

Onekama Receives Grant for Generating Vitality through Relationships

When the Onekama United Church of Christ called their new pastor last year, they probably had no idea that they were going to be invited to follow her “over the rainbow” to “follow the yellow-brick road.” And yet, that is exactly what they did throughout June and into early July this last year.

Using the matrix of the themes from the classic story of The Wizard of Oz, Rev. Alison Young shepherded the congregation through five unique group sessions designed to move the church into a process of revitalization. There were five sessions roughly spaced a week apart, with each session building on the insights from the one before it. The sessions were cleverly dovetailed to correspond with regular meetings of the church body so that they fit naturally into the rhythm of church life.

For instance, when the session involved playing a game about growing the church through testimonies about the past and present moving onto the future (a game created by their pastor called “Vital-i-



Throughout the program, seven maxims of church growth were laid out and unpacked for their meanings in relationship to church growth and revitalization. The five sessions were well attended with 18 to 20 participants for each session. At this time, the various ministry teams of the church are working on bringing the eight priorities set by the revitalization process to fruition.



Associate Conference Minister for Church Vitality and Transitions, Lawrence Richardson shared that Onekama was granted \$2000.00 because "this is such a strong example

tales”), the session was held directly before the church’s regularly scheduled “Community Game Night & Potluck.”

The five sessions began with a “Crash Course,” to correspond with Dorothy’s crash landing in Oz, on the “Three M’s of Vitality” and the biblical underpinnings for Mission and Ministry, and ended in session five with “Pulling Back the Curtain” to correspond with the revelation of the true meaning of mission as a process of shared ownership and trust.

of how to create and generate vitality by developing relationships.” Lawrence is excited to help support churches across the conference that continue to do creative and innovative work that nurtures relationships with neighbors and community.