

The Good Futures Accelerator

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The Good Futures Accelerator was designed by Rooted Good to help congregations address core questions relating to the use of property for mission and ministry in the changing context congregations face today. The project aims to help congregations understand their changing context – both in terms of ministry and finances –

and how that impacts their use of property and buildings, help congregations clarify how their core mission and theology shapes the use or development of property/building in light of this changing context, help congregations cultivate ecclesial imagination, with a particular emphasis on developing social enterprise as an expression of mission, and help congregations experiment with new uses of property/building that both further their mission and generate income. ¹

Slifers Presbyterian Church is located just outside the Village of Farmersville, Ohio on the corner of South Clayton Road and Chicken Bristle Road and sits amid the many farms and homesteads that surround the church. Many of the members of Slifers come from generational farm families, who continue to farm for a living today. The church is also located between - about a few miles to the north - the Village of New Lebanon, Ohio and a few miles to the south the City of Germantown, Ohio. It is a busy intersection for this part of Ohio. The church is fortunate to have a nice parking lot and a beautiful, 8-acre plot of land across the street known as “8 Acres.”

Many years ago, “8 Acres” was farmed as a bean patch by church members. This was called the “Bean Patch Project.” In an article from the Dayton Daily News in August of 1994, this was said about the project by then pastor Rev. Doris Arnett, the “Bean Patch Project” in Farmersville allows people in need to have fresh produce by picking it themselves. The project was started around 1987 and gave the church the opportunity to provide local mission help with the Miami Valley’s hunger problem. Unfortunately, the Bean Patch

Project is no longer happening as many who were part of it are no longer with us or have aged to the point, they are no longer able to help.

Even so, now there is an energy that has built recently in the church to be future focused as we now in 2026 to look at our property and grounds once again and to take time to actively discern the needs of the wider community around us. It was at this time we were introduced to the “Good Futures Accelerator.” The Session voted in the fall of 2025 to engage with the program and soon a team of 5 folks was formed to work through the “Good Futures Accelerator” program. In January of this year, we embarked together and dove into the program.

At Slifers, we have completed the first 2 sessions and moving towards working through the 3rd session. The 1st session included - that before meeting as a team that - each team member taking time to meet with another member of the church who has been a part of things at the church for longer than they have. They are to ask them to tell them a story of innovation or change that happened in the past, when the church did something new. The stories that were shared by members of our team were fun and full of great energy both for what had happened at Slifers years ago but could also now send us forward with our new vision and dream for Slifers future.

In this session we also read through stories of inspiration from the program of congregations that have explored new economic models that have fulfilled their mission and purpose in new ways. These stories of real-life inspiration that have worked for other churches pushed us into even bigger dreaming of what could be next in Slifers future! The energy among the team was building and the ideas, both big and small, began to flow freely. There was excitement in the room and much hope for the future!

In the 2nd session, we explored together more interviews with church members that the members of the team had completed that focused on our congregational identity. Who is Slifers church and who have we been known to be in our community over the years. This is when the story of the “Bean Patch Project,” that was shared earlier, were shared. There was a lot of excitement and great memories shared during this session as we talked about previous ways Slifers have engaged in the wider community!

Soon, we are gathering as a team with other members of the congregation to do an “I Spy” activity around our community. There is a great “I Spy” tool that the study includes to help us do this. Our plan is to engage some of our younger members (school age kids) as well to help us do this activity. The purpose of this activity is to help us identify and highlight needs in our community that many times might be overlooked. We are excited to see where this activity might lead us in our dreams for Slifers future!

The Good Futures Accelerator program shares this information from churches that were surveyed that completed the program: 96% reported clearer vision for using their assets to further their mission, 93% gained a deeper understanding of their community context, 82% improved their ability to imagine new revenue streams, and 9.3/10 was the average score when asked how much they would recommend the course to another church. ¹

We hear these words of God from the prophet in Jeremiah 29:11, “I alone know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans to bring you prosperity and not disaster, plans to bring about the future you hope for.”²

The Presbytery of the Miami Valley has joined in this program and are hoping to create a cohort of churches who are working through the Good Futures Accelerator. The PMV is also offering the possibility of a \$5000 grant to churches that complete the program and come up with an idea to fulfill their mission and purpose in their communities that utilizes their buildings and creates possibly new revenue streams for the church.

Our hope and prayer are that this in-depth study will help our church and many other churches fulfill our mission and purpose in our local community, utilizing our buildings and land in new, creative ways, and generate new revenue streams. As we know, our God has created everyone to do good work, and the role of faith communities in the world today is still significant. And more needed than ever. ¹

¹ Rooted for Good webpage – <https://www.rootedgood.org/good-futures>

² Good News Translation