



Communities in Action

American Baptist Churches of New Jersey

2026-2027 Grant Application

*This year, the ABCNJ
Communities in Action grant
will focus on "Strengthening
Parents-Nurturing Disciples-
Building Community"*

*"Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel
of God but our lives as well." 1 Thessalonians 2:8*

One of the greatest opportunities for discipleship begins not only in the sanctuary but also in the home and in the relationships we build across our communities. Parents and caregivers are key spiritual influences on children and youth. Today, they face complex challenges, including technology, social media, mental health, identity, busy schedules, economic pressures, shifting family structures, and cultural influences. Many feel overwhelmed, isolated, and unsure how to nurture faith, hope, resilience, and healthy relationships.

The Communities in Action Grant for 2026–2027 invites congregations to reimagine how we disciple, encourage, and equip parents and caregivers, and to intentionally extend those relationships beyond our church walls. As parents grow as disciples of Jesus Christ, they become better equipped to nurture their children's faith and to witness Christ's love within their communities. We therefore encourage congregations to develop ministries that integrate discipleship and community engagement.

Rather than creating another children's program or limiting family ministry to Sunday morning, churches are invited to develop innovative approaches that strengthen parents' spiritual lives, cultivate intergenerational relationships, and build meaningful connections with parents and caregivers who are not currently part of the congregation.

What Kind of Ministries Are We Looking For?

Congregations are encouraged to develop ministries that:

- **Equip Parents** — Help parents deepen their faith and nurture discipleship at home.
- **Build Relationships** — Foster mentoring and intergenerational connections.
- **Engage the Community** — Build relationships with families beyond the congregation.
- **Develop Partnerships** — Collaborate with schools, counselors, and community organizations.
- **Live Faith Beyond Sunday** — Create practical opportunities for families to serve, grow, and practice their faith together.

Vision Statement

Communities in Action exists to inspire, empower, and resource American Baptist Churches of New Jersey to develop innovative ministries that proclaim the Gospel, strengthen communities, and participate in God's transforming work throughout New Jersey.

The 2026–2027 initiative calls churches to strengthen the faith of parents so that families flourish, children grow as disciples of Jesus Christ, congregations become intergenerational communities of hope, and Christian disciples carry the love of Christ into their communities.



2026-2027 Grant Application

Strengthening Parents-Nurturing Disciples-Building Community

"Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well." 1 Thessalonians 2:8

Proposed Ministry Name: _____

Church Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Name of Pastor/Leader: _____

Additional contact name/information: _____

Is the church in covenant with ABCNJ? (see <https://www.abcnj.net/our-covenant-congregations-and-region>) Yes or No (Circle one)

{Please note: Churches not in covenant with the region will not be considered for grants.}

Amount Requested: (Maximum - \$3,000) _____

Signature: _____ Date _____

Application Deadline - September 18, 2026

Email completed application to: Rev. Dr. Miriam Méndez at mmendez@abcnj.net
or mail to:

American Baptist Churches of New Jersey
 170 Elm St
 Westfield, NJ 07090
 Attention: Communities in Action Grant Committee

[Note: These grants are made possible because of specific gifts and grants to the region. ABCNJ will award amounts based on the number of requests approved. Each project may receive less than requested.]

1. Ministry Vision (100-200 words)

Describe the vision for your proposed ministry.

- How will this ministry strengthen the faith and discipleship of parents and caregivers while advancing your congregation's mission?
- How will the ministry help parents live their faith beyond Sunday morning and nurture their children's faith in everyday life?
- Describe why this ministry matters in your community and how it reflects God's call to make and nurture disciples across generations.

2. Identifying the Need (150-250 words)

Describe the needs of parents and caregivers within your congregation and surrounding community.

Consider the following questions:

- What challenges are parents and caregivers facing?
- What have parents told you they need?
- What opportunities do you see for your congregation to respond?

Whenever possible, include information gathered directly from parents or community partners rather than relying only on assumptions about community needs.

3. Ministry Strategy (200-300 words)

Describe your proposed ministry.

Please include:

- Activities you will offer
- How parents and caregivers will participate and be strengthened as disciples
- How children and families will be involved
- How the ministry extends beyond Sunday morning
- How prayer, Christian witness, spiritual conversations, mentoring, or other forms of discipleship may be incorporated appropriately.
- What is innovative or different about your approach?

4. Community Partnerships/Engagement (150-200 words)

Describe how your ministry will engage people beyond your congregation. At least 50% of participants must come from outside the church.

Please include:

- Who you hope to reach and how many participants you expect.
- How you will connect with and engage community participants.
- Partners you will work with and their role in the ministry.
- Impact these relationships will have on parents and families.
- Relationships your congregation will build and sustain with the wider community.

5. Measuring Success (200-300 words)

What are the primary goals and objectives for your project? (Consider SMART: Goals **should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely.) Describe how you will collect and evaluate this information.**

Church membership or increased Sunday attendance does not need to be the primary measurement of success. We are interested in how your ministry creates meaningful relationships, strengthens parents, nurtures discipleship, serves the community, and creates opportunities for people to experience the love and hope of Jesus Christ. Describe how you will collect and evaluate this information.

6. Sustainability.

How will this ministry continue after grant funding ends? Describe your plans for leadership development, volunteer engagement, ongoing funding, and congregational ownership, continued community partnerships, etc.

7. Budget

Provide a detailed budget describing how requested grant funds will be used. Please attach or provide an itemized budget showing anticipated expenses.

Grant funds may NOT be used for:

- Administrative costs, church salaries, building improvements, capital projects, general operating expenses.

Examples of allowable expenses include:

- Curriculum, parent resource materials, hospitality, childcare during parent gatherings, guest speakers, community events, ministry supplies, transportation assistance, family service projects.

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Additional Grant Requirements

- Provide a 75-100 word summary of your proposed ministry and its aims. This description should be suitable for publication on the ABCNJ website and presentation during the ABCNJ Annual Session.
- Grant recipients must submit a six-month progress report. Reports may include:
 - Written ministry updates.
 - Participation numbers.
 - Percentage of participants from outside the congregation.
 - Photographs and/or videos, with appropriate permission.
 - Community partnership updates.
 - Lessons learned.
 - Challenges encountered.
 - Evidence of spiritual growth or community impact.
 - Communities in Action Learning Gathering
- Grant recipients agree to participate in one regional Communities in Action Learning Gathering to share ministry experiences, challenges, lessons learned, and promising practices with other participating congregations.

Communities in Action is a collaboration between our current New Church Development and Public Mission Committees. This collaboration aspires to facilitate Christian leaders in navigating the present post-Christian, pluralistic society where injustice and inequity continue to pervade, and to support one another in discovering ways to respond with love and courage in their communities. In addition, our collaboration seeks to inspire, empower, and support congregations and/or faith groups in their work towards justice and human rights, with the purpose of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ and being peacemakers in our world.