

Christ Lutheran Church
Serving Our Neighbors (SON)¹
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is SON?

SON stands for Serving Our Neighbors. It is a one-time initiative of Christ Lutheran Church to disseminate \$30,000 of our FY2020 budget surplus to about 150 active participants—both members and nonmembers—meaning each adult will be allocated \$200. Those participating are then asked to designate their \$200 to “serve our neighbors” as they see fit. There are no strings, other than the request to participate in a launch Zoom meeting on April 18 that will explain the program and then a second Zoom meeting on May 16 to share their reflections on “who is our neighbor.” We will track giving decisions (anonymously) and celebrate them during our Pentecost worship on May 23.

Where did we get \$30,000?

CLC expected a deficit budget for FY2020, but thanks to generous and faithful giving by the congregation, lower expenses, and the forgiveness of our PPP loan, we now anticipate a surplus of more than \$30,000 for the year that ended June 30, 2020. Given this unexpected grace – and the fact that we are not, for the first time in 40 years, contributing to social ministries from Yard Sale proceeds – Council voted in November that we would use any surplus from FY2020 for social ministry. We agreed to use our abundance to invest in the needs of our community.

What is the purpose of SON?

1. To live into our vision of being a faith community with no walls.
2. To celebrate abundance in the midst of a tough time.
3. To shine a light on CLC’s social ministry, past, present and future.

Who is included?

- Active participants, including all confirmed youth and those livestreaming worship from other cities (about 150 people).
- Allocations are made to individuals, not households.
- If anyone is not on the list and wants to be, they can reach out to Pr. Renata and request to be included. The point is to include, not exclude.

How will we engage children and youth?

- Confirmed youth will have their own breakout group to explore how generosity and service fit within a life of faith.
- Active participants in the CLC youth group will be allocated \$50 if their parents wish.
- \$10 will be available for CLC children whose parents would like them to participate.

Has this ever been done before?

LaSalle Street Church in Chicago did something similar and found it energized the congregation and spurred more generosity and awareness of social ministry. As a child participating in a similar program

¹ See Luke 10:25-37

at her church, the Dwiggin's granddaughter Maggie used a \$10 allocation supplemented by "matching gifts" from family members to make "birthday bags" for other children. And Clare McLaughlin's employer, NBC, started great conversations about caring for others when they allocated \$50 to each employee to give to charity in lieu of a traditional holiday gift. We're borrowing from these examples and adapting based on our own vision and circumstances.

What is the timeline and schedule for the Zoom calls?

April 18: Launch Sunday where we dedicate ourselves in prayer during worship followed by a Zoom call—to provide inspiration and information about our past and current social ministries and explain the program

May 16: Second and final Zoom call to discuss "who is our neighbor" and reflections on the program

May 23 (Pentecost): A celebration, during worship, of our giving

What if I can't make it for the two Zoom calls?

Send an email to clcoffice@verizon.net and let us know what weeknights you are available, and we'll schedule a call for those who cannot make the Zoom calls after Sunday worship. Exceptions can be made if someone can't attend a meeting as planned or if they request to opt out of the meetings, but the hope is that all will participate. We hope this will be a great time of connecting with one another and envisioning our next steps in social ministry.

What can I use the money for?

The money is intended to meet the needs of "our neighbor." It's up to you to decide who that is!

There are three ministries we will "feature"—meaning, we will put them first on the list along with funding targets in hopes that, together as a congregation, we will meet those targets at a minimum. The criteria for selecting these "featured" organizations are that they have a close connection to the church, a history of support by CLC, and a clear current budget need.

The three featured are: CLC Food Pantry (\$3500 minimum requested); Samaritan Ministry (\$2000) and Lutheran Social Services (LSS)/National Capital Area to support refugee re-settlement (\$2000).

Is that all the Food Pantry needs?

The Food Pantry needs \$6,500 in order to serve 12 families in the Partner Arms 2 building for one year, of which CLC already allocated \$3,000. To ensure we have the full amount, we hope among all of us participating, individuals will designate at least \$3,500 to secure this funding.

At the same time, the Food Pantry constantly has to fund raise in order to complete the funding for the existing commitments to serve residents of Partner Arms 1 and 3. To ensure funding for the full year, an additional \$3,000 is needed. We hope participants will consider giving an additional gift from their own money toward this need.

Is our Social Ministry vision more than giving money?

Yes! We are grateful that so many CLC members already volunteer their time and encourage everyone to consider how they can serve giving their time, talents and treasure going forward. The Food Pantry is a great example, as is the work of the Racial Equity/MOSAIX team.

What about advocacy?

There are “downstream” ways to serve, such as providing food to meet immediate needs, and “upstream” ways to serve that can have great impact, such as advocating for food security and fair wages. There is a continuum from charity to justice in action, and we hope all will participate in at least one act of advocacy during the SON program.

What if I feel called to support a personal need?

Yes! This is a great use of the funds! Participants can indicate on the Survey Monkey form--or contact Pr. Renata--if they would like to receive the funds directly to address their own personal need or to share the funds directly with someone they know who has a personal need.

What if I want to donate this money back to the church?

We intend this money to be used beyond our own walls, but if you prefer to donate back to the church, we suggest donations to the Pastor’s Discretionary Fund which Pastor Renata uses to provide rental or emergency assistance to those in need in our congregation and those who knock on our door.

What if I want to give to an international ministry?

As a faith community with no walls, we recognize that Jesus calls us to be “neighbor” with all those in need. For practical purposes, the church cannot send money overseas, but the church can send money to any non-profit organization based in the U.S. that serves people in other parts of the world.

How will funds be disbursed?

The logistics of physically disbursing money during the pandemic are challenging and many people do not use cash or checks these days. We are therefore “allocating” funds and then asking participants to communicate where they want the money to go so the church can then send it out directly to those organizations. If anyone indicates that they would like to spend the funds on a personal need (whether their own or another individual or family), the church will disburse the funds directly to that participant. (We want people to feel free to do this.)

How do I let the church know where to send my money?

We are creating a Survey Monkey where you can designate your money, whether to one of our featured ministries or to another nonprofit organization. We also hope you will be inspired by CLC’s history of giving and social ministry on the updated the Social Ministry page of our CLC website. On Wednesdays and Sundays, we plan to update people’s giving decisions on the SON box in the Announcements of our website. If Survey Monkeys and websites are not your thing, you can email the church office at clcoffice@verizon.net or call Susy Cheston at 202-549-3656.

Can I match my \$200 with my own donation?

Yes! We know that many in our community are already generous in sharing their resources, and hope that by reflecting on the needs of others, we can be inspired to contribute to the Food Pantry and organizations that others bring to our attention.