



Delta Literacy Cohort Application

In 2020, 200K More Reasons received the largest grant to date from the Methodist Foundation for Arkansas to address root causes of childhood hunger in the Arkansas Delta- titled the Delta Project. 200K More Reasons commits to the goal of having 100% of United Methodist Churches in Arkansas participate in an initiative to alleviate childhood hunger. We want to expand the understanding of alleviating hunger to include such poverty alleviation strategies as literacy and promoting a healthy, stable family. We recognize that by working to alleviate poverty, we have the best opportunity for ending childhood hunger in Arkansas, particularly in the Delta.

Through the Delta Literacy Cohort (DLC), the Delta Project is seeking leaders from Delta-based United Methodist congregations to explore together opportunities to engage in literacy ministry in their community. The DLC will gather twice monthly from January 2022 to May 2022 in an online format. Through coaching and mutual support, participants will gain the skills and confidence necessary to offer a literacy based ministry in their community during the summer of 2022. Additional coaching will be provided through August of 2022 to troubleshoot programming and evaluate impact.

Priorities:

- 1) Build a cooperative learning community that seeks to encourage pastors, lay volunteer leaders, and congregations to engage in the poverty alleviation strategy of literacy in their community.
- 2) Develop program models involving literacy that seek to close the academic gap for students by offering support for grade level reading, especially for those through grade 3.
- 3) Offering out-of-school time, particularly summer literacy programs that go beyond increasing access to reading materials by promoting group tutoring, literacy instruction, or one-on-one assistance in reading. These can be provided in partnership with other community programs focused on children during the summer.
- 4) Incorporate feeding ministry and/or promoting a healthy, stable family for those children we serve in our communities.

Participants of this cohort will receive priority in grant opportunities in the Delta Project for summer of 2022.

The strongest applicants will:

- 1) Exhibit a desire to reach their community through literacy ministry.
- 2) Have strong congregational support for outreach ministries to the community.
- 3) Show understanding of the social issues being addressed, including a response to those intensified by the coronavirus pandemic.
- 4) Approach the opportunity with creativity and grace.
- 5) Be willing to learn from other pastors, lay leaders, and community members.
- 6) Expect to develop a literacy ministry that fits their context and resources within the community.

Items to note:

- 1) We are NOT limiting applications to only *new* ministries. If your congregation already hosts a literacy ministry, but would like to consider going deeper, you are welcome to apply.
- 2) If you are unsure if your congregation is considered part of the Delta, please reach out to Rev. Sam Meadors, samantha.meadors@arumc.org and she can help make that determination. Our definition of Delta is much broader than you might realize.
- 3) Pastors and leaders of churches of ALL SIZES are invited to apply. We encourage partnerships among churches especially in rural areas where access to services may be limited. We recognize that rural churches partnering with larger churches can make great colleagues in ministry.
- 4) Internet access will be key for engaging with one another. Please make sure that you have internet capability to participate. If that capability is not possible in your area, please inform Rev. Meadors at your earliest convenience to see if other arrangements can be made.

Please complete the attached **Delta Literacy Cohort Application** after reading the above carefully. If you are not able to complete this form online. Download a paper form and return via email to:

Rev. Samantha Meadors, Community Coordinator, The Delta Project
samantha.meadors@arumc.org

Applications are due by November 4th, 2021.
Cohort participants will be notified by November 18th.

Name: _____

Address: _____ City/Zip: _____

County: _____

Phone: (_____) _____

E-Mail: _____

Church Name: _____ ARUMC District: _____

Title (Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor, Children's Minister, Lay Leader, Volunteer, etc.): _____

Please answer the following. Answers may be provided on separate sheets if necessary.

1. Describe yourself. Why does this cohort pique your interest? What personal attributes do you possess or experiences have you had that will help you to plan and implement a literacy ministry?
2. Describe your community and the needs within it.
 - a. What are the demographics of your community? What about your church?
 - b. How would you describe your local school district? How many students receive free/reduced lunch?
 - c. Where do most children live or go to school in relation to where you worship?
 - d. What are the community spaces that are frequented by children? How near are they to your church?
3. How is your congregation already in ministry to the community? Feeding ministry, outreach, other programs?
4. Who is in your corner? List the congregational committees or individuals who would support you in starting a literacy ministry.
5. What non-congregational based resources exist in your community that could assist you? (i.e. libraries, Boys and Girls Clubs, etc.)
6. What are your hopes for yourself, your church, and your community in engaging in ministry through literacy?
7. Can you commit to meeting twice monthly from January to May of 2022? Are there any commitments this spring that you would need to work around? (note: We will attempt to find a time that is conducive to most participants' schedules.)

Other supporting documents may be included with the grant application.

Delta Literacy Cohort Gathering Topics

January - August 2022

Prepare: (3 sessions)

Prepare for literacy ministry by discussing literacy as a poverty alleviation strategy; getting to know the community and its resources; and generating ideas for literacy ministry models.

Plan: (3 sessions)

Plan for your ministry by developing a logistics and costs strategy for the program; gather resources around grants and fundraising; learn to manage volunteers; work to incorporate a feeding program.

Program: (3 sessions)

Ensure programming by creating a recruitment plan for children and families as well as training for volunteers and staff.

Provide: (4 sessions)

Check-in together monthly in order to provide support for the literacy program including assistance in sharing the story of your literacy ministry.