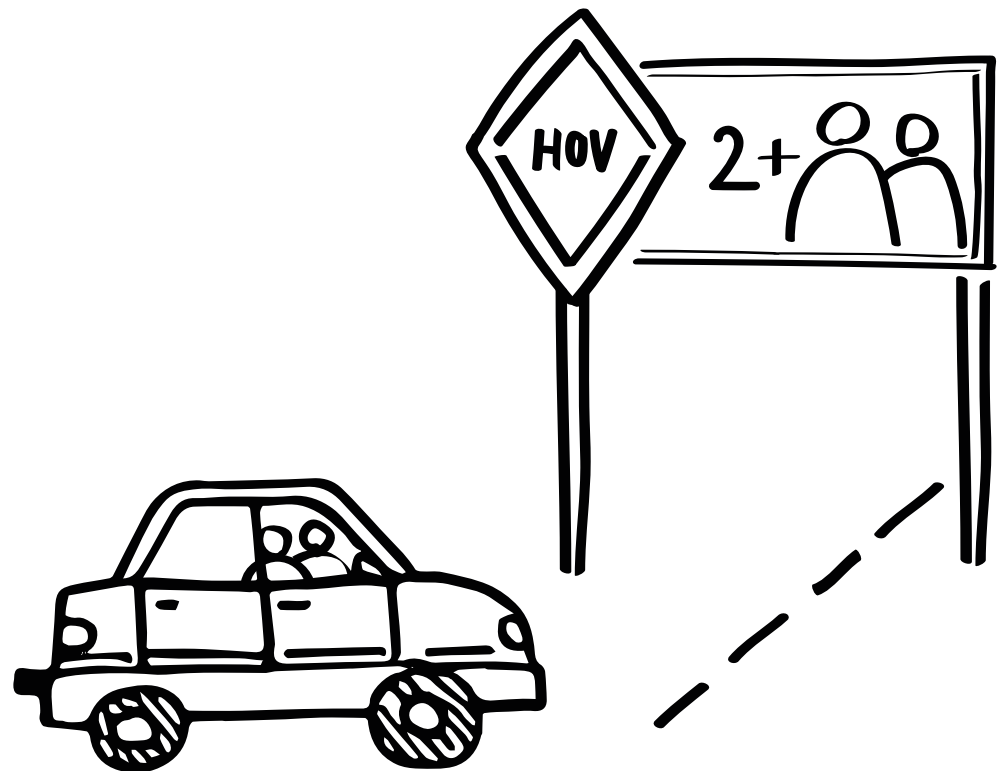
Every story you read also involved the formation of new partnerships.

Partner for Moving Resources

Congregations often respond to needs and opportunities through internal resources alone - for example, through volunteers, donations from the congregation, and use of the congregation's buildings and land. These are all important but, to respond effectively to needs and opportunities in the wider community, it is highly likely that a congregation will need to work closely with a partner.

This could be a non-profit, an educational institution, another congregation, a community from a different faith tradition, a business, a foundation or financial institution, local government, or any other organization.

It might be helpful to think of that partner organization as your co-pilot in moving resources in generous new directions.



DRIVE & DEPLOY

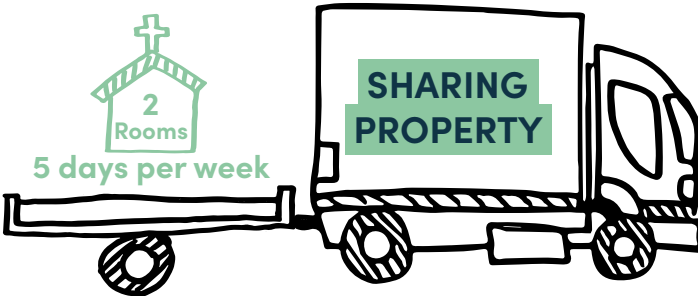
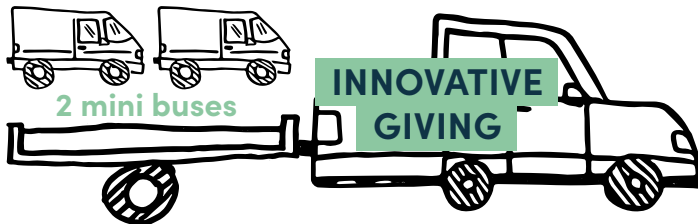
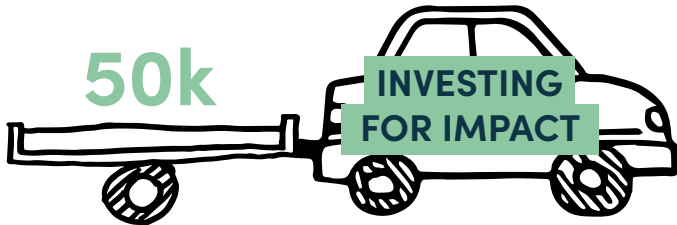
Utilizing different resources, different means of deploying these resources, and new partnerships, you are going to come up with ideas to meet needs or respond to opportunities.

- 1 Randomly choose two of the vehicles on the next page to 'Drive and Deploy'. You will use these for **Round 1**. The remaining vehicles will be used for **Round 2**.
- 2 Then (and only then), proceed to **Round 3**. Come up with an idea for how each of the chosen vehicles might meet the need/opportunity.

Get Creative!

ROUND 1

Circle the two resources you chose, then pick one. Read the need or opportunity, then come up with an idea and an organization you can partner with to make it happen. Repeat this for the second resource.



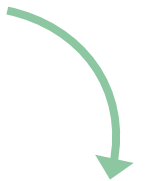
IDEAS

[Dotted green box for writing an idea]

WITH THIS PARTNER

[Dotted blue box for writing a partner]

+



NEED/ OPPORTUNITY

Your local community is currently experiencing record levels of unemployment among young adults. Civic and business leaders in the community acknowledge this needs to be addressed and are willing to be part of a solution.

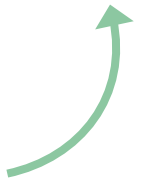
IDEAS

[Dotted green box for writing an idea]

WITH THIS PARTNER

[Dotted blue box for writing a partner]

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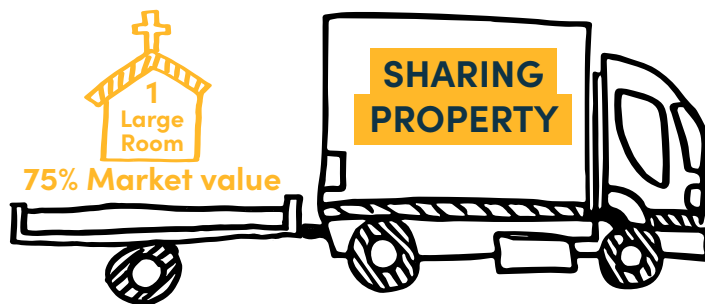


ROUND 2

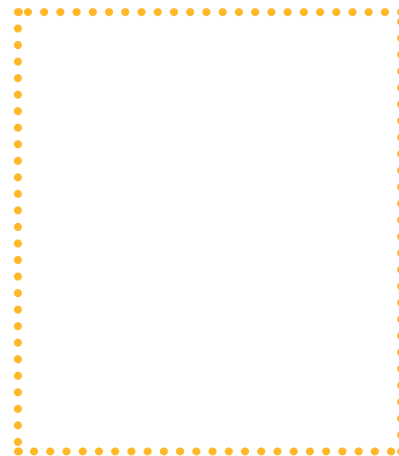
Now do the same with the remaining two resources.



Legal and financial
expertise from members
of the congregation



IDEAS



WITH THIS PARTNER



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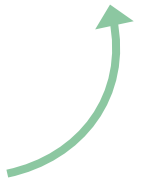
**NEED/
OPPORTUNITY**

Due to a local business closing, people in the community, particularly those with low-income, no longer have access to an affordable grocery store. Schools and health workers are concerned with the effects of poor nutrition.

WITH THIS PARTNER



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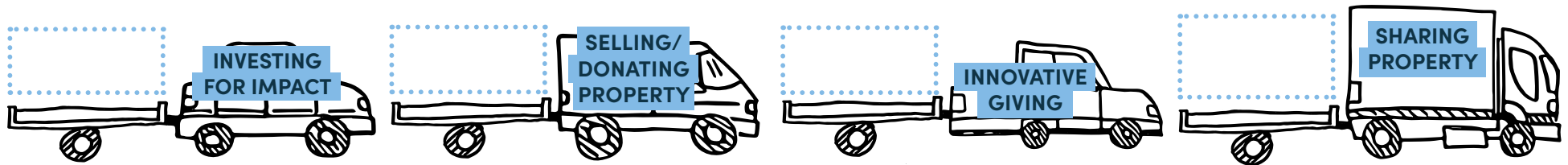


ROUND 3

Your own community

Now, play this game with a need or opportunity you are aware of in your own community. As this tool is designed to spark imagination, try to come up with an idea that has not yet been discussed in your context. Start by identifying the need, then fill in the rest - what vehicle you will use, the idea and partnership. Feel free to fill these out in the order that makes sense to you.'

CHOOSE A VEHICLE TO DEPLOY



DEVELOP AN IDEA

Finally, come up with an idea for how that resource and particular deployment might meet the need. (There is no obligation to implement this so have fun and be creative!)

FORM A PARTNERSHIP

Identify an organization that cares deeply about this idea and can bring something to the table that you don't have.

IDENTIFY NEED

Start by identifying a need you have observed in the local community.

Reflection Questions

What new insights emerged during the course of this activity?

What challenges or barriers does your congregation face in using resources more creatively?

What opportunities can you imagine in your context for deploying your congregation's resources in new ways?

What next?

- 1) Visit Lake Institute's [Faithful Generosity Story Shelf](#) for more inspiring stories of congregations and other faith communities doing this work.
- 2) Find another congregation to share what you have learned from this activity.
- 3) What other step can you take in the next month to keep momentum on this conversation?

This tool was created by RootedGood and Lake Institute on Faith & Giving. We would appreciate any feedback on your use of this tool. Please contact us at info@rootedgood.org

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CHURCH SEES A HIDDEN NEED AND GROWS A SOLUTION

By *Ray Marcano*

Bethel A.M.E Church of Ardmore, with guidance from Trellis for Tomorrow, grew a flourishing garden on it's property that produced 1,200 pounds of food in 2022 for those experiencing food insecurity in their community. Photo courtesy of SAVVY Main Line.

In 2018, the [Bethel A.M.E Church](#) of Ardmore in Lower Merian, PA met with [Trellis for Tomorrow](#), a non-profit with expertise in organic farming. The church and Trellis partnered to tackle an inconspicuous problem in one of the state's wealthiest townships, food insecurity.

The Rev. Carolyn Cavaness, Bethel's pastor, knew that some families would have difficulty feeding their children during the summer months since 10% of the community's students relied on free or reduced meals at school. Partnering with Trellis, she created [The Bethel AME Church Community Garden](#) and Ardmore Victory Gardens, which provides free, fresh produce for anyone who needs it.

The garden started on church property with one bed and now, five years later, has 15 that produced 1,200 pounds of food in 2022, according to its annual report. The program has helped build 50 garden beds for local families and organizations. The garden operation is now so large it's hired a full-time staffer to supplement the program's 50 current volunteers and has a budget of \$75,000.

Cavaness called Trellis "the project's architect" because it had the expertise to get the program off the

ground. Building garden beds isn't as simple as putting seeds in the ground. Cavaness learned which crops would thrive in the northeast, what type of irrigation system would be best for her crops, whether the beds should be in direct sunlight, and much more. Today, Ardmore Victory Gardens uses their newfound skills to help people in the community with questions about their gardens – such as, what kind of fence best keeps out squirrels.

In addition to learning the ins and outs of gardening, Cavaness had two other issues to confront. She had to convince her 125-member congregation of the project's overall benefit, and village residents that people were going hungry in their affluent community.

Cavaness experienced some skepticism because Lower Merian is one of the wealthiest townships in the state, with a [median annual household income](#) of nearly \$149,000. If you live here, how could you not afford food, Cavaness would hear. But she had a simple message: "This is real. This is in our neighborhoods," she said.

The skepticism has faded. Now, the Victory Garden project has grown into a community staple with festivals, lectures, and workshops,

all around themes of food insecurity, empowerment and justice, and how these gardens can help make people become self-sufficient.

The project helps other churches build beds on their property and provide seed for people who need it. The program also serves as support for people of color interested in agriculture. It hosted a webinar with [the Black Church Food Security Network](#), which empowers Black churches with land to grow food. In conjunction with one of its partners, [Haverfarm](#), it hosted Amirah Mitchell of Sistah Seeds, which educated Black and brown growers on culturally important seeds.

The AME Church was founded on principles of self-help and self-determination. "This is core of being self-sufficient," and meets the church's mission and values, Cavaness said. "We took care of ourselves, each other, and the community at large. If somebody needs it, we have it here."



More stories on
Innovative Giving

WHAT HAPPENED WHEN A CHURCH LEARNED TO SEE ITS MONEY IN A NEW WAY

An interdenominational bible study and justice action group called Economics of Compassion saw the gentrification in the Over the Rhine neighborhood in Cincinnati through a lens of Biblical justice linked to economic analysis.

EOC taught its faith community to stop blaming the poor for their circumstances or see the homeless as broken people. “We learned to help people find their gifts and led them to invest in them,” Peter Block said. “We dropped the concept of charity, giving from those who have to the people we label needy. That sustains poverty and bad power relationships. Charity is not an economics of compassion. We looked for the assets of our neighbors.”

A \$30,000 grant from the local Episcopal Cathedral had let the leader of a local African American led accelerator called Mortar, operating in Over the Rhine, play the “connect-the-dots” role for six months as a system entrepreneur among the white churches, the city, local investors, the community foundation and CDFI’s and economic development agencies. Those new relationships enabled by that visionary grant from a church resulted within three years in more than \$3.5 million in philanthropic, private sector and public investment in Mortar to help black led businesses create assets operating out of their pop up store front in Over the Rhine. Mortar has since been recognized as an award and grant winning national model and its leader has testified in Congress on the role of entrepreneurship in asset creation among marginalized communities.

Many church members were trained by Mortar in culturally appropriate technical assistance, and white professionals learned to both talk and listen to first-time non-college educated African American entrepreneurs and become long-term, valued mentors, spawning scores of new relationships with value for both.

The EOC conversations and teaching from Walter Brueggemann “caused the Cathedral community to repent of certain past ways of behaving and thinking; they realized that gentrification is not all good, that not all investment benefits everyone equally,” said the dean of Christ Church Episcopal Cathedral Gail Greenwell.

“There was a significant shift in our outreach projects. We went from ameliorating the symptoms of poverty to addressing system change.”

A core group of Cathedral community activists formed and they, with the Cathedral’s backing, raised a minority loan fund with partners. Now, along with public sector partners, the Cathedral plans to invest \$10 million from its large endowment in a \$50 million low-income housing fund, to counterbalance the gentrification. The wealthy church even learned to see its endowment in a new way. “We had always thought about preserving the (Proctor Fund) endowment. Now we’ve come to see with great treasure comes great responsibility, not in a noblesse oblige way, but identifying with our neighbors,” Greenwell said.



**More stories about
Investing for Impact**



Creatively Letting Go



More stories about
Selling/Donating Property

Years ago, the children of St. John's United Methodist Church in South Charleston, West Virginia, gathered for games and fun in a small area adjacent to their sanctuary at the edge of downtown. Today, [a vegetable garden](#) sits on that plot of land providing produce for the café now run out of the former church building. [Café Appalachia](#), a pay-what-you-can coffee shop and restaurant, opened in the old worship space in 2018. Part of the organization [Pollen8](#), Cafe Appalachia also trains and employs women recovering from substance misuse. The journey to this social enterprise coming to occupy an old Methodist building began years ago and required a mixing of cultures and financial sources to come to fruition.

The building of St. John's actually belonged to St. Paul's United Methodist Church, which had come to own it through a series of mergers over the last fifteen years. The general decline of attendance and financial security at several local congregations led to an opportunity familiar to many consolidated congregations. They now held an extra piece of real estate, but they had to maintain it and decide how they might steward it to further their mission. With the central location of the former St. John's plot, St. Paul's had the opportunity to sell this land and gain a substantial sum of money and provide some security

to daily operations. According to St. Paul's pastor Rev. Paul Mateer, the congregation had conversations with a restaurant that wanted to purchase the parcel for about \$200,000.

However, the congregation maintained active relationships with many nonprofit organizations and hosted community meals. Through this community engagement, they met Cheryl Laws, the founder and CEO of Pollen8. Laws presented to them her vision of Café Appalachia, where all people could come to eat and women recovering from substance misuse could more easily reintegrate into society. The old church building would serve as a perfect site for this new social enterprise, but St. Paul's would have to give it to Pollen8 for little to no cost.

In discerning whether they wanted to invest in the mission of this nonprofit, the congregation came to know some of the women engaged in Pollen8's programming. These women, who would be the ones working in the proposed café, did not match the typical demographics of the congregation. Through small efforts of relationship-building though, any concerns about the cultural differences between the church and the nonprofit were allayed. Even with the strengthening bond between

the congregation members and women of Pollen8, the church still had to determine whether they could afford to sacrifice a six-figure windfall to support the dream of Café Appalachia.

Leaning on the expertise of the members of their congregation and the resources of their conference, St. Paul's came up with a compromise. Rather than give the old church building to Café Appalachia, the congregation would apply for some grants to help substitute for some of the potential revenue from selling the land to the highest bidder. Through a grant from their conference, a denominationally affiliated foundation, and a few other small sources, the congregation raised \$45,000. While this amount did not equal the \$200,000 offer they had previously received, it eased the concerns of the congregation's trustees enough for them to move forward in partnership with Café Appalachia.

This process of relationship building and piecing together the right financial components did not happen overnight. Yet, through the investment of time and energy by many in their congregation and beyond, St. Paul's United Methodist Church used their extra church building to support a nonprofit focused on one of the most urgent and challenging social problems in their community.

Art Sanctuary



More stories about
Sharing Property

For a few sultry nights this past spring, North Philadelphia's landmark Church of the Advocate was transformed into Harlem's Cotton Club, circa 1940. On stage, teenage performers bedecked in vintage finery channeled stars of a bygone era—Ray Charles, Etta James, Billie Holiday. "This joint is jumpin'," they sang, and by the end of an evening that interwove old-time jazz standards with hip-hop dance, African drumming, and spoken-word poetry, the audience was jumping too. The crowd was on its feet for the finale, clapping to a rousing version of Stevie Wonder's "Higher Ground."

The North Stars Afterschool Program—in which twelve- to eighteen-year-olds study music, poetry, voice, and dance with accomplished professional artists free of charge—is just one of several high-impact programs initiated and run by Art Sanctuary, a community arts organization based at Church of the Advocate in North Philadelphia. As the brainchild of Philadelphia writer Lorene Cary, Art Sanctuary was originally founded to bring prominent African-American writers and performers to inner-city audiences often overlooked by national book and concert tours. At Art Sanctuary's recent Reading in Concert series, for example, Pulitzer-prize winning playwright Charles Fuller spoke informally to high school students at Church of the Advocate about his craft, career, and formative years spent in nearby housing projects.

North Stars is just one example of Art Sanctuary's responsiveness. The Afterschool Arts Program answered a need expressed by Eileen Brown, cofounder and president of Grands as Parents (G.A.P.), who was raising six grandchildren on her own. Also housed at Church of the Advocate, G.A.P. is a support group for grandparents who suddenly find themselves caring for their children's children. Although G.A.P. offered reading and crafts for younger children and sports activities for teens, Brown expressed concern that teenagers with artistic inclinations did not have an outlet; Art Sanctuary established the North Stars program to provide that outlet. Since its beginning, more than 125 teens have been transformed by the program, including all of Eileen Brown's grandchildren. This year Brown once again sat in the audience, proudly watching her two youngest grandchildren perform in the African dance numbers.

While her granddaughters grin and glow after strutting on stage, Brown knows that North Stars' true value comes from the program's less glamorous moments. The gradual mastery of difficult dance steps and the steady presence of North Stars' instructors are what will make a lasting difference in the teens' lives. "It builds up their self-esteem," she says. "They do better in school."

Cary notes that shyer kids sometimes gain confidence at North Stars and then become so involved in student council or theater at their schools, they no longer have time for the program. "Sometimes we're victims of our own success," she jokes. Seifert's research supports these observations. Social Impact of the Arts has demonstrated that neighborhoods with thriving community arts programs experience lower truancy and delinquency rates.

Church of the Advocate makes a fitting home for organizations like Art Sanctuary and G.A.P., which are part of a buzzing hive of community services at the church, including a soup kitchen and clothes cupboard based in the neo-Gothic National Historic Landmark. While its ample campus and cavernous interior support Art Sanctuary's practical needs for storage, rehearsal, and performance space, the church's activist history is also a source of heady inspiration. As the site of the city's Black Power Conference in 1968 and of the Episcopal Church's first ordination of women in 1974, the Church of the Advocate resonates with the significant contributions it has made—not just to Philadelphia but also to the world. As Cary says, "People get that we're righteous if we're at the Advocate."

And though Art Sanctuary moved its offices to South Philadelphia this spring to further its commitment to build bridges to other neighborhoods and communities, the Advocate remains Art Sanctuary's true home, where North Stars kids build confidence as they learn to play guitar and dance, and where renowned artists like Charles Fuller tell inner-city youth their own stories of struggle and triumph. "Our groundedness comes from our relationship with the church," says Tarana Burke, Art Sanctuary's managing director. "We will always be a part of the church."

Read the [full story](#).