

## ***Just. Good. Food.***

### ***Project Summary***

Just. Good. Food. (JGF) seeks to create and strengthen partnerships between PC(USA) congregations and organizations that provide food for those who need it. The 2010 census shows higher poverty rates now than at any time in the last 20 years - disproportionately affecting children and the elderly. In both urban centers and rural areas, access to nutritious food is increasingly limited as suburban big box stores drive local businesses to close. JGF has four components: gardens, curriculum, partnerships and outreach. This pilot project's \$16,000 budget will target 100 congregations and communities. JGF requests \$4,000 from First Presbyterian Church's endowment fund.

### ***Who is involved?***

Just. Good. Food. (JGF) Is a pilot project of the Synods of Lakes and Prairies, Lincoln Trails and Mid-America of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) located in ten upper Midwestern states (ND, SD, MN, WI, IA, NE, KS, MO, IL, and IN).

### ***Why is this important?***

Poverty in the United States has risen to its highest level in 20 years. 15.3%<sup>1</sup> of the population in the Midwest lives at or below the poverty line and access to high quality food is decreasing in so called 'food deserts'<sup>2</sup>. There is no evidence that increasing poverty and decreasing access to high quality food will change anytime soon. As a region known for its agriculture, the upper Midwest has the resources to provide enough for everyone. ***This project is a small step toward a big mission – feeding people and strengthening communities.***

### ***How will it work?***

Utilizing the strong connectional nature of our denomination, JGF is targeting 100 congregations in 10 states to participate in:

- Growing food in a garden;
- Collaborating with already existing local organizations for food distribution;
- Considering what it means to be a good steward of creation and resources as well as caring for people by caring for our world; and
- Reaching out to invite the larger community to participate.

---

<sup>1</sup> 2010 Census Bureau

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data/fooddesert/fooddesert.html> a food desert is "a low-income census tract where a substantial number or share of residents has low access to a supermarket or large grocery store. "

### ***Project Components:***

#### *Growing Gardens –*

Gardens are at the center of this project. Gardens will be the starting point for each project and can be as simple as tomato plants in a five gallon bucket or as complex as a two acre plot with multiple crops. Gardening will provide food as well as opportunities to learn about food production, composting, planting, harvesting, and caring for and working with the land. Gardens may also be a vehicle for community outreach and will engage people of every age and skill level.

#### *Curriculum –*

In partnership with Interfaith Power and Light<sup>3</sup> and the Presbyterian Hunger<sup>4</sup> programs (both of which already provide substantial curriculum resources) a 6 week programmatic curriculum will be developed to enable congregations to study the stewardship of creation, the theology of food justice and our role as Christians in making sure there is enough for everyone.

#### *Partnerships –*

Each congregation will be responsible for intentional collaboration with local human services organizations such as food pantries, community dinners, after school programs, schools, shelters etc... that need resources to distribute to people who need food. This is neither a new organization nor a one size fits all program. Congregations will have the flexibility to engage and sustain partnerships that make sense in their own contexts. What will be effective and helpful in Des Moines IA will not work for Kearny NE and it is important that congregations have flexibility to work independently to build these relationships.

#### *Outreach –*

Many mainline congregations are struggling to find ways to be relevant in the communities in which they serve. Local food, sustainability, organic growing, and building community are areas of interest for many people regardless of their faith affiliation and JGF seeks to offer a way for congregations to do mission locally while engaging the community around them.

Pilot congregations are already being identified by executive presbyters from all three synods.

---

<sup>3</sup> <http://interfaithpowerandlight.org/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/hunger/food-and-faith/>

***Proposed Time Line:***

August 2012 – Starter kits sent to congregations (Introduction to the project, fall curriculum, scale, starter seeds)

Fall 2012 – Partnership building in the community / study theology of creation / stewardship of people and resources

Early Spring 2013 – “How to”: grow/compost/winter sow and construct gardens

Late Spring 2013 – Planting / teaching / community building / outreach / worship and Sunday school in the garden

Summer 2013 – Harvest / share / assess / report

***Reporting:***

Reporting will be done via web interface.

Each congregation will report:

Pounds/Kilos harvested and shared

# of participants in the project

# of organizations served (partnered with) and if available the number of clients served by the organization

What did you learn in the garden?

What did you grow in the garden?

Who did you work with in the garden?