



2 Corinthians 9:8

Annual Report 2010

In 2010, the American Baptist Churches of Indiana and Kentucky (ABC/IN-KY) and American Baptist Churches of Greater Indianapolis (ABC/GI) continued progress toward achieving the goal set forth by the Lilly Endowment to *“alleviate the financial burdens carried by pastors and to strengthen the quality of pastoral leadership and enhance the vitality of Indiana congregations.”*

We continue to experience even greater needs than anticipated. Financial needs identified through our emergency relief grants have already exceeded \$1.3 million. Behind these financial needs are needs for financial and stewardship education among clergy and lay leadership in our churches.

Activities, Results and Impact

To date, 93 applications for emergency assistance grants have been submitted, resulting in approval of 64 grants totaling \$302,031.90. The top five needs identified were, in decreasing order of need: medical bills, consumer debt, student loan debt, educational expenses and household expenses.

Beginning in January of 2010, Retirement Incentive Grants were made available to PCLs whose churches have not previously provided retirement benefits. MEF funds are provided on a dollar-for-dollar matching basis up to \$1,200 over a 12-month period. To date, only nine PCLs have applied for these grants (all approved).

On October 14, the MEF Team approved a new initiative as part of our ongoing ministry. Health Insurance Premium Increase Assistance Grants were announced in November. The purpose of these grants is to help congregations pay for significant increases in health insurance premiums in 2011. We will help congregations who are committed to maintaining insurance benefits to their PCLs. The MEF will pay half of the increase in premiums for calendar-year 2011.

Sessions on the topic of household budgeting, estate planning, debt reduction, biblical economics and fundraising were presented in seven different settings over the course of the year. In addition, an electronic, self-paced curriculum for PCLs seeking to develop personal financial skills in order to counsel their parishioners was developed. The DVD self-study was distributed in October of 2010.

We also continue to build a Professional Advisors Network. To date, we have 3 attorneys, 5 insurance brokers, 3 insurance agents, 1 investment broker, 2 financial planners, 1 economics professor and 23 Dave Ramsey Financial Counselors.

We also have available Endorsed Local Providers listed on DaveRamsey.com and 64 Financial Peace University Sites (including 30 ABC/IN-KY churches) identified through the Dave Ramsey website.

To encourage congregations to host Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace University, Church Leader Kits were purchased by ABC/IN-KY using educational funds in 2010. The MEF Ministry provided the Church Leader Kit at no cost to any church desiring to host a 13-week study series within the next 12 months. In addition, the MEF subsidizes the cost of member kits, decreasing the cost for individual households to \$60 each (an approximate savings of 40% for participating households).

A total of 22 congregations have taken advantage of the opportunity to host FPU. In addition, we discovered nine other congregations who have hosted FPU in the past and who are willing to continue to offer FPU to their congregants. This means that 31 ó 10 percent of our congregations ó are involved in this financial education ministry.

As evidenced in testimonials provided by our grantees, our efforts have been successful in alleviating the financial burdens of pastors and their families. We have seen a revitalization of energy in our PCL grantees and are starting to see some positive effects within local congregations in terms of enhanced ministry.

Here are some examples of results from 2010:

We have provided funding, along with matching funds from the local church, for one grantee to complete certification in our Church Leadership Institute. This certification will enhance the grantees' credentials with congregations seeking bi-vocational leadership ó one of the crucial issues identified in our research leading up to the Lilly Endowment grant.

We were able to provide additional assistance to a previous grantee. We learned in the process that MEF and matching moneys helped pay for a medical procedure that cured his diabetes. We cannot begin to quantify what this means in terms of extended life and ministry for this pastor.

This year, we approved the largest grant to date -- \$59,500. Through this grant, we will be able to eliminate medical bills as well as a business debt that has been plaguing a bi-vocational pastor for many years.

Another grant approved will help an associate pastor resolve a transportation issue, as well as eliminate some consumer debt. The transportation assistance will allow the pastor more freedom in serving the congregation while meeting the needs of his family which includes school-aged children. We also estimate that the grant will provide relief that will increase household cash flow by some \$240 per month. Those resources will be put to good use in support of family and ministry.

The display purchased for use at annual and special events includes space for testimonials from grantees. Some have hand-written their personal appreciation for MEF support. Others have provided anonymous emails or letters. A few have even videotaped their testimony and allowed us to use it to promote and encourage participation in the MEF Ministry.

Fundraising

A "Blessings Fund" was established in 2009 into which donors (individuals, churches, associations, etc.) can make undesignated gifts. Funds received can and have been used to provide matching funds in cases where no congregational or other matching funds are available. To date, \$21,627.63 has been received into the Blessings Fund (reported as "Direct Gifts to MEF" and Local Churches MEF Special Gifts in the attached financial report). From this total, \$12,800 has been distributed to match MEF grant funds given to three grantees.

The Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board (MMBB) has been a tremendous asset to the MEF ministry. Through their Emergency Assistance Fund (EAF), \$61,500 in matching funds have been provided to grantees. These funds have allowed us to leverage other funds to match MEF grants.

The majority of matching funds continues to come from the local congregations of grantees. We continue to hear from PCLs who are reluctant to apply for a grant because they are hesitant to ask their congregation to increase support for their pastor while other areas of ministry are cut back.

We have also received several requests from pastors asking if MEF can supplement declining congregational budgets. Such requests have been consistently refused, given our mandate to make grants which alleviate financial burdens and enhance congregational vitality.

We strongly believe that supplementing declining support for local ministry simply contributes to a downward spiral of decreased financial support.

Through 2010, matching funds have been committed in adequate amounts to meet the matching requirements for grant distributions.

Evaluation

To date, feedback has been very positive. Grantees have expressed sincere and abundant gratitude for the assistance they have received. Our grant process has been affirmed ó from clarity of guidelines to the ease of application to the prompt distribution process. Testimonials have been very affirming and positive in regard to the process, results and impact of the MEF Ministry.

Plans

Given the positive response to our ministry to date, we do not anticipate significant changes in our activities and plans for 2011. We will continue to provide the grants and educational programs discussed above.

The great challenge in 2011 and 2012 will be disbursement of Lilly Endowment grant funds. As seen earlier, we continue to develop grant initiatives that, while falling within Lilly Endowment guidelines, will incentivize PCLs and their congregations to make requests for assistance.

The Ministerial Excellence Fund is truly a blessing to our Regions. Please encourage professional church leaders who need assistance, churches and individuals who can participate in educational opportunities and provide resources to meet the needs. For more information on how you and/or your congregation can participate, please contact:

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