

REELFOOT RURAL MINISTRIES INC.

Robert Craig, Executive Director

The mission statement of Reelfoot Rural Ministries (RRM) defines how the organization seeks to live out the command of Jesus Christ to “Love our neighbor.” The mission statement is: Following Christ in building relationships, we provide resources and offer hope to our Reelfoot Lake neighbors.

The daily work of RRM is succinctly defined in this brief purpose statement: Restoring hope, one relationship at a time. This is how the staff and volunteers at RRM seek to offer Christ to a hurting world. The RRM neighborhood includes counties in northwest Tennessee and southwest Kentucky around Reelfoot Lake and beyond.

Over the past year, service to our neighbors has expanded in several areas. The RRM Dental Clinic has increased from an average of three to six days per month. Demand for affordable dental services continues to grow. We are actively seeking additional funding to expand the clinic days of operation. The RRM Dental Clinic constantly maintains a three month wait list.

The need for household financial assistance has become a much larger part of our work. Assistance with rent, mortgage, utilities, and household emergencies has more than tripled over the previous year. With the rising costs of living, households have more frequent shortfalls with family necessities. RRM cannot assist with every need, but we rejoice in the blessings we do have to share.

Another ministry expansion was the RRM garden. Our one-acre garden produced over 17,000 pounds of produce including tomatoes, sweet corn, okra, squash, zucchini, potatoes, sweet potatoes, watermelons, cantaloupes, and green beans. Over the growing season, more than 1,100 clients received approximately 14 pounds of produce in addition to the regular grocery assistance.

During the season of Advent and into Christmas, RRM continued to offer hope to families through the RRM Christmas Toy Store. In 2021, over 300 families were able to select five new gifts for each of their children. The result was 730 children experiencing a joyful Christmas morning with new gifts to open that otherwise would not have been available.

RRM has been heavily involved in response and recovery efforts following the devastating tornado outbreak on December 10, 2021. While Mayfield, Dawson Springs, and Bowling Green, Kentucky received the breadth of the national news coverage, several communities in the Reelfoot Rural Ministries’ service area were also devastated. RRM responded in the immediate days following the disaster with community and survivor support through donations and volunteer coordination. Several United Methodist Committee on Relief Early Response Teams were housed and coordinated through RRM for communities in Lake, Obion, Gibson, and Weakley counties in Tennessee as well as Fulton and Hickman counties in Kentucky. RRM will continue to serve these communities for years to come through the long-term recovery groups formed in each county.

Reelfoot Rural Ministries has several exciting ministry efforts planned for the coming year. The RRM board continues prayerfully visioning for how to best be in ministry with the asset of the former East Dyersburg UMC location. Repairs and modifications are underway for a satellite community service office as well as an additional dental clinic at this site. Generous donors are sponsoring a disaster ministry warehouse at the RRM site in Obion County, Tennessee. This will serve as a collection and distribution point for recovery supplies as well office space for disaster recovery work for the December tornado event. RRM will continue to house and engage volunteer repair teams for Reelfoot Housing Outreach Ministry Exercises accessibility repairs and modifications while adding long-term disaster recovery projects this year.

Obedience to God’s call continues to adjust the way we serve at RRM; however, our supporters and clients can rest assured that RRM will continue the work of restoring hope, one relationship at a time on behalf of Christ and the Church.