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First Presbyterian Church of Houston Awards \$250,000 to Advance Work of Social Entrepreneurs

*From 101 applicants, six Project Flourish finalists
aim to have positive impact on chronic social challenges*

HOUSTON, TX, September 2, 2020 / A panel of judges has selected six Houston-area social-entrepreneurial ventures to receive funding totaling \$250,000 from Project Flourish, a program of First Presbyterian Church of Houston (fpchouston.org). Project Flourish is a church-based "shark-tank" style business pitch competition focused on "growing ideas for the good of Houston." The finalist "Award Winners" each address complex social challenges faced by the Houston community, including childcare, nutrition, education, and job training. They include:

- **Project One Day** - Provides free, Christ-centered childcare for economically at-risk infants and toddlers through the use of a single-parent cooperative. Parents volunteer one day a week to receive 44 hours of free childcare weekly. Awarded \$75,000.
- **Small Places, LLC** - Uses urban agriculture to develop a culture of health by renewing the bond between people, places, and food. Awarded \$75,000.
- **Eight Million Stories** - Seeks to transform the lives of vulnerable 14- to 18-year-olds through education, skills training, employment, and authentic relationships. Awarded \$35,000.
- **GoBU** - A movement that aims to entertain, educate, and evangelize through quality Christian hip hop and R&B. Awarded \$25,000.
- **Belong Bakery** - Intends to certify, train, and create dignified, meaningful, paid employment for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Awarded \$20,000.
- **Brazen Table** - Trains survivors of human trafficking in the hospitality industry, empowering them to reclaim their personal identities and their futures. Awarded \$20,000.

The six Project Flourish award recipients were selected from a field of 14 semi-finalists. Beginning in late 2019, each semi-finalist was paired with a Project Flourish "Navigator" (mentor) who helped to refine their business plan and pitch presentation. The panel of judges made up of business and community leaders who are members of the First Presbyterian congregation, selected the award recipients and determined how much each will receive.

"We have been tremendously impressed by the innovation and dedication each social entrepreneur brought to this challenge," said Rev. Dr. Jim Birchfield, Senior Pastor of First Presbyterian Church. "Through the selection of these six

organizations, the judges seek to add to the existing portfolio of Project Flourish ventures that are moving the needle in addressing social challenges that affect everyone in Houston."

"I don't think it has ever been as important than now to encourage the development of new social ventures. Each one of these Award Winners is doing hard, courageous work, lighting up fires of hope in a world consumed by hard times and bad news. I am so proud of them all, and we have been honored to work with them," said Austin Hermann, Director of the Center for Faith, Work, and Innovation at First Presbyterian Church of Houston.

First Presbyterian Church of Houston will hold an online celebration for the winners at 1 PM on Sunday, September 6. The hour-long virtual event will have each winning team's pitch shared to the entire congregation and other community members.

To learn more, please visit www.projectflourish.org.

About First Presbyterian Church Houston

Established in 1839, First Presbyterian Church of Houston was the first church to organize and build in Houston. Today its congregation continues to worship and serve from its location in the heart of the city's museum district. Committed to providing opportunities to gather, grow, and go, the FPC Houston community strives to impact Houston and beyond through multiple worship styles, Biblical teaching, and diverse opportunities to serve both locally and globally. FPC is affiliated with ECO: A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians. This relationship with the denomination is expressed through participation in its local governing body, the Presbytery of Texas. For more information, visit <https://fpchouston.org>.

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