



About *Operation Understanding* (OU)

Operation Understanding is our diocesan commitment to provide grant *seed* funding to a parish (or a *shared ministry* among parishes) for creating a new outreach ministry or enhancing an established one.

The ministry should address one or several life necessities, such as providing food, shelter, clothing, health care, energy assistance, and/or educational programs for children or adults in need.

OU grants serve as *seed* funding to *plant* and *grow* new ministries for helping people throughout the diocese.



About *Operation Understanding* (OU)

A parish or a person, who is a member in good standing of a parish in the diocese, can submit a grant application by having the consent of the parish's rector.

A parish may apply for grant funding for up to three years from the date the parish received its first diocesan check.

If a parish wants to enhance an *existing* ministry by undertaking an additional outreach need, then it must apply for another OU grant.

As an example, an established food ministry wants to add a clothing storeroom and needs to purchase racks and hangers.



About *Operation Understanding* (OU)

OU grants are made possible through the generosity of parishes and parishioners who contribute to OU through the annual *Alleluia Appeal*, monetary gifts from parishes and individuals, proceeds from ‘*Outreach Sunday*’ offerings and from fundraising projects.

The major source for OU funding comes from the diocese’s Bishop Stevenson Fund.

OU Committee members are appointed by the Bishop. Twelve people representing the clergy (4), laity (7) and youth (1) serve on the OU Committee.



About *Operation Understanding* (OU)

There are two (2) grant application cycles during the year with submission deadline dates ending in January and October.

The OU Committee meets in February and November to review and evaluate the OU grant applications.

Grant applicants may be contacted by an OU Committee member before the meeting, in order to obtain more information or clarification.

Grant applicants (the contact person's name as it appears on the form) are notified via email or telephone about the outcome of the review immediately after the meeting.



When completing a grant application, you should be prepared to:

- Provide a description of the ministry's mission. What calling or vision led to forming the ministry? Who benefits from the ministry? How does the ministry accomplish meeting the outreach need?
 - Describe the economic and demographic condition of the area where the ministry serves.
 - Explain how the parish, vestry and parishioners support the ministry.
 - Show that the ministry has sustaining financial support to keep it alive. How will the OU grant serve as *seed* funding for *growing* the ministry? Include details about other funding sources and fundraising events/projects.
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When completing a grant application, you should be prepared to:

- Explain why *continued* financial support is needed if the grant application pertains to an *existing* (not new) ministry. Is the ministry expanding its mission to serve an additional outreach need?
 - Does the ministry utilize other ecumenical and/or community agency support? If so, tell us about volunteer participation and financial support of partnering churches and groups.
 - Present the ministry's fiscal plan; its projected or current budget. At a minimum, the fiscal plan must have an outline of its annual income compared to expenses. The grant application will be more favorably viewed when the fiscal plan contains itemized details.
 - Know a grant application will not be approved after three years from receiving the first check, unless an *existing* ministry undertakes an additional outreach need.
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Once a ministry's grant application is approved:

- The Episcopal Diocese of Central Pennsylvania will send a check only to an Episcopal church and not to a person or another outreach group. When completing the form, please include the recipient church's name (as it is to appear on the check) and the prime contact person's name, postal/email addresses and a daytime telephone number.
 - OU Committee members visit ministries that received grant funding, so we view the ministry's activity and confirm that grant funding is being rightfully used.
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Once a ministry's grant application is approved:

- Six months after receiving grant funding, the ministry must submit a progress report. The report should describe the work completed and the ministry's future outlook, along with a financial report comparing the ministry's proposed budget (from the grant application) to the actual receipts and expenses to date. Personal stories, photos and financial statements contained in the report give a broad view of the ministry's success and how responsive the Episcopal Diocese of Central Pennsylvania is in helping people in need.
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When the OU Committee reviews a grant application submitted by a parish (or group of parishes joined together for a common ministry), the Committee uses ***ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES*** to evaluate each grant application and to authorize funding.



Essential OU guidelines include:

- Vestry support, parish participation, and the ministry's fiscal sustainability are essential items to include when completing the application.
 - OU funding may not serve as the only source of financially support for the ministry.
 - Use of the church facility as the ministry's gathering place is preferable.
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Essential OU guidelines include:

- Ministries funded by OU should focus on providing food, shelter, clothing, health care or educational programs for children or adults in need.
 - Grant funding may not be used for facility renovations, building maintenance, congregational development or *compensated* staffing related to the ministry.
 - Requests for “*pass through*” funding (meaning a parish is not actively involved in a community’s outreach project) will be denied.
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Essential OU guidelines include:

- A grant application should pertain to only one ministry. If the parish seeks funding for different ministries, separate grant applications must be completed for each ministry.
 - **IMPORTANT:** OU grant applications and corresponding budgets must be submitted *electronically* by using <http://www.diocesecpa.org/forms/operationunderstanding>. Hardcopy (paper) grant applications will not be accepted! However, supplemental items, such as newspaper articles, informative pamphlets and photographs, may be sent to the diocese. Always include a photocopy of the grant application's cover sheet with the material, so diocesan staff can match the hardcopy items to the electronic document.
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Excerpts of New Ministry Stories:

'Eagle's Nest After School Program'

Saint John's Episcopal Church, Lancaster

"The ministry "began as an offshoot of a former ministry held in the late 1990's when children from the neighborhood school came one afternoon a week for snacks, games, reading, etc. Following burnout on the part of the volunteers, a younger member and the Rector searched for a replacement program that would be different and yet offer the same safety for children after school. The school principal was incorporated in the new plan."

A lesson learned ...

"Acquiring a capable and enthusiastic director to lead an army of dedicated volunteers."

"As the buzz about Eagle's Nest surrounded the church, (parishioners) began to hear about the needs, both physical and financial interest rose, as did pride."

"With the backing of school personnel ... and the offer to connect with families for registration purposes, we gained their interest. An annual back-to-school luncheon is held for the entire faculty, where chocolate chip cookies baked by the kids raises their awareness and commitment."

"The neighborhood is supportive and takes pride in the fact that Saint John's, (known as) the church down the block, is offering a safe and enriching place for city school children."

"Be patient. A successful program takes a long time to get it right. There isn't a week, after thirteen years, when we don't take time to analyze what went right, what went wrong and how we can improve next week."



Excerpts of New Ministry Stories

'The Help Line' (serving a four-county area)

Church of the Transfiguration, Blue Ridge Summit

“What began as helping out two or three families a month in 1981 has grown gradually to an average of fifty a month. In 2015, we gave assistance 643 times for food, utilities, clothing, Easter, Thanksgiving & Christmas boxed dinners, Christmas presents for children and miscellaneous items (household supplies, e.g., detergents, paper goods, hygienic and cleaning supplies).”

“(The ministry) started as “word of mouth.” Then churches began publishing flyers which were placed into local post offices and other businesses. Some of the churches also published a monthly newsletter, which went out to all those (businesses and organizations) involved. In addition, reminders are added to most Sunday bulletins. Each of the churches/organizations involved, also keep their members informed.”

Community feedback ...

“Resounding praise. Some of those that are served return the favor by volunteering their help in maintenance.”

Practical advice ...

“We cannot over-emphasize the effect that (the ministry manager/director) has had on the success of this important mission. We are noting this, so that the person(s) who peruses (a new ministry) puts emphasis on the fact that it takes a particularly dedicated volunteer to manage such a program on this scale, as well as other dedicated volunteers to step in when/as necessary.”



Excerpts of New Ministry Stories

'Race Track Ministry'

Saint Andrew's in the Valley, Harrisburg

"A parishioner, who is employed at Penn State Hershey Medical Center, told us about the clinic at the (Penn National) racetrack and the ministry to provide hot food to the workers at the track interested us. Apparently, when the horses run the workers have no access to hot meals only vending machine food. A group of area churches signed on to serve meals on those evenings. We visited the site before we got involved and saw that some of the meals being served were sandwich types. We decided that a hot nourishing meal might be more appropriate and, under the auspices of our ECW funds, we devised a menu consisting of salad, rolls and butter and a chili type mix of meat, tomatoes, and tomato sauce, peppers, corn, and rice, followed by fruit cups, fresh fruit, cookies/brownies or some other type of goody. We also make a vegetarian chili to accommodate a couple of workers. Because there are no kitchen facilities at the racetrack community room, we prepare and cook the meal at our church kitchen and transport it in hot containers to the track by 5 p.m. We set up and serve by approximately 5:30 p.m. We make a point to try and engage in conversation at the tables. Many of the guests are Spanish speaking. The guests range from small kids to quite older folks and they are always extremely grateful. Leftover food is wrapped and left for the next day. We have to clean up and be out of there ASAP because the pastor conducts a service following the meal. We never know how many people will show up but we plan for about 80 or so. Between the shopping for the food, preparation, transportation and clean up back at our church we need about 6-10 people to be involved. It's been a successful ministry for us."

"All of us who work on these projects have enjoyed the fellowship especially because we know our efforts are for a good cause."

Editor's note: To date, this ministry has not applied for OU grant funding.



Excerpts of New Ministry Stories

'The Community Cafe at Saint Andrew's'
Saint Andrew's Episcopal Church, State College
Beginnings ...

“We had listening sessions to determine what we wanted St. Andrews to look like in the future. We publicized a meeting to brainstorm ideas for local outreach. I invited the lady who headed up our local Food Bank to tell us about the need in our community. She told us her dream of having a different church in our community host a Soup Kitchen each night of the week. At that time, there was only one other church with a Soup Kitchen. She told us she would help us with soup ingredients as much as she could. At that time, 2 local factories had just shut down and lots of people were out of work.”

“We had a kitchen, but no BIG equipment (pots, soup bowls and spoons). We also decided to serve bagels, and we asked a local restaurant, if they would donate their day old bagels, which they were more than happy to do, rather than throw them out. We got a start-up (*Operation Understanding*) grant from the Diocese and some very generous parishioners gave us a donation, which we used to buy two big soup pots, a food thermometer and some big leftover containers. We talked to the Pa. Health Department to find out what the “rules” were for serving the public, and many of us took a training class offered by the county extension service.”

“Parishioners were so excited to do this and the idea had originated with them. We started with eight teams of seven to eight people. Each team worked only once every 2 months. Now seven years later, we still have lots of interest and the menu has expanded to a full meal. LOTS of grocery stores donate items for consumption that night as well as for take home for the guests. People from St. Andrew's, as well as the community, volunteer to help us now. We also have students from the high school, who come to earn community service hours required for graduation.”



Excerpts of New Ministry Stories

'Father Abraham's Children'

Saint Paul's Episcopal Church, Manheim

"We are one of the many small churches in the Lancaster Convocation of the Diocese of Central Pennsylvania. In spite of our size and aging membership, we are very committed to our Outreach projects, especially those involving children. During the year, those projects include an Easter egg hunt after the Easter worship service, handing out candy, apples, little crosses, and Bible tracts to trick-or-treaters on Halloween, supplying families with the ingredients for a Thanksgiving meal, and providing Christmas gifts for needy families."

"A few years ago, we also wanted to supply some children with back-to-school clothing and supplies, but couldn't afford to do so. We found out about the *Operation Understanding* grant program, applied, and received a grant. We called this project *Father Abraham's Children*, naming it after a song beloved by our Sunday school kids. It has become one of our favorite Outreach projects.

This ministry consists of our parishioners taking needy families out shopping for school clothing and supplies. We receive the names of eligible families through a Lancaster County organization that provides help and services to needy families. This year, we want to try raising money for this ministry by holding a series of sub and sandwich sales, which is always a popular way to ask our congregation for money. And we know that they will respond generously, because they really love those sandwiches, and they love supporting our Outreach ministries."

"Writing a grant seems like a very hard thing to do, but the *Operation Understanding* Committee gave us some very helpful pointers by giving us questions to answer about the particular ministry, and advising us to be specific and concentrate on only one project. We've appreciated their helpfulness and would like to thank them again for the grant money that we have received."



Excerpts of New Ministry Stories

'Summer Program for Youth (SPY)' Saint John's Episcopal Church, Carlisle

"Dickinson College had begun a summer enrichment program for Carlisle children in the 1960's. By 1986, there were more at-risk children being recommended by the schools than they could handle. The first summer when St. John's set up SPY, we served approximately twelve children with a program that was primarily recreation."

"One of our (recent) biggest challenges has been the increase in attendance by the children which now averages well over fifty children every day. For the last two years, we have asked parents to sign a letter of agreement agreeing to volunteer at least once during the summer."

"All children are recommended by school counselors at the Carlisle elementary schools and attend the program at no cost."

"SPY provides a seven-week summer program (Monday through Friday) that is an enriched and structured day camp for children aged six to nine who otherwise would not have the opportunity to take part in a program with an academic emphasis, blended with recreation and community awareness. Importantly, it helps at-risk elementary age children maintain their reading and math skills during the summer void. SPY activities include a reading program, math review, writing, music, arts and crafts, library time, weekly field trips to area places of interest, movies, swimming, and other summertime activities that enhance community awareness, heighten self-esteem, and instill positive character traits."



Excerpts of New Ministry Stories

'Crispus Attucks'

Saint Edward the Confessor Episcopal Church, Lancaster

“We serve meals to the homeless at the Crispus Attucks Community Center in Lancaster, Pa. The need was determined 8 years ago when our social outreach ministry group was searching for projects to undertake in our local community. There was a need for community involvement, in terms of sharing the expense and the time to make and serve meals to the homeless clients at this Lancaster inner city shelter. The ministry has grown over the years, in both parishioner volunteer support and in the number of meals we serve on our one Sunday a month. Our volunteers plan the menu, prepare and transport food to the center (which has no kitchen or food prep area) and serve on our assigned Sunday. We serve once a month, with a minimum of six Sundays during a twelve month cycle. We at St. Edward’s continue to feel this is an important ministry for our parish as we hear the call of Christ.”

“The ministry is ecumenical, as other churches in the community are involved and have weekends when they commit to serving meals. St. Edward’s continues to be one of the largest contributors to this meal-serving ministry. Most of the other groups serve one or two times a year.”

“In 2009, St. Edward’s served seven meals from June through December. We applied for a grant through *Operation Understanding* to assist us in supporting this ministry, which in past years was supported 100% by parishioner donations. We realized that the need could not be 100% supported by parishioners as each meal “event” was approximately \$375. In order to meet our ten meals per year goal, we needed \$3,600. We received a grant for enough funding to enable us to serve a total of nine meals from June 2009 through April 2010. (We had to report on a full twelve months from when we received the grant monies which was May 2009). One of the requirements of receiving the grant monies was that you needed to spend the monies in their entirety during that year on the intended ministry in order to apply for a new grant the following year.”



Excerpts of New Ministry Stories

'Vacation Bible School (VBS)'

Trinity Episcopal Church, Williamsport

"Previous neighborhood summer programs were no longer running, so we thought this would be good both for children in our parish and in the neighborhood. It was supported by prayers and action, along with grants from *Operation Understanding* and Thrivent. We joined forces with St. Mark Lutheran Church and had two days there, two days here, and ended with a splash on the 5th day at Loyalsock Swimming Pool. New in 2015 was the addition of college-age counselors from Camp Mount Luther, who led the music and Bible study time. Over sixty people of all ages participated, including 28 children. We collected canned goods and financial donations for the United Churches Food Pantry."

Early challenges ...

1. "Early attempts at coordination between our church and the Lutheran Church; partnering with them as far as who was doing what and getting things rolling."
2. "Parishioners were involved by helping with food, running crafts and games. Some retired parishioners used their art ability to help paint posters and props for the Bible stories."

Lessons learned ...

"We overlooked the fact that the food committees from both churches did not check with each other about their menus for the different nights and had to make some last minute changes. Because of pool construction not being finished in time, the location of our final night pool party had to be changed at the last minute."

"For our first year, we did the ministry alone. We used 'Harry Potter' curriculum that was very well received, especially among the teenagers and young adults."



Excerpts of New Ministry Stories

'Food Bank Ministry'

Saint Luke's Episcopal Church, Mount Joy

"When we were looking for ministries in our community to help, we wanted all members of St. Luke's to feel involved, no matter if they were age 2 or 92. We collect food very week as well as gift cards for grocery stores for the food bank to purchase those items that are perishable. The food bank knows that if they have a special need they can count on St. Luke's. We just had our annual Concert of Compassion to raise money for the food bank and the Faith Homes of Donegal."

"When we all can be part of a ministry and do God's work, no matter what our age or physical condition is, we all feel uplifted and worthy of God's love."

About partnering ...

"Look for those ministries (in the community) that are already formed and piggy back with what your parish can do."



1 Corinthians 12: 4-7

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.
