



Making the grace of God real for people

To Whom It May Concern,

We write on behalf of Olivet Christian Church in support of the grant application seeking support for the Trail of Tears Pilgrimage. This Pilgrimage is scheduled to take place in July 2023 under the leadership of Larry Brown and Don Day with the support of several area churches. The Trail of Tears Pilgrimage will guide participants to a new understanding of the forced relocations of the Native Peoples of the Choctaw, Seminole, Creek/Muskogee/Chickasaw, and Cherokee tribes, and the implications of this historic event upon our contemporary society and relationships. Funding from this grant will help to offset some of the costs of the trip as well as provide access to participation through scholarship support.

Both Larry Brown and Don Day are active members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the Columbia community and have been working for several years through a local organization, RACE ONWARD, to heal racial divisions through education, advocacy, and relationship-building. This organization has brought together nearly twenty local churches and has hosted innumerable programs, including book studies, voter registration events, and discussions on topics ranging from political advocacy to honest conversations about US history. They've also led three previous pilgrimages in the past few years, traveling with participants throughout the United States to learn about, visit, and honor Civil Rights sites.

The work of Larry, Don, and RACE ONWARD has changed the face of our community, helping us to begin to tell the truth of our history and to work towards a future where all are regarded as members of God's beloved community. It is evident to us that their work and the Trail of Tears Pilgrimage are in line with our denomination's Anti-Racism/Pro-Reconciliation initiative. We recommend their application of this grant and support their efforts without reservation.

Hannah Ryan
Co-Minister

Natalie Dixon Crewell
Co-Minister