

First Parish in Concord Social Action Grants

Pledge Allocation for Social Action Grants

In 1996, the congregation voted to allocate 7.5% of pledge income to social action grants, and increase from the 5% that had been allocated since 1990. In 2006, a part time social action director was hired, and the SAC Grant Committee allocated funds to cover her salary. The Standing Committee made a commitment to assume the cost of this position over a period of four years. However, pledges declined and the congregation was unable to increase its support. Except for one year during the interim ministry, a portion of the pledge income designated for social action been devoted to the salary for the Social Action Director. (Benefits are covered by other funds.)

SAC Grant Reserve Account

Any unspent portion of the designated 7.5% of pledges goes into a reserve account. It has been used primarily for donations related to disaster relief, and is available to supplement annual allocations and to ensure that the SAC Director's position can be maintained.

Summary of FY2015 Social Action Grant Expenditures

Use of Pledge Income		Social Action Grant Reserve Fund	
Budgeted Pledge Income	\$66,791	Balance 6/30/2014	\$25,823
Social Action Director	\$30,900	Grant for Ebola Relief	\$5,000
Social Action Grants	\$35,600	Grant for Tibet Relief	\$2,500
Projected Addition to SAC Reserve	\$291	Current balance	\$18,323

SAC Grants Funds are Carefully Managed

A SAC Grants Committee reviews all applications and makes awards based on criteria and polices posted on the First Parish website. In 2014 this committee became part of the Social Action Community Council, and a subcommittee of the Council makes the grant decisions.

- To avoid conflict of interest, no member of the grant review committee can sponsor a Grant Request. A Committee member in direct association with a Grant Request organization is excused from Committee discussion and vote.
- Grantees must file progress reports at the end of the year.
- Since 2009, grant applications have been publicly posted for parishioner comment
- In 2014, the SAC Council recruited volunteer readers whose ratings are considered in making grant decisions.
- Beginning in 2015, applicants were requested to submit summary information from their tax filings.

Criteria for Awarding Social Action Grants

- Balance grant awards among local community organizations in which First Parish members are involved, as well as metropolitan, national and international organizations.
- Actively encourage social entrepreneurship with extra weight for Grant Requests to provide seed money for a specified and limited time period to "incubate" new ideas.
- Awards aim to make a meaningful difference in the success of a project. Therefore, an organization's or project's overall budget and alternative funding sources are considered.
- Extra weight is given to organizations with active First Parish participation.
- Exclusions: Individual scholarship requests and funding to facilitate First Parish member volunteerism.

2015 First Parish Concord Social Action Grant Awards		
Organization Name	Grant Purpose	Award
Concord Area Projects		\$7,500
Concord Prison Outreach	Support for CPO training and other supportive programs for inmates	\$2,500
Open Table	Sustain pantry and meals programs as the needs of the community have been increasing	\$3,000
Restoration Project	Hire a new teacher to expand vocational training in furniture refinishing for youth with mental illness or traumatic brain injury; expand vocational and volunteer opportunities by opening a thrift shop	\$2,000
Eastern Massachusetts		\$11,200
Advocacy Network to End Family Homelessness	Cost of email alerts and consulting fees for advocacy efforts to support Massachusetts legislation to end family homelessness	\$500
Budget Buddies	Provide financial literacy training and support to 12 - 15 low-income female headed households in Lowell	\$1,500
Dignity in Asylum	Provide food for asylum seekers living in Eastern Massachusetts, who cannot work while their asylum case is pending	\$1,200
Gaining Ground	Second year of a pilot program with Project Bread to distribute fresh produce at a free farmers' market	\$1,000
Louis D Brown Peace Institute	Create opportunities for dialogue and training for survivors of homicide violence in urban Boston	\$3,000
The Nature Connection	Support at-risk youth by engaging them in a variety of nature-based activities	\$2,000
United Teen Equality Center	Develop childcare services to allow proven-risk young parents to participate in UTEC work programs	\$2,000
Eastern Massachusetts UU Urban Ministries		\$7,500
Unitarian Universalist Urban Ministry	UUUM programs, including afterschool tutoring and activity programs, Stand High/United weekend and summer enrichment programs for Roxbury youth, Renewal House domestic violence shelter, and United Souls	\$7,500
International		\$9,400
Amnesty International Group 15	Community outreach in Concord and advocacy for human rights	\$200
At Home and Afar	Free medications for residents of Barrio Cassandra, Dominican Republic	\$2,000
Centro Arte Par La Paz	El Salvador program which uses chess as a way to promote prevention of social violence and violence against women, children and adolescents	\$1,500
Children's Island	Meals program for families in need in Capilla Del Monte, Argentina	\$1,200
Head to Head School	Provide textbooks for a Haitian school to help students prepare for high school exams	\$2,000
Mil Miagros	Prevent malnutrition in young Maya children and to improve their mothers' health; approx. 170 direct beneficiaries	\$2,500
		\$35,600

History of Social Action Giving at First Parish

Social action giving has been part of First Parish since its founding in 1636. It has been a budgeted line item and voted on as part of the annual budget since 1968. First Parish has awarded over \$1 million in social action grants since 1986 to support grantees addressing Concord area, Eastern Massachusetts, and international problems. The distribution of grants is shown in the following chart.

Over this period, social action grants have had a role in establishing Jericho Road, Domestic Violence Service Network, Open Table, Concord Prison Outreach, and other organizations. Grants continue to support those needing ongoing support.

