

Buildings & Grounds & Mission

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Mission Focused Buildings

BY DAVID HEFLING

St. John's Episcopal Church in Canandaigua, New York is not so different from other parishes. Our 143-year old roof leaks. We're in the Historic District, which restricts some of what we would like to do. Our website needs some "jazzing up," and we're trying to hone in on the perfect mission statement for us. We've got a ways to go.

What we do have happening is expanding mission and ministry as we continue to open our doors to the community after having been insular for too long. That's not to say we haven't had ministry happening here. For the past 28 years we have operated a weekday lunch program, Gleaners Community Kitchen (Kitchen). This meal is free and open to the public with no questions asked; over time it has grown from a handful of people to an average of 70 guests per day. Over 65 volunteers come

in each week to assist in cooking, serving, and washing dishes and to interact with our guests. When it began, our neighbors were less than happy that "those people" were walking through the neighborhood to get to the Kitchen. Over time and with a lot of patience and various discussions, acceptance has come.

But the Kitchen wasn't enough. Our bishop, Prince Singh, is constantly preaching mission and outreach, as bishops do. We've taken that call very seriously, using what we already have going for us. While we offer space for Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, and National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, as well as Daisy Girl Scouts and Cub and Boy Scouts, we know we have been called to more.

With new leadership, our parish has looked for ways to expand mission and ministry without

stretching ourselves so thin that we couldn't do anything well and to use our buildings and grounds more "mission-effectively." It has been an evolutionary process. About five years ago, with a gift from the Bishop, we began the "Red Wagon Pantry," an inhouse food cupboard for our Kitchen guests. The next year we decided to tear up a lush green lawn at the back of the church to add a kitchen garden. Again, some of the surrounding neighbors were not happy, but the community kicked in. City officials supported our effort. Local garden clubs have consistently supplied seeds, plants, soil, fertilizer, and tools. Lowe's in Canandaigua gifted us fencing and the labor to put it up and paint it. Volunteers show up regularly to water and tend the garden – the produce from which goes to support the lunch program. A master gardener comes in to teach young people and others how to garden successfully. In the past two years we have received grants from the local hospital to teach food prep and safety. This program is run by a local college professor.

One of the ways we have been strengthened and able to expand our program assistance and support is through our participation in the county Workforce Development (WDP) and Summer Youth Employment Programs

(SYEP). These programs allow participants who receive public assistance through the county (housing, food stamps, Medicaid) to get on-the-job-experience and training and, in the case of SYEP, to be paid for up to 29 hours of work per week. Placements have been made in the Kitchen, the food pantry, the gardens, helping with the upkeep of the grounds, and for the overall care of the property and the day-to-day workings of our outreach programs. The WDP and SYEP participants become part of our staff team. While most move on to other employment after a relatively short time, many return to visit and reconnect. It is a win-win for all.

Since we interact daily with a population that includes people who are homeless and those for whom poverty is a serious reality, we offer some auxiliary services like blood pressure checks through a local nursing program, a clothing mending service on Tuesdays offered by a very creative deacon, and an inhouse food pantry. These all happen within the dining room space of the Kitchen itself.

The former rectory, unused for nearly 25 years and in disrepair, sits adjacent to the church and parish hall. It has seemed to be the logical place for use as a mission and ministry center yet

until recently, we haven't realized the potential opportunities. This past spring, two opportunities surfaced and our desire to open a ministry center is beginning to take shape. With the assistance and generosity of a couple of local hair stylists, twice a month we are able to offer free haircuts to our luncheon guests, on the back porch of the former rectory. We'll move inside come fall. A parishioner, a retired teacher who has worked at Gleaners Community Kitchen for several years, has seen the need for reading assistance for some of our guests. As a result, St. John's has entered into an agreement with the local Literacy Volunteers program. We will offer one-on-one and small group tutoring and financial and kitchen literacy classes by the end of summer.

The parish applied for a small grant from the Diocesan Council and will transform the dual parlors and the kitchen of the rectory into a learning and outreach center. The dining room will become our barber shop!

After many years, the old rectory will be abuzz with life again, albeit differently. And, as our bishop preaches, we're keeping our ears and eyes open for more.

David Helfing, ObjN+ has been the rector of St. John's, Canandaigua, since 2010. He hails from Northeast Ohio where he was a teacher and university administrator for many years. A 2003 graduate of Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, he is Dean of the Northeast District, co-chaired the recent search for DioRochester's Canon to the Ordinary, has been a member of the Commission on Ministry, Diocesan Convention Planning Committee, New Clergy Mentor group, and has been a field education supervisor and mentor in Rochester and the Diocese of Massachusetts. He lives in Canandaigua with his spouse, Michael Dudley, a retired priest.

Try This

Despite aging buildings in need of repair, St. John's Episcopal Church continues to open their doors to the community to further extend their mission and ministry "after having been insular for too long." They also have developed relationships with county offices and local businesses, allowing this smaller congregation offer additional services to their lunch guests.

In what ways are your church buildings serving your congregation's mission and hopeful

vision for the future? Have you considered partnering with local workforce development or other agencies or businesses as a way to expand your own capacity?

(Source: Adapted from *Vestry Resource Guide*, 2015)

Resources

- The City of Canandaigua has worked with us consistently on property related issues and has been quite supportive and helpful. The Office of Development and Planning is where we have turned for assistance, Rick Brown, Director.
- The Episcopal Diocese of Rochester's grant programs: For our ministry center start we applied for a Parish Mission Grant <http://www.episcopal-rochester.org/content/funding-overview> in the amount of \$3,000 for computer equipment, paint, and supplies. We are anxiously waiting to learn the status of our application.
- Gleaners Community Kitchen www.gleanerskitchen.org and the Red Wagon Pantry are both volunteer-based community programs. We are one of 500 partner agencies with FoodLink <http://foodlinkny.org>, the Rochester based food pantry and support program, and we are supported by local grants, gifts from judicatories and our own diocese, individuals, and other corporations. Fundraising events are held annually. Tom Carter, USN, Retired <http://st-johns-episcopal.org/contact-us/clergy-vestry-staff/>, is the Kitchen Manager.
- Literacy Volunteers <http://www.literacyvoc.org/prospectivetutors.html> offer one-on-one tutoring, teach reading in small groups, English as a Second Language, and financial and kitchen literacy skills. We are partnering with them for training and program specifics. Margaret Morrison White, from the parish, is the coordinator of this ministry.
- St. John's Episcopal Church, Canandaigua, NY <http://st-johns-episcopal.org>
- Sew Green Rochester <http://www.sewgreenrochester.org> is a ministry founded by Episcopal deacon Georgia Carney. Her mending ministry began at St. John's <http://www.rochesterfirst.com/news/go-green/new-shop-saves-sewing-supplies-from-landfill>, where it continues! Learn more here: info@sewgreen-rochester.org

■ Tips for Parishes Considering a Food Pantry Garden, ECF Vital Practices resource
<http://www.ecfvp.org/your-turn/tips-for-parishes-considering-a-food-pantry-garden/>

■ The Workforce Development Program and the Summer Youth Employment Program are offered by Ontario County, New York. Our building manager, Ruth Dainty <http://st-johns-episcopal.org/contact-us/clergy-vestry-staff/>, is the coordinator for those people who work on-site.

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Editor's Letter

Church. Hearing the word, my brain immediately 'sees' a building with a steeple. And, I recall the stories of leaking roofs, faulty boilers, and so on.

Yet, when I began looking for stories of congregations and how they were managing their buildings, what I discovered was story after story of churches using their buildings and grounds in service to their hopeful vision of what God is calling them to do in their communities: Leaky roofs notwithstanding.

Here are their stories:

- In many ways, St. John's Episcopal Church in Canandaigua, New York is not so different from other parishes. Their 143-year old roof leaks. Their website could use some work and they are trying to hone in on the perfect mission statement. None of this has stopped this congregation from finding ways to use their buildings "mission effectively" without stretching themselves too thin. David Hefling's "Mission Focused Buildings" tells the story of how a 28-year-old free weekday lunch

program has expanded to meet a wider range of community needs.

- How might a church in a suburban neighborhood reclaim its [the church's] historic role as a hub of community life? Sarah Bartenstein's "Church as Village Green" shares the story of how a borrowed idea has taken root, resulting in a dynamic year-round Farmers Market from which a variety of other community programs and ministries have grown.

- En "Sí juntos podemos" Jesse Velásquez y Vidal Rivas nos animan a usar todos nuestros recursos (talento, tiempo, y tesoro) para lograr crecimiento espiritual y material, como en la Iglesia Episcopal San Mateo de Maryland donde la comunidad Latina ha logrado muchas actualizaciones en un edificio de más de 50 años.

/ In "Yes, Together We Can," Jesse Velásquez and Vidal Rivas encourage us to use all our resources (talent, time, and treasure) to reach spiritual and material growth, as the San Mateo Episcopal Church

in Maryland where the Latino Community has joined to accomplish many updates to an older building.

- Some churches lean on their visioning statements to drive them toward community partnerships. In "Pasture to Partnerships" Susan Kleinwechter shares how a community partnership not only helped with maintenance of St. Martin-in-the-Fields' 11.5-acre campus, but also showed the congregation part of a new vision.

- For Janice Ford and Peter Kosciusko, their commitment to the full recovery and rehabilitation of men incarcerated in the local county jail was the catalyst for the transformation of the rectory at their Episcopal Church into a sober house, providing a safe and healthy next step for persons with addictions. "Reconciliation House" shares the story of a congregation committed to make this a reality.

- Sharing our buildings with others can tax a congregation's resources. "A Ministry of Space" by Louise Fortuna shares how, on a shoestring budget and without a sexton, this downtown church has become a true community hub.
- Some congregations are staying close to home when it comes to mission trips. In "Parish Partnerships" Kimberly Durnan shares the transformation that took place when a church invited unchurched college students to join with parishioners in service and relationship with a struggling, smaller parish in their diocese.
- In 2012, neighbors believed the church was closed. It wasn't. Four years later, there are visible signs of life at St. Alban's Episcopal Church in Indianapolis. "Peace Garden" by David Paulsen, with an introduction by Nancy Davidge, tells the story of St. Alban's most visible ministry, one that is causing the phone to ring and people to stop in.

We encourage you to think about how the ideas presented in this and every issue can provide an impetus for evaluating and reflecting on what you could learn from the experiences of others. To help in your discern-

ment, we offer a list of resources related to the topic at the end of each article. If you have a resource you'd like to share, please email me at editor@episcopalfoundation.org with the link or add it to the site using the Your Turn feature. (<http://www.ecfvp.org/yourturn/>)

If you are interested in Spanish language content, please visit our searchable index for our Spanish content here. (<http://www.ecfvp.org/topics/es/>)

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Faithfully,

Nancy

Nancy Davidge

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PPS: Do you live in an area with limited Internet access? If you have a smart phone, consider browsing ECF Vital Practices from your mobile device.

Church as Village Green

BY SARAH BARTENSTEIN

The village green...the public garden...the town square. Before suburban sprawl became a prominent feature of American life, churches were often placed at the geographic heart of their communities. Today in Virginia, if you drive through a small town, you'll likely see a historic Episcopal church on the main street, near the courthouse, or in some other prominent public space.

Sadly, many churches have lost that sense of being the hub of community life. But while it is situated in a suburban Richmond neighborhood, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church is demonstrating that it's still possible to be a "village green." Parish buildings are not only full throughout the day on Sundays, the buildings and grounds are also alive on weekdays with people participating in small groups or coming for a meeting or a speaker; volunteering in the food pantry or the Episcopal Church Women's gift shop; shopping in the church bookstore; rehearsing in a choir; or attending Morning Prayer or Evensong.

The most colorful example of

St. Stephen's as a village green, though, happens on Saturday mornings when people (and dogs) of all ages arrive to delicious smells, colorful sights, and live music, thanks to a weekly farmers market. It opens at 8:00 am without fail, rain or shine. (Although we did close after a blizzard last winter because the walkways weren't safe, but a few years ago during a tropical storm, we simply moved indoors and had the market anyway.)

Founded in 2009, The Farmers Market @ St. Stephen's has grown steadily ever since. On a typical Saturday it hosts about 40 vendors each week for several hundred patrons (the number grows to about 1,000 during peak summer season). Local farmers sell in-season produce, beef, poultry, pork, seafood, eggs, flowers, and bedding plants. Though we began as a "producer-only" market, we're now a "full-disclosure" market, allowing farmers to bring items grown on other nearby farms as long as they disclose the source. This adjustment allows a wider range of products to be offered.

While farmers form the core of the market, customers also look forward to shopping for bread and other baked goods, freshly brewed coffee and hand-squeezed limeades, and arts and crafts such as jewelry, upcycled clothing, handmade soaps, and more. Food trucks are on hand to provide a pick-up breakfast or lunch for shoppers. Seminars and demonstrations are scheduled from time to time, various nonprofit groups visit, and there are always activities for children.

Customers and vendors tell us that the market's size is just right. It's large enough to offer a wide range of high-quality products, but small enough to make shopping and parking easy (it's also free). Many patrons arrive on foot or on bicycles—and some come in strollers.

The establishment of the Farmers Market @ St. Stephen's coincided with an increasing interest in our parish in the mind-body connection and its role in spiritual well-being. While the parish was already offering centering prayer and the occasional yoga class, groups expanded as the market

took hold. Regular yoga and tai chi courses, contemplative prayer groups, and five-week courses on mindfulness meditation are going strong to this day. Our first market manager led a class on Michael Pollan's book *Food Rules* with a parishioner who is a nurse practitioner; the popular class was offered several times.

How we began

During a 2008 visit to the Cathedral of St. Philip in Atlanta, parish staff were impressed by their weekly market, and believed St. Stephen's could initiate something similar. A team consisting of parishioners, staff, and local experts did their homework and prepared a proposal for the vestry. One of our parishioners, an attorney, ensured that all legal requirements were met, and crossed the t's and dotted the i's with the city.

While farmers markets at churches were not unheard of in 2009, they were not common, so it wasn't surprising that some vestry members, parishioners, and neighbors had questions and concerns. After addressing these issues, we were ready to open. We held our first market day in May 2009.

Initially the market was open during spring, summer, and early

fall, but demand by customers and vendors led to its expansion to a year-round offering. During the winter, the market moves into the parish hall and continues to operate every Saturday. (When we decided to offer the market in the winter, we initially tried Wednesday evening market hours, but we found that customers had trouble remembering it was open. Making Saturday our year-round market day gave the winter market the push it needed to be successful.)

The market's start-up was facilitated by the know-how of its founding manager, who had managed another area farmers market. Her relationships with local farmers provided an important jump-start. She worked closely with a full-time member of the parish staff with an MBA and retail experience. When she left to start a small neighborhood grocery store, the parish hired another experienced market manager with a passion for supporting local farmers and educating customers about farming methods (organic, conventional, etc.), Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs), and other issues.

Staffing and finances

The part-time market manager is a church employee and the support needed to run the market—from communications to accounting to facilities management—is provided by church staff.

The market sustains itself through application fees and weekly booth fees collected from vendors. These cover such expenses as the part-time manager and sextons' hours, and paid advertising and promotion. Now that it is well established, the market does not do a great deal of paid advertising, though robust communication is accomplished using the church's established communications channels, such as our website, email newsletters, printed newsletters, and social media (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram). We've also been able to obtain a healthy amount of free media.

Volunteers are critical to the operation; some are parishioners, and some are market patrons without other connections to the parish. Recruiting a sufficient number of volunteers during the peak market season has been perhaps the greatest challenge for this ministry.

An integral ministry

The market's relationship to other St. Stephen's ministries has grown since its founding. Farmers and other food producers at the market donate unsold food to the parish's pantry at the end of each market Saturday. On Monday, when people in need come to St. Stephen's for help with groceries, they not only receive canned and boxed food donated by parishioners, but they are invited to select such fresh items as eggs, greens and other produce, meat, and bread. They've even been offered freshly cut flowers on occasion.

For the Sunday Community Supper—a meal served between the church's two Sunday evening services—staff and volunteers use ingredients purchased from market vendors as a way of supporting local farmers while focusing on fresh, healthy foods. The meal is donation-based, since one of its goals is to provide a nutritious meal to those who might not be able to afford one.

The farmers market enjoys a reputation as one of the area's best, and has brought many people to St. Stephen's "village green" who later become part of the community, whether as small group participants, attendees at special events, worshipers, even members of the church. The market

is a "portal," one of several at St. Stephen's, through which people may enter this community of faith. A preschool, a prominent guest speaker, a community event, a worship service geared especially to visitors, all are paths into the rhythm of life at St. Stephen's. In large part because of its visibility, the farmers market is an especially effective "on ramp."

What makes all these pathways effective is the hospitality people receive when they come to St. Stephen's, and the insistence that all are welcome regardless of whether they are (or intend to become) "members." Our goal is to remove barriers to participation in our common life, and to put out the welcome mat. The Farmers Market @ St. Stephen's is one of the major ways we do that.

***Sarah Bartenstein** is director of communications at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Richmond, where she is responsible for communication within and beyond the parish, through print, web (ststephensRVA.org), social media, and other channels and platforms, with special emphasis on using communication as a form of hospitality. Sarah served as communications director for Commonwealth Public Broadcasting (PBS, NPR, and educational programming) for eight years and for the Diocese*

of Virginia for 12 years. Her husband is a gardener and landscaper and they, along with their adult daughter and son, are big fans of growing, discovering, buying, preparing and eating fresh, local foods. Sarah is in the final year of her term as president of Episcopal Communicators.

Try This

Sarah Bartenstein describes The Farmers Market @ St. Stephen's as an effective pathway leading people to St. Stephen's. Contributing to that effectiveness is the way St. Stephen's continues to cultivate relationships with farmers market customers. Sarah writes,

"A Farmers Market newsletter is emailed every Thursday, after we've heard from vendors about what they expect to bring that Saturday. St. Stephen's sends several targeted email newsletters each week, and the Farmers Market list is the largest one we maintain. Each edition includes information on the upcoming market day, including a list of vendors; the "blessing of the week;" a recipe using market ingredients (notated with the names of vendors who can supply each ingredient); and a thank you to the previous week's volunteers and donors to the food pantry

Sometimes the newsletter includes a feature on something like what do we mean when we say “organic,” “certified naturally grown,” and “conventional” methods; or what is a CSA and why should you join one? “

Does your church offer programs that regularly attract people from beyond your congregation? Might there be an opportunity to build – or strengthen – relationships by sharing helpful information or resources related to that program? Use Sarah’s example as a starting point for thinking about what you could offer that would be of interest to community members who come to your church for programs or services (i.e. thrift shop, food pantry, lecture series).

Resources

- Community Supported Agriculture https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community_supported_agriculture
- *Food Rules* by Michael Pollan, Penguin Books, 2009 <http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/7015635-food-rules> and excerpt <http://www.pbs.org/pov/foodinc/excerpt-michael-pollans-food-rules/>
- The Farmers Market @ St. Stephens web site <http://www.ststephensrva.org/community/farmers-market/> and video <https://vimeo.com/133239556>
 - Twitter @StStephensFM
 - Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/StStephensRVAMarket>
 - Instagram @farmersmarketststephens
- Resources for starting a farmers market
 - Farmers’ Markets, Mississippi State University <http://www.naturalresources.msstate.edu/business/farmers-market.asp>
 - How to Organize and Run a Successful Farmers’ Market, Massachusetts Department of Energy and Environmental Affairs <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/agr/markets/farmers-markets/farmers-market-howtorun-generic.html>
 - How to Set Up a Farmers Market, Advocates for Urban Agriculture, Chicago Urban Agriculture <https://chicago-urban-agriculture.wikispaces.com/10.+How+to+Set+Up+a+Farmers+Market>
- “Shared Leadership,” Beckett Stokes, ECF Vital Practices’ Vestry Papers, July 2014 <http://www.ecfvp.org/vestry-papers/leading-change/shared-leadership/>
- St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church, Richmond, Virginia <http://www.ststephensrva.org>

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Sí, juntos podemos

POR JESSE VELÁSQUEZ Y VIDAL RIVA

La Iglesia Episcopal San Mateo en Hyattsville, Maryland, en la Diócesis de Washington, tiene 204 años de antigüedad, pero sus edificios datan de las décadas de los 1950 y 1960 (rectoría 1951, salón parroquial completado en 1954, iglesia y santuario en 1964). Desde 2008, esta venerable iglesia ha tenido un verdadero renacimiento con la llegada de feligreses de países como, entre otros, El Salvador, la República Dominicana, México y Chile.

Muchas manos...

Los latinos y latinas hemos ayudado mucho en el cambio de la iglesia. Cuando llegamos en 2008, la iglesia estaba muy descuidada. Los/las latinos/as comenzamos a limpiar, recogimos las hojas, arreglamos el jardín, pintamos el salón parroquial, los cuartos y toda la iglesia por dentro y por fuera, y limpiamos y arreglamos los bancos. En el invierno limpiamos la nieve y tres veces por año hacemos una limpieza general para mantener nuestra iglesia en buenas condiciones, porque sentimos un gran agradecimiento hacia

todas las personas que edificaron este templo y sus instalaciones.

Dos cosas muy grandes que estamos logrando este verano es poner un letrero de bienvenida en la entrada principal, para que la gente sepa dónde está la iglesia. Esto nos ha costado 10 mil dólares. Estamos instalando un sistema de aire acondicionado central, algo que la iglesia nunca tuvo. Ya hemos preparado la infraestructura para el aire acondicionado central y seguimos luchando para poder recaudar lo que nos falta pagar de los 70 mil dólares necesarios para instalar la unidad. Los/las latinos/as donamos nuestro tiempo y talento y ayudamos a recaudar los fondos necesarios para alcanzar nuestras metas haciendo bailes y rifas, y vendiendo comida. Hemos pagado completamente el letrero, más de la mitad del aire e hicimos un préstamo para lo que nos falta y hemos comenzado una campaña para pagar lo que falta. Hemos donado la pintura y la mano de obra para todos los proyectos. Los/las latinos/as somos muy trabajadores y dedicados, y nos unimos como una gran familia para hacer todo. Cuando trabajamos

juntos parece que estamos teniendo una fiesta, porque mientras que muchos/as trabajan, otros/as están cocinando. Siempre hay mucha comida, mucha música y mucho gozo.

Conocer a nuestros vecinos

Cuando llegamos, sólo alrededor de 55 feligreses anglohablantes asistían a los servicios religiosos. Cuando comenzamos la misa en español, la presencia de latinos/as fue un soplo de vida para la Iglesia San Mateo. Hicimos que la iglesia fuera más visible en la comunidad. El vecindario ve que nuestra iglesia ya no se está muriendo, sino que está floreciente en todas las direcciones. Lo que hicimos para invitar a la gente del vecindario fue ir de casa en casa, repartir folletos, hacer procesiones en las calles para la Virgen de Guadalupe y el Viernes Santo. Son eventos en los que la iglesia se llena de personas nuevas de la comunidad. Tenemos el comité de hospitalidad, el comité de comunión, el grupo de oración, el grupo de catequesis para los niños, el

comité de comunicaciones y tres ministerios de música para cubrir los cuatro horarios de servicios religiosos que tenemos, a los que todos los domingos asisten más de 500 personas. Hay sitio para todos/as los/las que desean ayudar. También tenemos retiros y talleres; somos una parroquia solidaria que lucha por la justicia social y somos un santuario para los inmigrantes.

Otra de las maneras en que San Mateo se extiende hacia la comunidad es mediante nuestra radio, cuyo propósito es llevar el Evangelio más allá de nuestra comunidad. La radio también nos permite establecer una conexión espiritual por medio de las oraciones diarias. La Radio San Mateo se puede escuchar a diario las 24 horas con una linda programación llena de vida y esperanza. Nos pueden encontrar llamando al (641) 552-5821 y en www.iglesiasanmateo.net. También tenemos una presencia grande en redes sociales como Facebook, donde anunciamos los eventos y la comunidad puede compartir sus necesidades.

Un segundo hogar

Es importante sentir que uno es parte de una comunidad, de una iglesia, porque es como un segun-

do hogar. Y por ser nuestro segundo hogar, tenemos que cuidarlo, y para cuidarlo tenemos que sentir que la iglesia es nuestra, porque todos trabajamos para que se mantenga en pie. Debemos tomar la iglesia como parte de nosotros/as mismos/as, no dejar que nadie la destruya y tratar de seguir construyendo para hacerla más fuerte. Siempre estamos viendo qué más tenemos que hacer para que la Iglesia siga siendo un hogar para todos/as los/las que entren a ella. Hace unos años pusimos un barandal para que el segundo piso fuera más seguro para nuestros niños y niñas. Y lo hicimos como todo, con materiales y mano de obra donados.

Lo que hace una comunidad es el sentido de la hermandad, de entrega, y saber que somos una sola familia con el mismo Señor, la misma fe y el mismo templo, y estar conscientes de que juntos somos fuertes. Cuando la gente visita San Mateo la recibimos bien, la amamos, la tratamos con respeto y cariño y le damos oportunidades de participar. Cuando dicen que San Mateo es una comunidad bonita vemos el fruto del esfuerzo de toda una comunidad que se

une para trabajar para el bien de la iglesia. Es un esfuerzo que es recompensado con buenos comentarios, y una buena imagen de una iglesia es muy importante para poder traer más miembros a un lugar en el que se sienta que el Espíritu de Dios está presente. Eso es lo que hacemos en San Mateo.

Jesse Velásquez es músico y director de la programación de la Radio San Mateo. Tiene tres hijos con su esposa, Carmencita, y es Salvadoreño. Ha ayudado al Padre Vidal por muchos años en varias iglesias y en varios ministerios.

El Rvdo. Vidal Rivas nació en El Salvador y ha sido sacerdote por 24 años y sacerdote Episcopal desde 2008. Junto con su esposa, María de los Ángeles tienen tres hijos y viven en Maryland. Es el fundador del Comité de Solidaridad Monseñor Romero en Washington, DC que apoya a personas de bajos recursos en proyectos solidarios. Es el rector de San Mateo.

Recursos

- Facebook de Radio San Mateo <https://www.facebook.com/radiosanmateo/?pnref=story.unseen-section>

- Facebook de Iglesia Episcopal San Mateo <https://www.facebook.com/StMatthewParish/?fref=ts>
- Ministerio Latino de la Diócesis de Washington <https://www.facebook.com/Ministerio-Latino-de-la-Di%C3%B3cesis-de-Washington-1805785692967139/>
- Sitio web de Iglesia Episcopal San Mateo <http://www.stmatthewshyattsville.org>

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Yes, Together We Can

BY JESSE VELASQUEZ AND VIDAL RIVAS

St. Matthew's/San Mateo Episcopal Church in Hyattsville, Maryland, in the Diocese of Washington, has gone through many changes over the past 200 years. While the congregation is 204 years old, the church buildings were built in the 1950s and 60s (the rectory was completed in 1951, the parish hall in 1954, and the church/sanctuary in 1964). Since 2008, this venerable old church has experienced a veritable renaissance with the arrival of Latino/as from countries such as El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Chile, and others.

Many hands...

We Latinos have contributed a great deal to the changes in our church. When we joined the existing congregation in 2008, the church had been neglected. We cleaned it, raked the leaves, fixed the garden, and applied a fresh coat of paint, both inside and out. We also cleaned and repaired the pews. In the winter we cleared the snow, and three times a year staged a thorough cleaning to keep our church beautiful and in good repair. We did it to honor those who built the temple.

This summer we have two important projects. One of them is to install a welcome sign outside the main door, so people know that we are a welcoming church. The second, is to install a central air conditioning system, something the old church has never had. We've already built the infrastructure for the air conditioning and we are currently fundraising for the \$70,000 needed for installation. Half of the money for the air conditioning and all of the money for the sign has been raised through dances, food sales, and raffles. The church has secured a loan for the remainder of the air conditioning expense; plans are underway for a campaign to pay off the loan.

Our community donates its time and talent to raise funds and to achieve our goals. Among many other things, we have secured donors for the paint and labor required for all of the building projects that we have undertaken. We are hardworking and dedicated, and approach all projects as a big family. When we work together it seems that we are having a party, because while some work, others cook. There is always lots of food, music, and joy.

Meeting our neighbors

When we arrived in 2008, only about 55 English-speaking parishioners attended the service. Soon after we added a service in Spanish, more people began attending and the church experienced a true renaissance. We've also made the church more visible to the community. The neighborhood no longer sees our church as a relic, but as one that is alive. To gain new members from the neighborhood we visited homes, distributed booklets, and organized processions in the street for the Virgin of Guadalupe and on Good Friday. Through those events, the church eventually became full of new people from the community. Now, we have several active committees: hospitality, communion, prayer group, Catechism teaching for children, and communication. Additionally, we have three music ministries to cover our four services attended by over 500 people every Sunday. There is opportunity for anyone who wants to be involved. We also have many retreats and workshops. We are a parish committed to social justice, and our church is a sanctuary for immigrants.

Another way in which St. Matthew's/San Mateo reaches out to the community is through our radio station. The station's mission is to spread the Gospel beyond our community. Our radio helps us to establish a spiritual connection through daily prayers. Radio San Mateo can be heard 24/7 with lively programs full of hope. We can be reached at 641.552.5821, or by visiting our website, at www.iglesiasanmateo.net. We also have a large presence on Facebook and other social media networks where we can post upcoming events and the community can share their feedback.

A second home

It is important to feel that one is part of a community, and church community is a second home, which is how we have to take care of it. When the community feels that the church belongs to them they will do what it takes to keep it standing. We must consider the church as part of ourselves, and not allow anyone to destroy it. We must keep on building it to make it even stronger. We are always moving forward with new projects so that the church will continue to grow and be a home to all of those who enter it. Some years ago we installed a bannister to make the second floor safer for our girls and

boys; as always that was done with donated labor and materials.

What makes a community is a sense of brother/sisterhood, of dedicating ourselves to it, and the knowledge that we are a family with the same Lord, the same faith, and the same temple. When there is certainty in that understanding, together we are strong. When people visit St. Matthew's/San Mateo we welcome them with open arms, we love them, we treat them with respect and warmth, and we give them opportunities to participate. When they say that St. Matthew's/San Mateo is a lovely community we see the fruits of our communal efforts working together for the good of the church. Our efforts are rewarded with positive feedback and an image that we feel proud of, which we have learned is very important when attracting new members. St. Matthew's/San Mateo is once again a place where you can feel that the Spirit of God is present.

Jesse Velásquez is a musician and program director for Radio San Mateo. He has three sons with his wife, Carmencita and is Salvadorean. He has helped Father Vidal for many years in several churches and in many ministries, especially in the music.

Vidal Rivas, the rector of San Mateo, was born in El Salvador

and has been a priest for 24 years and an Episcopal priest since 2008. He and his wife, María de los Ángeles have three children and live in Maryland. He is the founder of Comité de Solidaridad Monseñor Romero (Committee in solidarity with Bishop Romero) in Washington, DC that supports low-income people in need with various solidarity projects.

Resources

- Latin Ministry for the Washington Diocese <https://www.facebook.com/Ministerio-Latino-de-la-Di%C3%B3cesis-de-Washington-1805785692967139/>
- Radio San Mateo's Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/radiosanmateo/?pnref=story.unseen-section>
- St. Matthew's/San Mateo Episcopal Church's Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/StMatthewParish/?fref=ts>
- St. Matthew's/San Mateo Episcopal Church's Website <http://www.stmatthewshyattsville.org>

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Pasture to Partnerships

BY SUSAN KLEINWECHTER

St. Martin-in-the-Fields Episcopal Church in Southlake, Texas was actually founded in the fields, specifically pastureland, where curious cows could peer through barbed wire fences and watch the church and community grow. Today, the cattle are gone and church's 11.5-acre campus on the western edge of Southlake abuts modern houses and the greenspace of Chesapeake Park, an 11 acre neighborhood park with a paved walking trail, stocked fish pond, pavilion, and playground adjacent to the residential subdivision Chesapeake Place. Part of our property, former pastureland, remains undeveloped, with an approved master plan for a larger church to be in the fields in the future.

Partnership with the City of Southlake

Once the cows stopped grazing on St. Martin's fields, and neighboring farmers with tractors and mowers sold their farms to developers, the church was faced with the challenge of mowing its under-utilized acreage to keep it up to city code. In the 1990's, the church made a cooperative partnership in the

form of a lease agreement with the City of Southlake to use open field as sports practice space. An early lease agreement allowed the city to build certain improvements on our land, including a baseball diamond with a backstop behind home plate. With the current agreement, most recently revised in 2013, Southlake can schedule city team practices on St. Martin's fields after school and on Saturdays. The city mows and provides trash receptacles and regular trash removal. This agreement provides St. Martin's, with a family focus in our church's DNA, a way to serve families in our community who are engaged in youth sports. Ever since the nearby Chesapeake Park development neared completion in 2001, the greenspace formed by church and parkland has offered the community an open, flowing, consistently-maintained space over a third of a mile long, a pleasant green oasis in the cubicle world of suburban homes.

Early on, Southlake mowing crews would often mow the "north acre" beyond their leased area, and the church's mowing teams made up of parish members certainly didn't

mind. Occasionally the City lets the grass get 'shaggy' when city league play is on break. Overall we have a fantastic, mutually beneficial agreement with a tremendous reduction of our grounds maintenance. Parish mowing teams maintain the church's unleased lawn and land; DIY also is embedded in the DNA of our parish.

Partnership with Fever United Futbol Club

St. Martin's rector retired in June 2013, and in September 2013 our newly hired interim rector was approached by Coach Constance Smith of Fever United Futbol Club inquiring about use of our fields for practice. As our nearby communities have added housing, it is harder for clubs to find practice space.

Coach Smith made a compelling pitch to our church leadership after personally researching our lease agreement with the city, and after that it was "game on" with Fever. Our 2003, ten-year lease agreement with Southlake was expiring. In renewing the deal, St. Martin's reduced the amount

of land leased to the city to make room for this dynamic, nonprofit competitive soccer club to use our westernmost, lower field. Fever is committed to overall player development, on and off the field, so that young people develop intellectually, physically, and spiritually. Their energy was contagious, and a new partnership was forged. Our lease with Fever is modeled after the lease with Southlake, with the addition of a plan for irrigation.

All of a sudden, early in our rector search period, St. Martin's opened up to new ways to be connected and serve our community. In the months that followed, as St. Martin's wrestled with what we believed God was calling us to become, as our people talked and listened and worked to articulate our vision, mission, and values, we saw the sharing of the abundance of our resources as essential, and articulated that in our core values. Some churches lean on their visioning statements to drive them toward community partnerships; our new community partnership actually showed us part of a new vision. See what God did there?

Benefits of Fever partnership

The impact on our bottom line in having lease agreements with two entities instead of one is negligible. Our field mowing cost is still zero. Our water bill is much higher because Fever irrigates the fields to ensure quality play in the Texas heat, but they reimburse the church for an agreed portion. Green fields are more welcoming than cracked, dry, brown fields. Not only does Fever maintain our fields to a high standard, they share St. Martin's mission to serve in the community. They have partnered with us on coat drives, food drives, shoe drives, school fundraisers, and our annual Festival in the Fields. <http://www.stmartininthefields.org/festival-in-the-fields/> Coach Smith led outdoor fun and games at last summer's evening Vacation Bible School. Fever families have gathered and done projects around St. Martin's including painting the walls in our office and chapel and assembling picnic tables. Coach Smith frequently asks, "What can we do for you?"

Having a partnership with Fever adds some extra hustle and bustle to St. Martin's, both day and night. That's right, night: Fever connected with Posey Plumbing, the business adjacent to our fields, to

store lights and a generator for weeknight practice. Every church wants to show that "the lights are on and people are busy." Fever's presence outdoors, along with Narcotics Anonymous, Boy Scouts, and church groups meeting indoors, makes "busy" evident at St. Martin's.

Fever also helps us keep an eye on the proper use of our fields. From time to time, despite signs ringing the church parking lot, we have had damage caused by unauthorized vehicle use, necessitating sprinkler repairs and levelling ruts in the fields. Since Fever's coaches are so frequently out at practice in afternoons and evenings when church staff and leaders are often not around, they can help identify teams who have not been permitted and scheduled by the City of Southlake. Coach Smith would unabashedly talk to a football coach who drove his pickup truck onto our fields to unload gear; the City would have told approved teams that only city maintenance vehicles are permitted on our fields.

Downsides to our lease agreement with Fever? None. Nada. Nilch. Zip. Our church's partnerships with Southlake and Fever have brought vitality to the fields where our story began.

Susan Kleinwechter has been a member of St. Martin-in-the-Fields Episcopal Church since 1994. She currently serves as the communications director for the church and its school, St. Martin's Episcopal School (<http://stmartinepiscopal-school.org/>), and is an independent contractor in communications with the Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth.

Try This

Legal matters in community partnerships

If your church land is under-utilized and you consider a property-use lease with a community partner, consider these items as essential in your written agreement:

- Church use of property around worship times and a church school's educational day
- Who schedules property use
- Allowed and excluded uses

- The ability for the church to interrupt or change regularly-scheduled property use with a 24-hour notice to accommodate special activities such as a funeral, wedding, or festival
- Details of maintenance
- Permitted improvements
- Parking, maintenance access
- Insurance and indemnification provisions
- Lease timespan and termination terms
- Contact persons

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Resources

- Agreement with the City of Southlake (see link to pdf on [ecfvp.org](http://www.ecfvp.org))
- Festival in the Fields, St. Martin-in-the-Fields Episcopal Church
<http://www.stmartininthe-fields.org/festival-in-the-fields/>
- St. Martin-in-the-Fields Episcopal Church, Southlake, Texas
<http://www.stmartininthe-fields.org>

Reconciliation House

BY JANICE FORD

For the past four years I have been volunteering two days a month at the Worcester County House of Correction (WHOC) in West Boylston, Massachusetts, providing spiritual direction, liturgy, Bible study, and book studies to the men incarcerated there in a program called STOP (Substance Treatment Opportunities Program). All of these men are in recovery from substance abuse, incarcerated for crimes committed largely as a result of their addiction.

After a period of time, it became clear to me one of the major problems for these men was what comes next. After participating in STOP's six to nine month intensive rehab program, there were few choices available regarding where they would live after release. If they went to an environment that was not healthy or safe, they were much more likely to relapse. These men need a transitional housing opportunity to help them move more easily and safely into society from the world of incarceration.

In September 2014, the WHOC Director of Substance Abuse

Services and STOP program creator, Peter Kosciusko (who is also a parishioner in my parish) and I were lamenting the poor housing options available for the men in STOP. Suddenly I recognized how our parish might help with this dilemma. For the past eight years, I've served as rector at the Church of the Reconciliation in Webster, Massachusetts and never lived in the rectory. My husband and I own our own home, so the rectory provided additional office and meeting space. Our congregation is also blessed to have a two-story parish hall with two large rooms. If we moved the existing office/meeting space into the underused upper parish hall, we could convert the former rectory to a sober house (we could take six men). Four separate rooms could be created out of the large upstairs hall, leaving the large open room downstairs for gatherings.

While Peter and I felt called by God to take on this new ministry, it was unclear if doing so was possible. We are a small parish with an average Sunday attendance of 50, and though we have a fairly healthy amount of invested funds, our annual budget is extremely

tight. We also had no idea how our parishioners would react to the idea of converting our rectory into a sober house, nor did we know what lay ahead in terms of getting town approval.

Putting ideas into action

Initially, Peter and I shared this idea only with the vestry. They felt this type of ministry fit well with our mission and vision. For the past eight years, our focus has been outward into the community. Webster is a former mill town in Massachusetts' Blackstone Valley, and its residents are primarily mid- to low-income. We have tried hard to minister to the needs of the people in town with very good success. We've earned a reputation as "the little church that helps people."

The leadership team decided to start with feasibility study. Ed Farrell, a fellow Episcopalian with experience in process work, was hired to look into all of the aspects of using the former rectory as a sober house. Over a nine-month period he gathered information,

meeting twice with the vestry to share findings. It became obvious that, although fundraising was the key obstacle, there was really nothing major blocking our way to starting this ministry.

On June 7, 2015, Ed facilitated a parish wide meeting and shared his findings. The vestry and I fielded questions and concerns. Many questions were asked. Four people expressed concerns related to fear of having previously incarcerated individuals in recovery living so close to the church and parish hall. Of interest was the fact that other parishioners attempted to quell those fears so that this role did not only fall to the vestry and me. We explained the vestry would vote in September whether to go ahead with the plans, and that parishioners should use the summer to continue to ask questions and receive information from the vestry and me. Over the summer, only one or two additional questions were raised. We also offered a Skype session with a lay leader from a Congregational Church outside of Boston with a similar ministry with formerly incarcerated women. Several parishioners attended the session; it had a positive effect overall.

On September 16, 2015, the vestry voted to go forward with the sober house ministry. The vote

was ten in favor, none opposed, and one abstention. *Reconciliation House* was born!

Next steps

Our first order of business was to hire an attorney to help us separately incorporate the sober house as a 501c3 (nonprofit, religious organization). The attorney prepared a “to do” list for us so we understood what we needed to accomplish in terms of the incorporation, tax exemption from the Federal and State governments, selection of a board of directors,

certification as a charitable organization so that we could do fundraising, etc. From October to February we worked on all of these things. We were blessed to have the help of our State Representative Joseph McKenna, as well as the Sheriff of Worcester County, Lewis Evangelidis. They talked with town officials to help us to determine what was needed to be in compliance with Town ordinances. We also began to build our board of directors. God blessed us with nine competent and dedicated individuals from our community including the First Justice of the Dudley District Court, Timothy Bibaud; Robert Keith, COO of Webster First

Federal Credit Union (now treasurer of the Board); several business owners; Peter Kosciusko, representing the WCHOC; Mark Rogers, our executive director (and senior warden of the parish); and me as president of the Board.

We were officially incorporated at the end of February. On March 10, 2016 we opened our first bank account with \$1,200 representing early donations.

The Board’s initial responsibility was to plan our first fundraising event. On May 5, 2016 we held a \$100-a-plate dinner at a restaurant in Webster; 105 people attended. Several notables spoke at the dinner, including two young men in recovery and recently released from the STOP program. Their testimony was riveting and emotional. At the end of the dinner, our executive director made the “second ask,” meaning, the request for additional funds. Pledge cards were on each table. Several individuals and corporate representatives turned in their cards that night, others mailed in their donations.

We also wrote two grant proposals. Our diocese, Western Massachusetts, had just created new ministry development initiatives: one-time start up grants.

We asked for, and received a \$10,000 grant. We also received a \$14,300 grant from the Janet Malser Humanities Trust, a local trust that provides funding to projects in Webster and two other towns.

By June 1st, we had accumulated over \$50,000.

These efforts left us feeling much more comfortable about meeting the two budgets we'd created: one represented our start-up costs, and the other represented our ongoing budget once the house was up and running. Residents would pay \$125 per week to live here, but that would not meet all of our expenses—particularly if we did not fill the House immediately. We knew that we would always need to do fundraising. And we felt we needed a financial cushion. I approached the Community Investment Committee of our Diocesan Board of Trustees (of which I am a member) to ask if Reconciliation House, Inc. (RHI) might be allowed to apply for a loan (the Trustees must invest a portion of Diocesan holdings via low interest loans to nonprofit organizations). Without any hesitation, RHI was granted a \$65,000 unsecured loan for three years at four percent interest! Another gift from God!

Renovations, certification, and preparations for opening

Hiring a contractor to do the renovations needed in the rectory and parish hall was the next major agenda item for our board. It

didn't take long to find a qualified contractor, and renovations began June 1, 2016. We soon learned the town fire code required an alarm system that rings at the fire station; an expense we hadn't budgeted for. The system is expensive--\$9,000 for labor and materials. We felt the sting of the additional expense, but we were determined not to let it stop our progress. We will continue to raise funds to help offset this expense.

Earlier this year, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) had issued a policy statement that sober houses may seek certification by the Commonwealth. Certification would mean that the sober house complied with very specific standards. DPH made it clear that noncertified sober houses would be ineligible to receive resident referrals from state departments. We knew we wanted to have DPH certification. Three other board members and I attended mandatory two-day certification training in June. Once the renovation

is finished, and all of our policies and procedures have been written, we will be inspected and, hopefully, certified.

This month we are interviewing candidates for the live-in house manager position. The house manager is someone with long-term recovery skills who will live at the House and provide ongoing support and direction to the residents.

Our hope is to have the renovations complete and our certification inspection done by the end of August 2016. Residents will be allowed to move in immediately thereafter. While our capacity is six men for up to six to nine months, it is expected that we won't have a full house until later in the fall.

A Grand Opening liturgy and celebration is planned for late September.

Key learnings

Over the past two years we have learned many things with regard to this project. These are the key items we wish to share with other clergy and vestries:

- **Keep in mind that God is in charge.** No matter how badly

we may want a particular ministry to succeed, surrendering to God's will is mandatory. Over the past two years, our vestry, parishioners, and I have repeatedly said, "Not our will, but yours be done, Lord" with regard to Reconciliation House. It's not always easy to step out of the way and let God be God, but when it happens, it's incredible.

- **Step out in faith that God can change people's hearts.** We all know that change is very difficult—especially when it comes to congregations. Clinging to the past in terms of activities and buildings can be a hard fought battle. It can be a fearsome thing for any priest and/or vestry to raise the possibility of taking on a major change like giving up the use of the rectory. However, God calls us to be fearless in the face of human need. We cannot allow the church to be emotionally blackmailed by those who choose to worship traditions and buildings over God and God's mission for the church.
- **Assessment is critical to successful mission work.** There are plenty of outreach ministries that a parish may want to undertake. However, going forward with a ministry based on

an **assumed need** can be deadly. The initial work always has to be assessment of the need. If individuals or communities do not perceive themselves to be in need of assistance, it is imprudent for a parish to go forward with that assistance. It was clear that safe, healthy, affordable transitional housing for men leaving the STOP program was a need the men themselves were voicing. God put that call into our minds and hearts.

- **Today's mission efforts require the integration of individuals and agencies from the larger community.** There was a time when most church mission efforts came out of the parish itself, with little assistance from those outside the church family. Today, the needs are such that our increasingly smaller churches cannot do the work alone. Jesus asked us to bring the Gospel into the world. We tend to think of this in terms of putting the Gospel into action by virtue of our mission efforts. However, when we include other secular organizations like our town officials and businesses in the work, they are not only seeing the Gospel in action, but are *participating* in the work of the Gospel as well. This adds another dimension to spreading the

Gospel. Including officials from the Town of Webster, the judiciary system, local law enforcement, state government, business, and individual citizens in the town was not only critical to getting the House established, but added to the wider reach of God's Word in the world.

- **This kind of work requires commitment of time and energy.** We have spent an incredible amount of time and energy on the establishment of Reconciliation House, Inc. There were days when I felt completely overwhelmed by trying to keep all the plates spinning. The routine work of the parish did not end for our vestry or me when we took up this new ministry, so we are all working double time. However, we know that the majority of the work will be done once RHI is open and running. There will always be more to do, but the greatest weight of the project will have been accomplished. I believe that our parishioners, our vestry, and I would never have made it through if not for God's on-going support and encouragement. This has been my daily prayer, "Lord, give me what I need to keep going."

■ **Ministry efforts such as Reconciliation House, Inc. require the very best lay and clergy leadership.** Though assistance is always welcome when it comes to outreach ministry, a project such as ours meant having people with a particular skill set to **get** things in motion. Keen assessment and organizational skills, together with the ability to stay on task are necessary for a successful outcome. Good people skills are needed to make connections in the larger community. The willingness to look outside the immediate church community for assistance and referral is pivotal. Understanding that this type of project will require a commitment of time, and that the start of one task rests on the completion of another means that the selection of individuals from the parish who can be actively involved may be somewhat small. What we have found is that having two or three primary leaders in the effort is best, and that getting additional help comes a bit later.

We will know soon enough the impact that Reconciliation House will have in the lives of the men who will live here. We continue to pray that God will lead and guide us in our effort to do God's

work in the world, in accordance with God's will.

Janice Ford is rector at The Church of the Reconciliation in Webster, Massachusetts. For the past four years she has volunteered two days a month at the Worcester County House of Correction in West Boylston, Massachusetts to provide spiritual direction, liturgy, Bible study and book studies to the men incarcerated there in a program called STOP (Substance Treatment Opportunities Program).

Try This

When Janice Ford and Peter Kosciusko got excited about the possibility of bringing a sober house to Church of the Reconciliation, they first brought their idea to the vestry. The vestry evaluated this idea using the framework of their mission and vision statement that, in part, says:

“We are a faith community of all ages and all walks of life that comes together to spread the Gospel by word and example, and to provide support and encouragement to those inside and outside our walls. We are dedicated to mission and outreach in our town, our nation, and our world.”

The decision to take the first step of conducting a feasibility study was made easier for this vestry because of their deep commitment to their mission.

- Does your congregation have mission and/or vision statements?
- Are they used to guide your work as congregational leaders? Are they practiced/model by members?
- When was the last time your mission and/or vision statements were reviewed?

Need help articulating a mission and/or vision statement? This Vital Post blog by Linda Buskirk may help. (<http://www.ecfvp.org/posts/a-vision-for-your-vestry-retreat/>)

Resources

- Church of the Reconciliation (Episcopal), Webster, Massachusetts <http://www.reconciliationweb.org>
- Massachusetts Association for Sober Housing <https://mashsoberhousing.org/standards-ethics/>

- Reconciliation House, Webster, Massachusetts <http://reconciliationhouseinc.weebly.com>

- “Reconciliation House sober home in the works in Webster” by Susan Spencer, Worcester Telegram and Gazette, February 28, 2016 <http://dev.telegram.com/article/20160228/NEWS/160229201/0/FRONTPAGE>

- Sober House (video), Janice Ford and Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts <https://vimeo.com/142266593>

- “Welcoming Broken Souls” by G. Jeffrey MacDonald, The Living Church, April 3, 2016 <https://www.diocesewma.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Sober-House.pdf>

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A Ministry of Space

BY LOUISE FORTUNA

St. Mary's has many of the ministries you'd expect to find in a church: collecting food for people who are hungry, Sunday School programs, an altar guild, Episcopal Church Women, and more. There's also a ministry that surprises many visitors: our ministry of space.

At St. Mary's we USE our space, every inch of it. Our building is larger than some, but smaller than many. Meetings often happen in Sunday school classrooms. In an average month, there are 110 parish events and 125 community events in our building. On any given day, one might find a group in our building at any hour of the day or night! In addition to ten weekly worship services, parishioners gather in our building to minister to each other and to the community. Quilting and knitting groups, bible studies, family fun nights, and a twice-a-month free breakfast for our hungry neighbors are just a small sample of the parish ministries that happen on a regular basis.

Hunger and homelessness are two primary areas of community outreach. In the winter, we're part of a local warming center program,

opening our doors to provide a place for people who are homeless to sleep when night temperatures dip below freezing. Another big piece of this ministry of space is making our building available to the wider Eugene/Springfield community. Our doors open for 12-step meetings, children's music classes, community yoga, meeting space for local nonprofits, and a range of other uses.

This ministry of space is done on a shoestring budget; we don't employ a sexton. There is a staff member who devotes approximately ten hours a week to building-related issues such as meeting with potential new building users, managing the building use schedule, and scheduling building repairs and maintenance. Community groups pay a small building use fee to offset some, but not all, of the costs of using the space (staff time and increased repairs, maintenance, and utility costs).

What we provide to community groups is essentially the space, as is. For groups that meet outside of our 9-5 Monday through Friday office hours, we provide a key. They in turn let their own

people in often by identifying a welcome person who lets people into the building. When multiple groups are meeting at the same time they often share the welcome task, trading who is responsible to open the door. Groups do their own set up and clean up, setting up chairs and tables, putting them away, making coffee, and taking out the trash if they have a big event.

As a downtown parish we face the same issues and concerns many urban churches face. You may wonder 'how can we keep our building safe when it is open to so many people?' Without a staff member or volunteer to greet people or to lock up when everyone has left, how do you avoid theft, people staying in the building overnight, or other property and safety concerns?

We believe it's because of the relationships we have built with the people we share our building with. There is a level of trust we offer up front, and from there, more trust and mutual respect grows. We have found that the

people who use our building, from the neighbors who are homeless who come regularly to our free breakfast, to the people who come to 12-step meetings, and everyone in between, take some ownership. They help take care of and watch over our building. Another way we avoid theft, vandalism, etc. is by not displaying irreplaceable items. No one has walked off with our dry erase board, but if they did, we could replace it. Expensive technology is well secured and out of sight behind doors most keys won't open. The safe is bolted to the floor.

Being such an open building impacts our decision making process. When flooring needs to be replaced we ask, "How will this stand up to the wear and tear of so many user groups? Will tracked in mud and coffee stains show?"

The parish hall and kitchen were remodeled recently. As we planned the new floor plan, new equipment, and new furnishings, we invited a group of interested parties into the process. The group included representatives of each of the parish ministries that currently use these spaces and others we thought might use a new, remodeled space that would better fit their needs. We considered both current uses and potential future uses, as far as we could imagine. Also present

was the staff member who works with the community groups. She asked questions such as, "how will this flooring, equipment, or furniture hold up to heavy use by a wide variety of people?" With very few exceptions, items that require much training are passed over for easier to use items. We are good stewards of our treasure, and will spend more on items that are more durable, since in the long run they are less expensive because they need to be replaced less often.

Our experience shows that you don't need a large space to open your doors to the community. It's true that we can't meet everyone's needs. We don't always have a space that is large enough for a community group at the time they need it, and we offer minimal set up, clean up, and audio/visual support. Yet, we are meeting a need in our community: the need for a low-cost, centrally located meeting place, and while parking is tight, we have ample bike racks in a bike-friendly town and a bus stop right outside our gate.

It's gratifying to be available for so much use, to be a place where recovery happens, where non-profits can further their mission, where children can learn to love music, and a variety of other important community needs. It is one of the ways we live out our

mission to "proclaim and practice our faith with compassion, thereby making a difference in the lives of our members and our neighbors in the heart of the city."

***Louise Fortuna** has been the office and building manager at St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Eugene, Oregon for 12 years. A cradle-Episcopalian and daughter of a bishop, she worked in commercial real estate appraisal before feeling called to work for the Episcopal Church in her current position.*

Try This

Who gets the keys to your buildings? Does the idea of giving out keys to outsiders make you nervous?

Vestry members interested in exploring St. Mary's approach for sharing their church buildings are encouraged to read Anna Olson's "Who Gets the Keys?" (<http://www.ecfvp.org/posts/who-gets-keys/>).

Anna notes, "Keys stand for in for all kinds of questions about access, ownership, and trust. The giving of keys signifies trust, and can mean a great deal to someone whose ability to take responsibility is called into question by

prevailing social and church norms. Giving out keys can create tremendous anxiety in those who have understood their vocation, at least in part, as being about keeping the church safe, clean, and secure.” She also raises questions for vestry members to consider and discuss, including:

- What does the distribution of our keys teach us about how we view each other as neighbors, and how we live out our own call to be neighbors?
- When was the last time a new person got keys to your church?
- Who has to ask for permission to use space?
- What feels like too great a risk when it comes to granting access?
- Is there any sacred space that is entirely open to the public?
- Are the ethnic and cultural groups that use your church facility equally represented among key holders?
- Is there anyone who has keys and perhaps shouldn't, because their behavior doesn't meet a Christian standard of neighborliness?
- Who decides?

Resources

- St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Eugene, Oregon <http://www.saint-marys.org> and Facebook page www.facebook.com/st.marys.eugene
- St. Mary's Sample Contract for Building Users (PDF) For a copy, please click on link in online version of this article.
- St. Mary's Welcome Letter for Building Users (PDF) For a copy, please click on link in online version of this article.
- “Who Gets the Keys?” by Anna Olson, ECF Vital Practices' Vital Post <http://www.ecfvp.org/posts/who-gets-keys/>

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Parish Partnerships

BY KIMBERLY DURNAN

Episcopal priest Betsy Randall doesn't invite people who are unchurched to worship or to hear her preach the Gospel. Instead, she asks those who don't know Christ to pick up a hammer, paintbrush, or garden hoe and serve. It just happens that during the life-changing days focused on nails, paint, and dirt that the Holy Spirit escorts them to a seat in the pew and their Christian journey begins.

Randall, who is an assistant rector at Church of the Epiphany in Richardson, Texas, goes on these service trips with a crew of lay leaders who bring the love and build the foundation for Christian community. But they don't stop there. Her God-squad of faithful followers prefers to double-dip their efforts as they help transform lives. For instance, they take the unchurched volunteers on a mission trip to All Saints, a financially struggling Episcopal church in Atlanta, Texas, to spruce up the parish, and wrap their arms around the congregation in emotional support and friendship. "It's a reciprocal relationship that allows conversion," Randall said. "We like to move in and plant the seeds."

Paul G. Mathew, a parishioner at Epiphany, has gone on three mission trips to All Saints where he says he watched with awe as a depressed congregation was gloriously uplifted and atheists fell to their knees and prayed.

On the first trip, All Saints congregants talked about how they rarely had the money to hire a priest to provide Holy Eucharist on Sundays and how they felt no one cared whether they kept the church doors open. When the Epiphany posse showed up and worshiped with them it was a joyous occasion for everyone and was the catalyst to redirect the momentum of All Saints toward renewal.

"They were moved because they knew people cared about them and that they were not forgotten," Mathew said. "After the Mass, everyone cried and it was very emotional. This congregation had been going through hard times financially but they realized there was hope and it was really moving."

Jim Bob McFerrin, who is a lay leader at All Saints, said the partnership with Epiphany has helped

them turn the corner in church membership and stewardship. The church is now able to hire a supply priest twice a month for Holy Eucharist. "When Epiphany came out they helped us fix some things we couldn't get done," McFerrin said. "We thought we were just getting the building ready for sale. But by the time they left we were so energized we decided that until the bishop told us to close, we were going to hang in there."

Randall said partnerships between churches big and small develop best if it starts with prayer. She recalled sitting in a diocesan council meeting when the treasurer reviewed the financial struggles of All Saints. Randall began meeting with church leaders and praying with them for about a year before she brought the mission team to Atlanta. The prayers, she noted, should be on behalf of both congregations.

"You have to be intentional about the partnership," Randall said. "You have to remove the understanding of the big parish coming in to help the small. It takes two for the relationship to work and for transformation to happen."

Freda Hass, who is an organist at All Saints, says the outreach was a highly visible display of the Lord moving and working in the lives of the volunteers and the congregants. As a result, the congregation has begun to grow and she credits Epiphany's outreach. "It has taken the focus of us just trying to stay alive, to us going out and doing the work of the Lord in our community and fulfilling our mission. When you go outside of yourself, you gain new perspective and a new set of eyes to view the world."

That work includes joining Epiphany to help the nearby Shepherd's Pasture in Jefferson, Texas, a retreat and conference center that ministers to veterans and their families. "We love this group," said Romey Kilgore, who owns the center with her husband, Dwayne. "They are like family. We stay connected between service projects and pray for one another."

Longtime Epiphany parishioner Laura Hartronft, who is a leader in Cursillo and prison ministry, said fixing up the church was a nice gesture to All Saints but the real support came in the relationships that were formed. "It's giving our presence to others so they don't feel so abandoned," she said.

"Plus, it's just a wonderful experience. Going home you feel guilty, that you got more out of it than you gave."

The transformation also enveloped the unchurched University of Texas at Dallas students who came to sweep floors and make minor repairs and give their time to serve others. It was during the first trip to Atlanta that two students from Taiwan, who had no exposure to church, came to volunteer, not worship.

Mathew said it was a blessing to watch the transformation of his friends. "They were moved to realize what it means to be Christian, and to witness the love we have with God," Mathew said. "I saw them pray for the first time. It was amazing to watch."

After this mission trip, the University of Texas Dallas students began attending Epiphany's Saturday night worship service, which has grown to about 40 students from countries all over the world. The mission trip "really solidified our Saturday service," said Randall, whose philosophy is to invite Millennials to serve before inviting them to church. The young adult generation likes to help others, so it's a natural way to engage them, she said.

McFerrin said he would like to

see more partnerships between churches happen in the diocese. "It helps the congregation see and hear about the ministries of the other lay people, and it helps them see that you don't need a collar to do something."

Dallas Bishop George Sumner encourages such partnerships between small and large churches and said that both entities benefit. "The word *koinonia* in New Testament Greek included the Eucharist, fellowship, and shared inheritance. In other words, how we pray, and how we collaborate, are deeply connected. The friendship in the gospel between Epiphany and All Saints is a vivid example of *koinonia* in the fuller sense."

Kimberly Durnan is director of communications for the Episcopal Diocese of Dallas. Kim's article was also published, in slightly different form, June 29, 2016 by Episcopal News Service.

Try This

Church partnerships can take many forms. Betsy Randall shares that "Partnerships between churches big and small develop best if it starts with prayer." After learning about the financial

struggles of All Saints, she began meeting with church leaders and praying with them for about a year before she brought the mission team to Atlanta. The prayers, she noted, should be on behalf of both congregations. “You have to be intentional about the partnership,” Randall said. “You have to remove the understanding of the big parish coming in to help the small. It takes two for the relationship to work and for transformation to happen.”

If you’d like to explore a relationship with another congregation or group, it is helpful to spend time identifying your ministry strengths. Your vestry – or a committee tasked with exploring relationship options - might begin by asking:

- What are we doing well?
- What do we do that is distinctive or unique?
- How do we welcome and engage the community outside our church?
- How are we an asset in our local area?

With your ministry strengths defined, the next task is to imagine the ways your presence and mission can impact the future. Consider together:

- What do we hope for our faith community?
- What do we hope for our neighboring community?
- What are the needs, hopes, and fears in the wider community?
- How will faithful attention to our mission build our church community in the future and share Christ’s love in the world?
- How might faithful attention to our mission lead us to stronger relationships and/or partnerships with our neighbors and others?

Once you have begun to define your strengths and vision, consider one or two strategic goals that would bring your congregation into alignment with your vision.

Resources

- All Saints Episcopal Church, Atlanta, Texas Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/all-saintsatlantatx/info/?entry_point=page_nav_about_item&tab=overview
- Church of the Epiphany in Richardson, Texas <http://www.epiphany-richardson.org>
- “Navigation Aids” by Randy

Ferebee, ECF Vital Practices’ Vestry Papers <http://www.ecfvp.org/vestrypapers/transition-and-change/navigation-aids/>

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Peace Garden

BY DAVID PAULSEN; INTRODUCTION BY NANCY DAVIDGE

Shortly after his assignment to St. Alban's in 2012, deacon Mike Scime attended a neighborhood association meeting. When he introduced himself, the response was unexpected: members were surprised to learn that the church was still open. Neighbors said the lack of visible activity at this once vital parish led them to believe it had closed.

Four years later, St. Alban's, which has an average Sunday attendance of 42, has reclaimed its role as a neighborhood institution. Alcoholics Anonymous and other community groups meet regularly in the church. Two of their long dormant baseball fields are now home to Playball Indiana, a youth baseball league, with the league taking responsibility for field maintenance.

This fall, the congregation will welcome Worthmore Academy, a school for children with learning difficulties. They share their sanctuary with Grace and Mercy Church, a new Indiana worshipping community. And, the neighborhood association now holds their meetings at the church.

What they are also becoming known for is their large vegetable garden (some refer to it as their farm). In late July, priest Debbie Dehler shared that to date, the garden's 43 volunteers had harvested and donated a ton of vegetables to area food pantries. These volunteers hail from St. Alban's, the neighborhood, and food pantries across the city. And, in addition to planting, weeding, watering, and harvesting, these volunteers also build and install the white crosses found throughout the garden. David Paulsen shares this story.

It's hard to miss the ministry that's growing outside St. Alban's Episcopal Church in Indianapolis.

Heading up Emerson Avenue past 46th Street, any passerby – whether nourished or hungry, devout or spiritually unsure, striving to heal or prone to violence – is confronted by a sight both grim and hopeful: Dozens of white crosses stand as a memorial to the dead while surrounded by the bounty of God's Earth, crops that eventually will provide fresh food for a neighborhood in great need of it.

Each cross planted in the church's street-side farm field represents one of the city's murder victims. In some cases, the crosses themselves have become tools of the gardener, supporting strings of peas and taller herbs, like dill. The church's goal, with the help of a United Thank Offering, or UTO, grant, is to harvest 10,000 pounds of produce from this former baseball field by the end of the growing season and distribute it to several local food pantries.

“So you have this image of resurrection; where you had a barren field that was representative of death, it's now becoming something that lives ... something that is going to benefit the community that has suffered from the murders,” said the Rev. Mike Scime, a deacon at St. Alban's and co-director of the garden.

The farm program is drawing inquiries from other congregations in Indianapolis and beyond as organizers keep their sights on a long-term goal of improving the nutritional choices and grocery purchasing options of the church's neighbors. This ministry has been

years in the making, and its name, which invokes a passage from Micah, points to multiple influences and missions: The Swords to Plowshares Peace Garden.

The project intends to show, that with God's help, the "barrenness caused by violence" can be transformed "into life-giving food" for the church's poorest neighbors.

Violence was a recurring story in 2014 and again in 2015 in Indianapolis. After more than 130 homicides in 2014, the city set a grim new record last year with 144 homicides, among them the case of a 10-year-old boy killed at a memorial service for a relative and another case involving the discovery of four people dead in a house that had been targeted for a break-in.

St. Alban's is located on Indianapolis' east side, where a large number of the murders have occurred. The congregation draws its members from a much larger geographic area, but in the neighborhood around the church, fresh produce is hard to find, said Sarah Archer, a member of St. Alban's who helped create the Swords to Plowshares initiative.

"Our neighborhood is what is called for lack of a better term a 'food desert,' which is defined

by the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) as an area where grocery stores are more than a mile away from most of the residences, and so they end up buying all sorts of food at convenience stores, which almost never are able to carry fresh produce," said Archer, a vestry member who co-directs the project.

In addition to a worthy mission, the church had a key resource: three unused ball fields.

The church's baseball ministry had ended several years ago, and congregation leaders had long debated what to do with the fields. Planting an orchard would take too long to yield fruit. There also was talk of creating a garden where community members could rent plots, but such a plan would involve administrative challenges.

"We knew that we had to find a different use for that property," Scime said, and the uptick in violence led to the beginning of a plan. "Some people wanted to do something that would bring to the community's attention the number of murders."

A response to the violence was incorporated into the decision

by the church take on itself the work of farming the field, and Scime and other church leaders also saw its themes of justice, peace and community aligned with the mission of the Episcopal Church's UTO grant program.

"The garden gave us an opportunity to also then do something positive in the community where we would be bringing people from all over the neighborhood together from all walks of life ... (to) benefit the community where the murders were happening," Scime said.

St. Alban's began laying plans to cultivate one of the half-acre baseball fields. In December 2014, Scime, with Archer's help, submitted an application for a UTO grant of about \$16,000 that, when combined with other grants and donations, would be used to buy equipment, hire a manager and get the farm up and running.

While the church waited last year for a decision on the UTO grant application, melons were planted in about 20 percent of the field to test the soil quality. It proved suitable, and the whole field was tilled to prepare for a full planting the following spring.

After the UTO grant was approved, the church held a

ceremony last December to dedicate the Peace Garden. About a hundred people attended, including the city's police chief and representatives from the church's food pantry partners. By then, Indianapolis was well on its way to topping its 1998 record of 143 murders, and the white crosses representing victims killed in 2015 filled the church's empty field.

"When all the crosses were up at the end of December and one looked across that field of crosses, it was pretty attention-arresting," said Archer, who works as a public-health nurse.

In the spring, the church used the grant money to hire Tate Nielsen as full-time garden director for the 2016 growing season. He developed a plan for about 20 crops, including tomatoes, lettuce, carrots, onions, squash, melons, corn and beans. The crops themselves became an advertisement for the ministry underway. "We wanted to make it visually attractive so people would come up and wonder what was going on and really engage with the garden," Nielsen said.

As of mid-July, 1,200 pounds of fresh produce already had been harvested, much of it lettuce. When the heavier crops a

are picked later in the season, the farm hopes to hit its goal of 10,000 pounds to donate to local food pantries, he said. At the same time, the farm has drawn support from many corners, with 43 volunteers putting in a total of more than 320 hours to get the food from seed to table.

The church already is planning for next year. It took about \$25,000 to launch the farm, but the annual cost is estimated at \$15,000 – Nielsen's job is only temporary, and the garden is expected to continue next year with only a part-time manager. Before deciding what will be planted next year, more than 100 food pantry clients are being interviewed to determine what types of produce they prefer, Archer said.

Further in the future, the church hopes to work with other local organizations to encourage more food companies to open grocery stores in this and other Indianapolis neighborhoods to address the problem of food deserts.

In the meantime, the violence has continued in 2016 – "There are 71 crosses in our garden," Scime said one Monday morning this month – though Indianapolis is not on pace to match last year's record death toll. In the face of such violence, St. Alban's hopes to be a "beacon

of light," Scime said, as it moves forward with its farm ministry.

It couldn't have happened without the UTO program's support, Scime said. "We have a strong commitment and belief that their initial investment here will result in something that continues on into the future."

David Paulsen is a freelance writer based in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and a member of Trinity Episcopal Church in Wauwatosa. Episcopal News Service first published this article as "From Swords to Plowshares" on July 21, 2016 (<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/ens/2016/07/21/from-swords-to-plowshares/>)

Try This

And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the East; and there he put the man whom he had formed.

Genesis 2:8

Interested in exploring whether a food pantry garden could be part of your church's ministries? Begin with these tips developed by the parishioners and gardeners at St. Timothy's Episcopal Church in Des Moines, Iowa:

A food pantry garden is a wonderful ministry for a faith community.

These gardens foster discipleship, stewardship of the earth, and social justice. They are places of gathering, hospitality and celebration. Given proper planning and upkeep, a faith-based food pantry garden will provide thousands of pounds of nutritious, organically grown food to families in need, as well as habitat for beneficial insects and wildlife for years to come.

Thoughts about naming your garden

If you want to reach out beyond your faith community and attract volunteers from the general public, use care in how you refer to the garden. Including the words “food pantry” in the name I think helps communicate the purpose of the garden to the public. Choose a name that captures the spirit of the ministry in a way that can be shared widely.

Also, “community gardens” are generally understood to be public garden plots available for private rental for a season while “faith gardens” and “grace gardens” suggest places devoted solely to prayer or a labyrinth walk to many people.

Initial Steps

- Securing a sunny, level, well-drained, adequately sized plot

of land in a convenient location. Remember to include space for community gatherings, composting, paths and signage.

- City regulations – Check for any site requirements such as buffers between the garden and sidewalks or road ways
- Cost of infrastructure required to create and maintain a garden, including ongoing expenses such as water, garden tools and plants (unless you can solicit donations)
- Engaging a core group of advocates with gardening expertise to spark communitywide enthusiasm
- Outlining a clear plan and long-term vision for the garden.

Click here (<http://www.ecfvp.org/tools/tips-for-parishes-considering-a-food-pantry-garden/>) for more tips from St. Timothy’s. Additional resources are listed below.

Resources

- “Church’s memorial honoring Indy’s homicide victims” by Joe Mellow, WISHTV.com, December 16, 2015 (article and video) <http://wishtv.com/2015/12/16/churchs->

memorial-honoring-indys-homicide-victims/

- Let’s Move! Faith Community Garden Guide, USDA and shared through ECF Vital Practices <http://www.ecfvp.org/your-turn/lets-move-faith-community-garden-guide/>
- St. Alban’s Episcopal Church, Indianapolis, Indiana <http://www.st-albans.org> and their Peace Garden <http://www.st-albans.org/garden-report-1-1/>
- St. Timothy’s Episcopal Church Faith & Grace Garden, West Des Moines, Iowa <http://www.growthefood.org>
- Tips for Parishes Considering a Food Pantry Garden, by the people of St. Timothy’s Episcopal Church, West Des Moines, Iowa and shared through ECF Vital Practices <http://www.ecfvp.org/tools/tips-for-parishes-considering-a-food-pantry-garden/>
- United Thank Offering (UTO) grants <http://www.episcopal-church.org/page/united-thank-offering>

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