

Christians Raise \$150,000 for Churches at Risk of Closing Due to COVID-19

The Churches Helping Churches Challenge today announced that its May 15 benefit simulcast, hosted by Pulse, drew 258,000 viewers and raised \$153,187 from 716 donors.

The initiative also announced today that it will transition, at the end of the month, from a national campaign to empowering local ministries to support at-risk churches as the ramifications of COVID-19 will be felt for months to come.

The May 15 benefit simulcast was also sponsored by RightNow Media and included musical artists Lauren Daigle, Lecrae, For King and Country, Kirk Franklin and TobyMac, among others. The simulcast also featured sports stars like Super Bowl champion Benjamin Watson, MLB World Series champion Adam Wainwright, NFL players Sam Acho, Lorenzo Alexander and sports analyst Chris Broussard, as well as Christian leaders Christine Caine, Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, Jim Daly and filmmaker Andy Erwin.

The Churches Helping Churches Challenge was launched by the AND Campaign and other Christian organizations on April 3 to urge larger, more stable churches to assist at-risk churches in their own community. The effort also created the COVID-19 Church Relief Fund to award \$3,000 grants to assist congregations in need.

To date, the Relief Fund has raised a total of \$649, from 1,371 individuals and ministries, with 100% of all funds donated going directly to churches. The Relief Fund has already given \$3,000 grants to 121 churches. Because of the money raised in May, an additional 95 churches will receive grants. Throughout this month, the Relief Fund will distribute the remainder of its funds to churches, and the work will

continue through ministries like Movement Day, City Gospel Movements, American Bible Society and others in cities across America.

“We have seen that low-income Americans, especially in urban centers, have been more likely to lose their job during this coronavirus economic shutdown. This has greatly impacted the small churches in these communities and many of them could be forced to close,” said Justin Giboney, president of the AND Campaign. “When we first thought of this initiative, we could’ve never imagined that this much money could be raised to help so many churches. It’s amazing to watch, and I look forward to seeing this challenge continue with more affluent ministries across the U.S. seeking to serve at-risk churches.”

“It has been great to see so many brothers and sisters in Christ come together to bear each other’s burden and *be* the church,” said former NFL star Benjamin Watson. “I want to thank the hundreds of donors that stepped up to support smaller at-risk churches, and now we want to urge Christians to keep this spirit of reconciliation going. As the impact of the pandemic will be felt for months, it’s important that Christians and churches look for ways to support congregations that are hurting in their cities.”

“We are thrilled that over 250,000 people tuned in for the Together Churches Helping Churches Simulcast with over \$150,000 being given!” said Nick Hall, founder of Pulse and visionary for Together 2020. “While there are many examples of division around us, the church can tell a different story because Jesus is our example and leader. He prayed that we might be one (in John 17), and calls us to love not only our neighbor, but even our enemy. We believe that what a hurting world needs, is a united, gospel-proclaiming church!

This challenge was launched, in-part, out of a spirit of gospel-focused racial reconciliation, as most of the churches at-risk of closing are minority and immigrant congregations in

urban communities that have been hit hard by the coronavirus economic shutdown. Altogether, 1,325 churches have applied for assistance from the COVID-19 Church Relief Fund.

The Relief Fund, which is administered by the National Christian Foundation, will accept donations and distribute funds through the end of May. Churches that have applied but haven't received a grant will be referred to large churches and ministries across America in their same cities. Larger ministries and churches that want to know about at-risk churches that have applied in their community should contact the initiative at or email the AND Campaign at engage@.