



A Ministry of the Office of Mission, Service & Justice

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Festival of Sharing Reveals Plans to Multiply Hope

COLUMBIA, Mo. – August 28, 2017 – After a multi-year assessment, the Festival Coordinating Committee voted in April 2017 to embrace an opportunity to become better stewards of the financial and volunteer-based resources that have contributed to this ministry for over 36 years.

Beginning in 2018, Festival of Sharing will host several gatherings, called Sharefests, around the state throughout the year. The committee's leadership is clear that Festival of Sharing is not ending, just altering its format to maximize impact and connect more deeply with smaller and rural church partners and local agencies.

One of the most noticeable differences will be shifting away from hosting an event at the State Fairgrounds in Sedalia after 2017. Moving the event away from the fairgrounds in Sedalia immediately releases \$20,000 in costs related to space rental and logistics that can go toward international and domestic relief instead.

The Festival of Sharing Coordinating Committee, representing Baptist, Catholic, Church of the Brethren, Lutheran, Presbyterian, United Church of Christ, and Methodist denominations, discussed at the April meeting an increase in requests for resources to come back to local and regional areas rather than be distributed throughout the state. Many agencies have backed away from driving to the primary event in Sedalia because of the cost of transportation and limited vehicle capabilities.

The plan for 2018 and beyond is to encourage more regional, localized partnerships while maintaining ties with international organizations, such as Heifer International and Church World Service.

Sharefests are smaller, regional Festivals and include many of the same elements as the event at the State Fairgrounds: youth participation, service, worship, booths, distribution to local agencies and community relations. These regional events provide unique opportunities for community members and local agencies to build relationships that generate solutions in their own context. There are currently three Sharefests in Dexter, Cameron, and Ferguson and the committee hopes to expand that list to include Springfield-area and northeastern Missouri locations.

“We invite prayer and encouragement for the future of this ministry and for those who are working to make Festival a celebration that many of our small to medium-size churches can invest in,” said Sidney Owens, Festival of Sharing coordinator. “We have an opportunity to exponentially multiply the hope we share with our brothers and sisters.”

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Festival of Sharing, a ministry of the Office of Mission, Service & Justice, is an interfaith celebration and in-gathering of mission resources. Festival offers a cooperative response to world hunger, poverty, and injustice and seeks to address and to raise awareness of its root causes and solutions. For more information or to get involved in sharing the hope, visit www.festivalofsharing.org/ or on Facebook @FestivalofSharing