

Bring Out the Tools, Call the Volunteers

Red Mesa Foundation to Help Churches Complete Building Projects

Red Mesa church buildings may have some old-fashioned charm – but those who gather in them know that there are roofs that need replacing, bathrooms that need repair, ramps that need to be built, and insulation that should be put in. And most of the churches are working on plans for their priority projects: saving up money and lining up volunteers. So, when the Red Mesa churches gathered at the May 2008 Classis meeting, they directed Red Mesa Foundation funding, available in 2009, to helping churches complete these projects over the next several years.

Knowing that the Red Mesa Foundation had committed to its first distribution (5%) from its 1.5 million dollar in 2009, the Classis set up the Church Ministry Finance

Committee, to help it determine how to prioritize these funds. The Church Ministry Finance Committee, currently chaired by Ed T. Begay, engaged in a listening process. Rhonda Berg, executive director of the Foundation, took a survey out to the churches, meeting with councils, steering committees and even whole congregations. She met with eighteen of the twenty Classis missions and churches. During these sessions, some of which required one person to act as a Navajo

translator, participants responded to a set of questions. The answers were all documented on flip charts and then typed up for each church. Several of the questions gave participants the opportunity “to vote” and the favorite items were the two that involved ranking funding priorities.



Young people in the Gallup Bethany Serve Project helped out in the summer of 2006 with repairs to the Window Rock CRC.

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Building improvement projects were by no means the only places where churches could benefit from a financial boost. However, this seemed to be a good place to start, where churches can get a little help from the Foundation to get a lot accomplished. Another pressure point, especially for churches on the reservation, is meeting their pastors' salary and benefit package obligations. And so Classis also designated that a portion of the Foundation's funds be made available for up to \$2,000 dollar grants to help with pastors' pension contributions.

There are also some big dreams for the future. One idea that emerged from the process was for Classis to hire a drug/alcohol prevention and treatment counselor for the Red Mesa Churches and Schools. This person could serve as a resource person, helping pastors and teachers work with families affected by drug/alcohol abuse, and finding the best treatment options among the many already available in the area.

The Red Mesa Christian School Association (Rehoboth Christian School and Zuni Christian Mission School) is in the process of also setting their priorities for the funding. By fall of 2008, the Red Mesa Foundation hopes to have application materials and processes worked out

with the School Association and Classis Church Ministry Finance Committee, so that everyone can begin to picture how this will all work. The exact amount available for funding will be known in January or early February of 2009, after year-end reports from the endowment are complete. Given the volatility of the stock markets this year, the RMF, is projecting an amount between \$60 - \$75,000.