

*Answering Jesus'
Call: Go Out!*

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Saying 'Yes'

BY HOLLY ZOOK

St. Francis Episcopal Church didn't really set out to do mission work. Rather, the mission field gradually started showing up on our doorstep. The result? A parish with an average Sunday attendance of about 150 found itself housing a clinic, managing a community garden, providing a soccer field, giving out truckloads of food, and sharing our worship space with two congregations of refugees from Nepal and Liberia—all while opening our doors to 23 12-Step group meetings every week.

This work has been gradual and tentative. It has never been in the budget, but money has not been a critical issue. Most of the relationships so far are incidental—people working next to one another in the garden, congregations crossing paths in the parking lot on Sundays—but bit by bit the natural walls between people are coming down. At a recent

celebration of St. Francis Day, the three congregations worshiped together for the first time, and staid Episcopalians were clapping and singing with all their hearts, shouting Amen when required, and sharing a noisy, joyful meal in the parish hall afterwards.

More than 10 years before that, though, we went through a visioning process, from which came the mission statement, Celebrating God's Love with Everyone, and the parish took it to heart.

The first manifestation was just a willingness to tolerate the skateboarders on the newly built handicap-access ramps outside the church. Then there was a parish decision to stay in its now-urban location, which had once been far on the outskirts of the city. Our attachment to the park-like seven acres of property ran deeper than anyone really sus-

pected.

So the decision not to move farther out into the affluent suburbs set the stage for the new rector, Patrick Ormos, a transplanted French Canadian whose family had emigrated from post-WWII Eastern Europe. He arrived in San Antonio from Indiana in August 2007. Around the same time, Catholic Charities in San Antonio began to help large numbers of refugees from all over the world: Rwanda, Somalia, Bhutan, Burma, Iraq, Nepal, Burundi—all places where people were trying to escape to a better life. With the Center for Refugee Services acting as advocates, more than 3,500 refugees eventually took up residence in apartment complexes in the St. Francis area.

So what did we do? Initially, not much—which may have been for the best. No one at St. Francis was equipped to take charge of “refugee relations,” so the mission work was largely passive. Father Patrick preached about the difficulties of being a stranger in a strange land and about how you don’t have to go anywhere to find mission work. He formed relationships with several of the refugees (aided by his fluency in French) and with the aid workers who were helping them.

Children who had never lived any-

where but a refugee camp started going to schools in the area, and after school they began gathering on our grassy field to play soccer. And we said okay, the kids could play soccer on our field.

Then a woman arrived whose call was to be a parish nurse. She volunteered to make contact with the University of Texas Health Science Center Nursing School, and before long a regular clinic was meeting in the Sunday-school rooms at St. Francis. Social workers gathered up interpreters, doctors volunteered time, and nursing students gained invaluable hands-on experience giving health care to people who had had precious little of it in their lives.

Still, the parish as a whole was involved only in projects like Worshipers for Warmth, donating coats and warm clothes to people for whom even a mild San Antonio winter was a shock. One teenager, who learned to knit so she could make scarves for the refugees, produced 15 in her first year. There was a general feeling that perhaps it was important to keep saying yes, to keep opening the doors, to stay alert for other opportunities.

When the San Antonio Food Bank called and asked to use our parking lot to distribute food to the new neighbors once a month in

the summer, we said yes. And after a couple of these food distributions, someone noticed something: Some refugees never seemed to get any of the food. Because some cultures were fine with pushing to the front of the line, and other cultures required deferring to others, the refugees who held back often did not get anything. Not to mention that a lot of the food the Food Bank was giving out—cans of pork and beans, boxes of macaroni and cheese, packets of soup mix—was insurmountably foreign to Burmese farmers.

And so the International Community Garden was born in the unused back end of our property. The project was a joint venture among St. Francis, University United Methodist, First Baptist, and Catholic Charities. The official groundbreaking ceremony took place on a sunny, chilly day in February, the prayers and speeches completely disregarded by a handful of people already hoeing their plots with rudimentary tools and looks of utter concentration. Within a few months, the bare raised plots had turned into a massive jungle that produced vegetables some of the master gardeners had never seen.

At around the same time, we started holding an annual Renaissance Faire on the grounds. This had very little to do with

ministry to refugees, except for one thing: The faire happened on the soccer field. Late in the day of the second faire, the soccer players showed up to play. Instead, they spent an hour playing medieval board games with the parish teenagers running the games booth, then helped break down the canopies and decorations so they could put their soccer goals back up.

So St. Francis Church just kept saying yes. When another church wanted to put new sod on the soccer field, we accepted gladly. When two churches needed a place to worship, they found homes here. When several 12-step groups were displaced from their meeting location, St. Francis opened itself to them. A church that had once hosted a single Narcotics Anonymous group every week for 30 years now has 23 meetings every week. It's just a different slant on refugee ministry.

Celebrating God's love with everyone, indeed.

*A cradle Episcopalian originally from New Orleans, **Holly Zook** has been a member of St. Francis Church for 23 years and has done a little of everything in that time, from Altar Guild to managing the annual Renaissance Faire, with*

sidelines into editing the parish newsletter and starting the monthly book club. She is married with two children, both of whom have vacated the nest in favor of higher education, much to the delight of their introverted parents.

Resources

- Episcopal Migration Ministries
<http://www.episcopalchurch.org/page/episcopal-migration-ministries>
- "Lessons from Bossypants: Saying YES AND" by Miguel Escobar, ECF Vital Practices
<http://www.ecfvp.org/posts/lessons-from-bossypants-saying-yes-and/>
- Sharing God's Love with Everybody: St. Francis Episcopal Church San Antonio (video 18:18) <http://www.dwtx.org/departments-ministries/communications/video/>
- "Yes And" and "Sí Y..." by Rosa Lindhal Mallow, ECF Vital Practices <http://www.ecfvp.org/posts/yes-and/> and <http://www.ecfvp.org/posts/s-y/>

Editor's Letter

Go.

Each time we worship in the Episcopal tradition, we are reminded of the Great Commission: You've been filled and fed, now go in peace to love and serve the Lord; go forth in the world, rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.

Across our church, congregations are answering Jesus' call to go out into the world and make disciples. They are following His example of building relationships, encountering people where they are and, as contributor Bob Leopold writes, "... doing the work of listening, which involves not talking and not trying to solve anything. This is tough for people and takes practice. Most of the time it cannot happen at the worshipping community's location for worship, but must happen in the communities we are called to serve."

Here are some of their stories:

- What happens when a church keeps saying "yes?" In "Saying 'Yes'," Holly Zook shares how that first "yes" 10 years ago has grown into a thriving ministry and relationship between St.

Francis Episcopal Church in San Antonio and the many refugees who live in the neighborhood.

- In the first three centuries before the institutionalization of the church, the memory of Jesus' ministry in the streets, along the shore, out on the margins of his world, continued to inspire small communities of faith to simply be "the church." In "Cathedral in the Night," Christopher Carlisle shares the story of a church – with links to a diocesan ministry – that believes the openness of space creates an openness of community in Jesus' spirit.

- Out is where mission happens at Southside Abbey. "Heading Out Into Mission" by Bob Leopold introduces us to a community church committed to lifting up hope where that hope has been obscured. How do they do this? They show up and they listen. And they trust the Holy Spirit to help.

- Believing that their role as faith leaders includes encouraging incarnational experiences of faith that connects one's active

civic life to their experience of worship, members of St. Paul's in Richmond, Virginia asked themselves, "what are our next steps for being a better neighbor and helping to build a better community downtown?" Liz Bartenstein's "Downtown Mission" shares the results of that conversation.

- Sometimes the way to get people 'back to church' is by starting a different kind of church. Better yet, offering individuals or small groups the freedom to design their own form of worship. In "Laundry Love," Nancy Davidge shares the story of a tiny worshipping community in Southern California where community engagement takes precedence over worship.

- Ruth Meteer's "College Ministry to Go" describes how the relationship between St. Augustine's Episcopal Church and the University of Rhode Island has become stronger thanks to two students interested in addressing issues of hunger on campus.

■ One of the country's first diaper banks began in a small Episcopal Church in McHenry, Illinois. "Diaper Bank" by Lu Stanton León shares the story of how given the increased need for diapers, St. Paul's changed their strategy and invited others in the community to join them in this ministry.

■ There is no more sacred moment in our lives than when we are able to serve those around us with love and humility. In "I'll Go With You: Pastoral Accompaniment to Medical Visits" Ema Rosero-Nordlam shares how she discovered a gift we can offer each other in times of anxiety and fear. This article is available in English and Spanish.

Following each article is a list of resources offering additional information and/or practical tools.

If someone shared this copy of *Vestry Papers* with you I invite you to consider subscribing to *ECF Vital Practices* and *Vestry Papers*. Visit www.ecfvp.org and

click on Register, located on the upper right corner of the page. Complete the registration form to have *Vestry Papers* and *ECF Vital Practices* content delivered twice a month to your email inbox.

Faithfully,

Nancy

Nancy Davidge PS: To make it easier to find the resources offered through *ECF Vital Practices*, please consider adding a link to ECF Vital Practices to your website. Here's how: Using your websites 'add a link' tool, insert our full URL – <http://www.ecfvp.org/>.

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; the site has been optimized for smart phones which makes it easier to search for content.

Cathedral in the Night

BY CHRISTOPHER CARLISLE

Around a folding altar table – and in winter, by florescent “walls of light” – close to 100 worshippers gather outside First Churches in downtown Northampton, Massachusetts to celebrate God’s abundance of bread and wine and the hot meal that follows. Each Sunday evening throughout the year, Cathedral in the Night practices radical welcome, offering an ecumenical worship service, a meal, and community. When asked, both longtime worshippers, as well as those who have just started coming, share that “you never know what’s going to happen” in this fluid spontaneous worship service.

Perhaps the best way to understand this Northampton, Massachusetts based ministry is to watch this short video: Here’s the link - <http://clearstorycollective.org/citn/>.

Rather than being understood as parish “outreach” or “social justice ministry,” Cathedral in the Night is best understood as a community unto itself. Invoking the literal example of Jesus in first century Palestine, Cathedral in the Night strives toward the radical embrace that marked his wandering min-

istry. Noting the similarities of our time with Jesus’ own time: a powerful political empire, rampant poverty, and the need for religious renewal, Cathedral in the Night aspires to break down institutional barriers that divide God’s people.

Shared Leadership

In many ways, Cathedral in the Night appeals to a younger demographic, those who are resist institutional affiliation and are drawn by a sense of adventure. This has resulted in a successful college intern program for students from the many area colleges who wish to take on leadership in worship, engage in theological reflection, and help organize the worship services.

Critical to the success of Cathedral in the Night, are our partner parishes that bring the meal each week, along with part of the liturgy. Cathedral in the Night would not exist without the institutional church’s time and talent; we depend on our faithful network of thirty-five partner parishes. In what has become a miraculously synergistic relationship – whereby parishioners testify to new wisdom they bring back to their sanctuar-

ies – the feeding of a hundred bears the potential to be the feeding of five thousand, and more, as the church learns in new ways what Jesus had in mind, and the very truth of the gospels.

A Different Approach

By virtue of going out into a world which is tragically divided – by class, and race, and the fractures of our overarching competitive life – Cathedral in the Night reveals how the church may be the single community that is able to reach out and unify creation in the God always intended. Thus it may be no accident that this “Cathedral” is ecumenical, having been founded by an Episcopal priest, and Lutheran and Congregational pastors. Nor may it be an accident God’s presence is heightened as we find ourselves worshipping with people from across the divisions found in our society: homeless and homed, rich and poor, young and old, and indeed, churched and unchurched.

In a time when buildings are frequently sapping the resources of the Church, the wisdom of Jesus’ building-less ministry is returning to the contemporary landscape.

Cathedral in the Night is remarkably “cheap church,” especially when using a rota of lay leaders, student interns, and partner clergy to lead its Eucharistic worship. Equally important to its efficient economics is the Cathedral’s gift to parishes, which testify to the vitality and purpose found in their service with the poor.

A New Face for the Church

After almost three years, the community appears to have been truly borne by the Holy Spirit; and “blowing where it wills,” it continues to seek the will of God from everyone who is involved. From our first service in five-degree weather when the community gathered huddled together for warmth, it has been Cathedral’s aspiration to offer a creative, yet ancient ministry that chases human need as Jesus did. Rather than aspiring to supersede the existing institutional Church, Cathedral in the Night critically depends upon the faithful ministries of parishes. All people, homed and homeless, young and old, students, young adults, “churched” and those who’ve never gone “to church,” are welcomed to God’s table, to Cathedral in the Night, and to the community of God it has become.

It is the hope, in conjunction with other street communities, [[\[clearstorycollective.org/\]\(http://clearstorycollective.org/\)\] that Cathedral in the Night might offer a new face of the Church in this vastly changing time. The goal is to grow broader, but also to grow deeper by way of servant leadership: an exciting, proven way to enable Christians to reflect on new practices of being “the Church.” Thanks to grants from the Diocese of Western Massachusetts and The Episcopal Church as well as critical parish involvement, Cathedral in the Night is able to offer both pastoral ministry and theological education to those who gather regularly for worship services.](http://</p></div><div data-bbox=)

Learn More

Cathedral in the Night is part of the Clearstory Collective, [<http://clearstorycollective.org/>] a coalition of churches and spiritual communities throughout western Massachusetts intended for people who seek experiences outside conventional church worship, and for whom words like “denomination” no longer mean much. Clearstory Collective is an expression of the radically inclusive and creative ministry of Jesus, inviting people into local, authentically open communities in common pursuit of greater fulfillment.

From year-round outdoor street communities to farms of prayerful planting, from alternative worship in brew pubs to midnight

breakfasts during college exams, from theological conversations in burger joints to contemplative candlelight services, Clearstory Collective is comprised of opportunities to explore oneself in the context of the something greater that many of us sense surrounds us. Unlike the institutional church of the last 1700 years, Clearstory Collective looks more like a loose confederation of “ecclesias” – literally, from the Greek, “assemblies” of people – for whom the truth springs forth from human interaction rather than from the walls of a building.

In the first three centuries before the institutionalization of the church, the memory of Jesus’ ministry in the streets, along the shore, out on the margins of his world, continued to inspire small communities of faith to simply be “the church”. If there is historical precedent for Clearstory Collective, maybe this is it: a collective of ecclesias comprised of diverse expressions of faith that enrich the world of God. We invite you to become part of one of these communities, or perhaps to start one of your own. In either case, for further information feel free to contact Chris Carlisle at christopheraecarlisle@gmail.com.

Christopher Carlisle is director of higher education and young adult

ministry for the Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts. An Episcopal priest, his greatest passions are writing and chasing after his kids. Chris works closely with Cathedral in the Night co-founders **Eric Fistler**, a United Church of Christ minister and **Stephanie Smith**, a Lutheran (ELCA) pastor and director, Beyond Belief at Smith College and CITN College Internship Program.

Resources

- *Cathedral in the Night* webpage with video (4:04) and radio interviews <http://clearstorycollective.org/citn/>
- Cathedral in the Night: Get involved http://cathedralinthenight.com/?page_id=61
- Clearstory Collective <http://clearstorycollective.org/>
- Ecclesia Ministries <http://www.ecclesia-ministries.org>
- Letter to Ministry Partners - <http://cathedralinthenight.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/Ministry-Partner.pdf>
- New Ministry in the Episcopal Church of New England video series Cathedral in the Night

videos:

http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLCb_o6NDCL-HaeAyjN_uyssImYxmtHxw7p

- Fears Encountered: Cathedral in the Night, Western Massachusetts – a video (2:53) created as part of “The Art of Hosting Conversations” project in Province I. <http://www.youtube.com/>
- Hope: Cathedral in the Night, Western Massachusetts – a video (3:36) created as part of “The Art of Hosting Conversations” project in Province I. <http://www.youtube.com/>
- This is Why We’re Here: Cathedral in the Night, Western Massachusetts – a video (2:47) created as part of “The Art of Hosting Conversations” project in Province I. <http://www.youtube.com/>

Heading Out Into Mission

BY BOB LEOPOLD AND CROWD SOURCED WITH MEMBERS OF SOUTHSIDE ABBEY

“The Church isn’t called to serve the poor. The Church is called to be the poor.”

Nik Forti, Southside Abbey
Theologian-in-Residence

Out is where mission happens at Southside Abbey. A mission of the Episcopal Diocese of East Tennessee, we sprung from a felt need articulated by a small group in Chattanooga, who knew we wanted to live into our faith in a different way. Central to our mission is our belief that as Christians we don’t go to save people, but rather we go to be saved. As Saint Paul writes in his Second Letter to the Corinthians, “For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich” (II Cor. 8:9).

Early conversations made clear the need to encounter people where they are and do the work of listening, which involves not talking and not trying to solve anything. This is tough for people and takes practice. Most of the time it cannot happen at the place where a worshipping community regularly worships, but must hap-

pen in the communities we are called to serve. For Southside Abbey, we found ourselves called to Chattanooga’s Southside neighborhood. And, as this video: Here’s the link - <http://southsideabbey.dioet.org/welcome/welcome.html> shows, we not only found a place to worship in a community art gallery, we began to gather around a common table, sharing a meal as well as the body and blood of Christ.

From the beginning, we knew there were certain principles that would guide this work:

- Letting the Holy Spirit guide us
- Reimagining the structure known as ‘church’
- Seeing mission as a reflection of the goals of our worshipping community
- The need for community partnerships and relationships
- Shared leadership

Letting the Holy Spirit Guide Us
Think about all that takes place throughout the church

year. Ordinary Time becomes the watchfulness of Advent. Incarnation is realized in Epiphany. Lenten fasts are broken by Easter joy. The Great Fifty Days culminate in the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, until once again, time becomes ordinary.

At Southside Abbey, the rhythm of the liturgical year guides our work. How many parishes participate in Jesus’ command to wash one another’s feet at Maundy Thursday? Southside Abbey decided to play with this command a little bit, following a conversation with our neighborhood school. The Family Partnership Specialist at the school suggested that Southside Abbey might begin a shoe closet for some of the kids at the school. When we were able to look forward at the liturgical year and frame this in light of Maundy Thursday and Jesus’ command to care for feet, it really took off in a way that it might not have had we simply embarked on an ordinary shoe drive.

This process begins with having holy conversations and listening for what the Holy Spirit is already doing in the community and then

getting on board. Bo Armstrong, a friar in the Brotherhood of Saint Gregory, leads the charge in this respect. He often uses words like, “nimble,” or, “integrated,” to describe Southside Abbey’s missional direction. We are able to listen, hear, and respond quickly.

Reimagining the Church

Whenever the Church begins a new project – after banishing the initial “we can’t” attitude – primary questions surround the issue of content, for the most part leaving questions of structure relatively unspoken. Southside Abbey decided – at the behest of empowered layperson and young person, Lisa Leopold – to flip the dynamic of content and structure on its head.

After determining that we really couldn’t improve on the biblical message of Jesus or the sacred meal he left us, we decided to leave content pretty much alone and address structure first.

Rather than drafting a budget that pays for the ministries of building, overhead, administration, insurance, and personnel first and spends whatever is left on mission, mission became our budget. Bob Leopold’s compensation is paid (for the next 22 months) by the Diocese of East Tennessee. Everything else is mission. When our governing council meets, we meet over a missional project

(for example, our last meeting we stuffed fifty Southside Abbey tote-bags full of nonperishables to share with those who ask for food). It is never “just” a meeting. The question we constantly ask is, “How is what we are spending money on doing the work of Jesus?” If a project doesn’t pass that litmus test, it doesn’t happen. So rather than raise money and then decide the mission work that we want to do with whatever funds remain, we decide what mission work we feel called to do and then we set about figuring out how the Holy Spirit will help us pay for it.

Mission as Reflection of Goals

In that we worship in public places (with a meal) and do mission work tied to the seasons of the Church Year (again often around food), Southside Abbey attempts to view worship as mission and mission as worship, in a way that parishioner Ben Thomas calls, “seamless.” “Guerrilla Liturgy” and “relying on the hospitality of our neighbors” are both mission. In this sense, we are not here to “help.” This is not a one-way exchange. We get something out of this. We do mission to ourselves be transformed into the likeness of Christ Jesus, not the other way around.

The primary impact of Southside Abbey is in the lifting up of hope

where hope has been obscured. This is done in helping people recognize that their voice matters, but also in showing Church people that what we do matters and is real: This is a two-way street.

We talk a lot about joy on tap. When we do something like our birthday party or an Oktoberfest with the ELCA Lutherans at the Country Hearth, we get to experience that joy in the lives of others and in our experiences, and we are changed by it: our prayer is that others are too. The Jubilee Year is a way that will respond to the felt needs of the community, rather than our perceived needs. Essentially, in the Southside Jubilee Fund, Southside Abbey is raising a bunch of capital to fund community projects that are brought to us by the community feeling those needs. It should not be such a radical idea – that a worshiping community would raise money to give it away – but that is how people are reacting, in all the best ways.

Relationships

Relationships are tougher to share in a way that is not exploitative. What can be said is that relationships always bear some kind of fruit, no matter how garbled the transmission.

As a community gathering, the Holy Spirit reigns and this amaz-

ing organic webbing of relationships begin to take place. People with innate passions for the least of these, enter into relationships with refugees and asylum seekers that challenge their spirituality and way of life.

A struggling single mom meets a struggling married mom and they exchange stories and offer support for another through their differences and similarities. Southside Abbey has become this place where people experience the love of Jesus by simply giving it away. "It is through this unintentional, yet Spirit-driven, method that leaders have naturally risen up through the building of relationships with people who resonate most with them, their desires, and their gifts," says Anna Thomas. "Reciprocity of relationship is key to Southside Abbey's model."

Early on, Southside Abbey worked with a family of immigrants from Iraq (who have since moved). In the beginning going to their house and trying to communicate using only the forty or so words we had in common was difficult. What we thought was a request for diapers, turned out to be a request to paint their apartment. We eventually got it right, but not before we delivered a bunch of diapers. What must they have thought? Who are these people with the

diapers? Can't they understand we need our room painted? The Holy Spirit worked through our attempts at that relationship. Now is the time for the Church to be trying things. So what if they don't work out like we had hoped? We know the story, right? Resurrection means that we actually can't lose.

Shared Leadership

Southside Abbey is about the decentralization of leadership. Anything a layperson can do, a layperson does. This means the clergy person must let go of a lot, particularly the illusion that he or she is in control. This is not the Bob Leopold show. If we are doing our job, this is the Holy Spirit show – which is always fresh, always new.

Central to our leadership are people well versed in the art of facilitation, a great strength. Anna Thomas shares, "Southside Abbey's ability to lead through empowering every member to be God's version of themselves is something I'd always hoped for but had never encountered."

This is a different level of buy in to mission than is often seen: one that leads new places. The laity – with the Holy Spirit – dreamed up the new 700 Club, the Southside Jubilee Fund, an attempt to raise \$700,000 to give away in our

community in 2014, based upon the biblical principles of Jubilee.

Deepening of Faith

Southside Abbey has some real diversity – people who are homeless and immigrants, and also those well established in Chattanooga. When people of such a diverse collection gather around a table to be fed spiritually and physically, things happen – walls come down. Perhaps the biggest deepening of faith has occurred in our partnerships with those in more traditional parishes. Spencer Cantrell writes, "It's kind of awesome how we've seen a lot of vitalizing and re-vitalizing energy spring up within a lot of the existing churches. The partnerships with the [ELCA] Lutherans is the obvious example, as well as having people worship with us who are also part of other parish churches, which has strengthened relationships even between the Episcopal churches in the metro area . . . Turns out new models might help support the good work of the older ones, too."

Bob Leopold is missioner for the Diocese of East Tennessee, where he serves Southside Abbey in the diverse Southside neighborhood of Chattanooga. Southside Abbey is a non-traditional model of worshiping community that engages in justice ministries and gathers

for a meal and worship on Friday evenings beginning at 6:11pm in a not-for-profit art gallery. If you would like to chat with him about anything, please feel free to email him at bob@southsideabbey.org.

Bob would like to recognize Southside Abbey members Bo Armstrong, Spencer Cantrell, Nik Forti, Lisa Leopold, and Anna and Ben Thomas who all contributed to this article.

Resources

- Bob Leopold blogs for ECF Vital Practices <http://www.ecfvp.org/posts/author/bob-leopold/>
- “Jesus was Right There in the Bounce House” by Bob Leopold, ECF Vital Practices <http://www.ecfvp.org/posts/jesus-was-right-there-in-the-bounce-house/>
- Sacred Chaos: Southside Abbey video, 5:22 <http://vimeo.com/59134494>
- Southside Abbey website <http://southsideabbey.dioet.org/>
- Southside Jubilee Fund <http://southsideabbey.dioet.org/jubilee.html>

Downtown Mission

BY LIZ BARTENSTEIN WITH ASSISTANCE FROM MELANIE MULLEN AND BRIAN LEVEY.

What happens when a downtown church with an active program of community outreach asks how it might better meet the needs of its changing neighborhood?

Believing our role as faith leaders includes encouraging incarnational experiences of faith connecting one's active civic life to their experience of worship, members of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, asked, "what are our next steps for being a better neighbor and helping to build a better community downtown?"

Located in downtown Richmond, Virginia, and adjacent to the state Capitol, St. Paul's has a rich history as a "weekday church," offering daily worship, educational and lunch programs, and daytime spiritual formation opportunities for people living and working downtown as well as a number of ongoing outreach ministries. As downtown Richmond began to experience a resurgence as both a residential and business/civic community, we started to explore ways the church might contribute to this rebirth.

We began to look outward. A com-

mittee was tasked with giving this idea shape and form. Conversations were held; visits were made to churches in other cities. Downtown Mission began to take shape as a sacramental ministry with the goal of knocking on new doors, entering new relationships, and developing innovative opportunities to grow and deepen our life and ministry together. A conversation between our rector, Wallace Adams-Riley and Ben Campbell, pastoral director of Richmond Hill <http://www.richmondhillva.org> planted the seed of hiring a priest as missionary, dedicated to building connections between St. Paul's and its Richmond neighbors. "He had this idea of calling someone totally dedicated to reaching out in fresh ways," said Adams-Riley. "Knocking on doors we hadn't already knocked on. Approaching people not thinking about church at all or who had stopped thinking about church, to help them think about church in a new way, to help them understand what church, what the Gospel, what Jesus means to them."

A staff salary and program budget were allotted. Downtown Mission was born.

Building Relationships

Led by downtown missionary Melanie Mullen and a small leadership committee, Downtown Mission is building connections between the congregation and people living and working downtown, providing new ways to practice radical welcome and to praise God through action. We've been reaching out in new ways to people living and working downtown, and at the same time, fostering new community relationships.

A key part of this ministry is how it focuses members' attention towards the community. It's not about increasing membership or raising funds or getting a better bottom line. It's about how St. Paul's becomes a better neighbor and helps build a vision, to help us get outside the walls of St. Paul's.

There are now more conversations going on about what's going on in our community and how we can be involved, though participation has often come slowly. As members practice what Mullen calls "the art of neighboring," engaging with residents, supporting local businesses, aiding efforts to improve life in the city, they are both spreading the

church's ethos in a way that benefits the broader downtown area and deepening their own engagement with the downtown community and their faith.

Being a Good Neighbor

When Mullen asked Victoria Campbell, Richmond's community garden coordinator, how St. Paul's might help, Campbell seemed surprised but excited that a church was interested in such a thing! What began as an offer to help with weeding and watering, led to the development of a community garden in the heart of the Shockoe district, behind the Main Street train station in Downtown Richmond. Later, the congregation developed a 'daughter' garden in Creighton Court – an underserved community in Richmond's East End.

During Lent, we practiced public liturgy, offering Stations of the Cross at the 17th Street Farmers Market space downtown. We also created a mobile "listening post" for prayers, an idea we learned about from the Yale Congregations Project and theologian Don Sailors. The post offers passers by the chance to post a prayer on a board, which St. Paul's then adds to its prayers and petitions on Sundays.

We've also offered a Financial Peace class in the evenings at St.

Paul's, which brought in a number of nonmembers. We sent parishioners to local TEDx and other development forums in the city. We participated in Richmond's iteration of Parking Day, a worldwide event where artists, designers and citizens transform metered parking spots into small temporary public parks. We held a community Eucharist with a handful of other churches at Virginia Pride Day, and hosted a welcome booth at the festival, offering yet another opportunity to practice radical welcome.

The 2013 program year kicked off with a rousing and festive celebration on Grace Street sponsored by Downtown Mission. We called it a "Welcome Block Party," and envisioned it as a chance for the parish to come out onto the street in fellowship with one another, inviting the community to join in the fun. The party included food trucks and live music from a local favorite brass band.

Future plans include installing a mobile labyrinth in different locations in the city, inviting the community to come and walk, meditate and pray.

Challenges

The ministry has been met with some challenges – to some extent motivated by the looming fear of church decline, with pressure on

the missioner position to generate new membership. Committee members and church leaders have had differing opinions on what the ministry's main goals should be. We are now working to resolve those differences and clarify goals and mission.

From the start, the Downtown Mission efforts took a broad set of ideas and engaged in an earnest period of experimentation. Nine months later, the Downtown Mission Committee (which includes members of the vestry) and clergy are taking a look back at all the forays in mission and evaluating the results. The Downtown Mission Committee is in the process of creating a model for theological reflection that looks at each project and assesses which ones are both consistent with our mission and sustainable for the future.

Another challenge is that we're dealing with modern people who are interested and passionate, but who are also very busy and have lots of commitments. Furthermore, we're a downtown church – and the majority of our established membership lives elsewhere, so we have some location challenges.

For churches considering a program like this, the most important thing is to be very clear about

your goals and mission, and knowing what's valuable and what's worth protecting. The experimental, fluid nature of the program means that holding fast to the core mission is important.

Liz Bartenstein is communications manager at St. Paul's Episcopal Church.

Melanie Mullen came to St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Richmond, Virginia in 2012. Melanie has a Masters in Divinity at Virginia Theological Seminary, and most recently, she served as Interim Diocesan Youth Missioner for the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, DC. Along with a wealth of varied experience, Melanie brings with her an entrepreneurial and pioneering spirit, as well as a deep and contagious commitment to the spiritual exploration and development of all.

Brian Levey is a data scientist working in the defense industry. As an active parishioner, he offers a great deal to St. Paul's: he is part of the vestry, parish choir, Membership Engagement Taskforce, and many more committees. He served on the Downtown Mission search committee, and now contributes much of his time and talent to Downtown Mission committee.

Resources

- Financial Peace University: www.daveramsey.com/fpu
- Fresh Expressions UK www.freshexpressions.org.uk
- Melanie Mullen's blog: <http://missionrva.com/>
- "New Mission Program Takes Church Outside the Walls and Into the City," by Edie Gross, Faith & Leadership an offering of Leadership Education at Duke Divinity, July 16, 2013. <http://www.faithandleadership.com/features/articles/new-mission-program-takes-church-outside-the-walls-and-the-city>
- Parking Day: www.parkingday.org
- Participatory Prayer Board <http://episcoyouth.org/2013/10/28/hope-joy-healing-loveprayer/>
- Radical Welcome by Stephanie Spellers <https://www.church-publishing.org/products/index.cfm?fuseaction=productDetail&productID=451>
- Radical Welcome by Stephanie Spellers <https://www.church-publishing.org/products/index.cfm?fuseaction=productDetail&productID=451>

productID=451

- St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Richmond, Virginia <http://www.stpauls-episcopal.org>
- Yale Congregations Project: www.yale.edu/ism/congregations

Laundry Love

BY NANCY DAVIDGE

Sometimes the way to get people 'back to church' is by starting a different kind of church. Better yet, offering individuals or small groups the freedom to design their own form of worship.

For Christian Kassoff and his wife, Shannon, church is Laundry Love and Thom's.

Their journey began 10 years ago.

Broken and ready to find God, they found the Episcopal Church. Christian loves theology, the Episcopal liturgy (although not the stale manner in which it is sometimes presented), and being part of a big family on Sundays. Over time, what he became uncomfortable with was the model of church that so many Episcopalians treasure: gathering inside a beautiful sanctuary on Sunday mornings.

Often this story ends with people leaving the church. God had another plan for Christian and Shannon.

[In the online version of this article, the link to the Laundry Love video is here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v>

=MRKMBNS6Eh0&feature=share&list=UU7fG2HgbT_s1c7Jm-fXrXNw
Print readers are encouraged to watch this video to gain a deeper understanding of this ministry.]

Discovering What God had in Mind

Missionary work in Tanzania changed Christian's life, making it clear that his faith life needed to center on serving God through service, worshipping in the street with others who also feel called to what he calls "more of a 1st century expression of Christianity.

Returning to California Christian and Shannon began visiting other Episcopal Churches. Once again, the experience of worshipping while sitting in a pew helped him to understand that this was not a model of church that worked for him. The call to go out, to be part of a different expression of church, one that might draw in people who, like him, were uncomfortable in a traditional church. Christian joined a team of Orange County clergy meeting regularly to explore new ways of being church.

Thad's Episcopal Church in Santa Monica was the next stop on their journey; yet just too far away to make it their church home. This congregation describes themselves as: "...a movement of missionary people who've made a choice to leave the relative safety of the established church and take the love of Jesus 'to the streets.' Our calling is to bring this transforming love into people's lives in positive, transformative and practical ways. In church-speak, we're a 'mission station,' an experimental community of the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles."

Thad's held the key.

Thom's and Laundry Love

By late September 2011, Christian and Shannon were part of a small group gathering in an empty restaurant and beginning the process of creating a church. Calling themselves Thom's, short for Thomas, as in The Apostle Thomas as in, Doubting Thomas, they quickly discovered was that they knew what they did not want their new faith community to be. Discovering what they did want proved to be harder.

What they knew was that engagement with the community was essential. Worship was secondary. They looked around for opportunities in the community. They collected ideas. And quickly, one rose to the top of the list: Laundry Love.

Christian explains, “We began Laundry Love because it was a simple idea that we could quickly enact and that stood to assist a lot of people, which it has. As our regular volunteer Remy observed after his first evening, it’s not just the laundry. It’s the hope it provides when people know that someone cares. I guess that’s why laundry and love remain connected in the title. We see this as month after month the same people return. They become part of our lives and we theirs. This also happens with volunteers as we share experiences and ourselves. This month we shared our project with two groups of people from churches in Los Angeles and Silver Lake. They wanted to know how we do it so that they could start an event as well. An idea spreads.”

Worship at Thom’s

Christian describes Thom’s as a “messy house church that is lay led.” Intentionally without a per-

manent physical ‘home,’ Thom’s holds services in restaurants, homes, and occasionally in other churches. Thom’s has no budget; no paid staff. Any money collected goes to support the monthly Laundry Love offering.

Their website offers this description:

“A gathering of people helping each other to move in what our collective conscious feels like the right direction, having fun wrestling with religion (faith too), growing together, recognizing god in all things, abandoning self, seeking to serve, digging Jesus’ message, questioning deeply, and trying to walk the talk.”

Worship is simple and participatory, following the 1st century practice of being built around an actual meal. Christian shares liturgy preparation with one or two others; meeting on the first and third Sundays of each month, the order of service often includes secular songs, opportunity for silent meditation and prayer, readings from both secular and religious texts, and a form of the Eucharist which, without a priest often involves preparing and eating a meal together.

Next Steps

Two years later, Thom’s remains a small worshipping community, with 3-12 regular members. Their Laundry Love ministry is thriving, providing assistance to people struggling financially by assisting them with doing their laundry as well as opportunities for people in area congregations to offer tangible help and begin to get to know those in our communities who are often dismissed, seen only as a problem rather than as children of God.

Having the freedom to try a different form of being church is one of the hallmarks of the Episcopal faith. Throughout The Episcopal Church, a variety of emergent worshipping communities have formed. Tom Brackett, The Episcopal Church’s missionary for church planting, ministry redevelopment, and fresh expressions of church, offers online resources and networking opportunities for people engaged in, or interested in, as he puts it “learning together the disciplines of midwifing the new Spirit being birthed in our times.” Learn more about these networking opportunities at <http://5marks.org>.

Nancy Davidge is the Episcopal Church Foundation’s associate program director for leadership resources and editor of ECF Vital Practices.

Resources

- Emergent Church and Church Planting <http://www.episcopal-church.org/page/emergent-church-and-church-planting>
- Five Marks of Mission Facebook Group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/FiveMarksofMission/>
- Five Marks of Mission website <http://5marks.org>
- Fresh Expressions of Church <http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk>
- Laundry Love website laundry-lovehb.com
- Laundry Love video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MRKMBNS6Eh0>
- Mission Developers Facebook Group <https://www.facebook.com/events/464123960351528/>
Meets online 3rd Thursdays at 3:00 pm ET
- Network of Ministry Innovators Facebook Group <https://www.facebook.com/events/592398394128577/>
Meets online 1st Fridays at 4:00 pm ET
- Thad's Episcopal Church, Santa Monica <http://thads.org>
- Thom's <http://thomsoc.org/>

College Ministry to Go

BY RUTH METEER

This year, St. Augustine's Episcopal church in Kingston, Rhode Island has been busy. They discovered hunger in an unlikely place and found an opportunity to step outside their church and care for their next-door neighbors, the students of the University of Rhode Island.

It started one Sunday at St. Augustine's coffee hour when Eileen Holovac and Catie Chatowsky listened to a presentation by the director of the Jonnycake Center of Peace Dale, an Episcopal Charities grant recipient. At the time the two URI students were taking an honors course on "Hunger & Poverty in America."

Eileen and Catie were inspired by the Jonnycake center, and had wondered about the need for food on campus. They were particularly concerned about students with limited resources who are not able to go home during spring break. What does one eat when the dining halls are closed?

Working with St. Augustine's priest in charge, David Dobbins, and arch-deacon Jan Grinnell they met with URI representatives who agreed this was indeed an issue for a large-

ly unseen population of students. Support was given for a spring break food pantry.

The Jonnycake Center generously agreed to provide food for this initial effort. In early March 2013 students and parishioners gathered together to assemble 35 boxes of food, each box designed to support a needy student with a week's worth of meals.

Word spread like wildfire when announcements were made by the students through Facebook, email, and campus-based web pages. When spring break came, 63 students arrived in need of food, and in the spirit of the Gospels, food meant for 35 in the end covered everyone.

The food pantry is just one example of a larger initiative at St. Augustine's to serve the student community. Early on they recognized another major issue for the students: homesickness. There's nothing like a home cooked meal to help with homesickness right?

The congregation's "Feed a Friend" dinners began last Shrove Tuesday. Parishioners volunteered to cook

students their favorite home cooked meal if they brought a friend. The first dinner had five students. By November, the number attending this monthly event had increased to 80, with at least 40 current URI students as well as one or two prospective students.

For St. Augustine's the jump in numbers is a great success. Over the past year they've made it their mission to better reach out to the college students around the church, to provide for their needs both spiritually and physically.

Some of those visiting the campus in November were sent to the dinner by the University's LGBTQ group. According to Jan Grinnell one student even said that he now really wants to come to URI. Knowing there is a loving, supportive Episcopal community on campus seems to have made a big impression.

It isn't just the students whose spirits are lifted by this ministry though. The whole congregation is feeling the joy of sharing and caring. Carol Miro, the parishioner who coordinated this last dinner, said in an email to Deacon Grinnell:

“So many contributed in so many ways and the energy in the room was palpable. Students and others are telling us how much they feel unconditional love at St. A’s. We are acting on our mission!

Other initiatives have been “Liturgy to Go” events outside the student center where parishioners offered prayer cards with ashes on Ash Wednesday then hot cross buns at the end of Lent.

During exams St. Augustine’s got especially clever and handed out Smarties to go. It was reported that the stressed students especially appreciated the attached prayer card, and though no one has heard how the venture affected exam scores, a few students have posted thank you notes on the St. Augustine’s website.

David Dobbins says the positive seeds planted in the community are immeasurable. “People are talking about what we are doing and respecting our commitment to the students.” And, as for church attendance, there are at least two URI staff members and five students who are now parishioners.

Ruth Meter is the communications director for the Episcopal Diocese of Rhode Island. This piece is an expanded version of an article from the Spring 2013 issue of *Risen*, the magazine of the Diocese of Rhode

Island.

Resources

- Ashes to Go <http://www.ecfvp.org/yourturn/ashes-to-go-tips-for-liturgical-outreach/>
- Hot Cross Buns to Go, Risen, Winter 2013 http://issuu.com/episcopalri/docs/risen_winter_2013_web
- Jonnycake Center of Peacedale <http://www.jonnycakecenter.org>
- St. Augustine’s Episcopal Church, Kingston, RI <http://www.staugustineuri.com>

Diaper Bank Ministry

BY LU STANTON LEÓN

This year the Diaper Bank ministry of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in McHenry, Illinois, is on track to collect, sort, and distribute more than 260,000 disposable diapers to children of low-income families, disabled children and adults, those suffering through illness, and seniors in need.

That is the work of a core group of four dedicated volunteers in a congregation that averages about 40 people on Sunday mornings. "It's a huge ministry for this little parish," said Lori Lowe, who arrived at St. Paul's as priest-in-charge in July 2012 and became its rector this fall. "There's a lot of pride in our congregation about being the diaper bank church.

"McHenry is a small town. There are three Episcopal churches in the county, all small, and we're the smallest. The Diaper Bank gives us a real profile, a real identity."

And it meets a very real and growing need, a need that led St. Paul's to hire Phyllis Mueller in January 2013 as the ministry's first paid director. Mueller, a retired Presbyterian minister, works part-time and is tasked with enlisting

the support and involvement of people and organizations beyond St. Paul's congregation.

The changes were immediately apparent. "She's turning it into a much more efficient operation," Lowe said. In addition to seeking additional funding and trying to broaden the volunteer base, Mueller is making the community aware of the program by penning letters to the editor and doing a lot of public speaking on the Diaper Bank's behalf. More and more organizations are hosting diaper drives and donating "Dollars for Diapers."

The diaper bank's mission is three-fold. To:

- Ensure families in poverty have an adequate supply of diapers for their infants, toddlers, and adults.
- Raise community awareness that "basic human needs" includes diapers and that these needs are not being met for children and adults living in poverty.
- Advocate for policy reform so that diapers are included in the

definition of and provision for the "basic human needs" of families.

Without disposable diapers parents can't take their children to childcare, and without childcare, parents can't go to work. Diapers are expensive: If money is tight, parents will opt to put food on the table rather than a clean diaper on the child.

"What I've learned from this ministry is you can't take a child to a daycare center with cloth diapers," Lowe said. "You have to have six to eight disposable diapers a day. Even if they had access to cloth diapers, these are people who are either going to a laundromat or using a community washing machine, and those places don't allow you to wash cloth diapers."

Without disposable diapers parents can't take their children to childcare, and without childcare, parents can't go to work. Diapers are expensive: If money is tight, parents will opt to put food on the table rather than a clean diaper on the child. "What I've learned from this ministry is that you can't

take a child to a daycare center with cloth diapers,” Lowe said. “You have to have six to eight disposable diapers a day. Even if they had access to cloth diapers, these are people who are either going to a laundromat or using a community washing machine, and those places don’t allow you to wash cloth diapers.”

Mueller said she understands why people ask about cloth diapers.

“I love when someone asks me that because my answer is that I would give my right arm if we could go back to cloth diapers, but that’s never going to happen. We’re such a throwaway society. It makes it almost impossible.

“I will say this. The diaper manufacturers have made tremendous progress in the last five years in making the disposable diapers more biodegradable. And I’m thrilled, and they’ve got to keep doing this. It’s a challenge.”

Mueller notes that for the St. Paul Diaper Bank Partnership to grow the support base must increase.

“We keep a monthly track, and I think we’re going to exceed the 260,000 diapers we distributed last year,” she said. “We’re certainly not going to do less. While that number seems vast, it is

only half of the requested need from our county, so we really need to push it up to 500,000 in 2014.

“The need is only going to grow. We’re seeing signs that people are having babies again; we’re getting more and more requests for newborns and size 1’s and 2’s. Plus, we have 76 million baby boomers coming at us, and out of that, there is a good percentage of people who are going to need some kind of incontinence care. You cannot buy paper products through food stamps or WIC (the federal Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children). What are people going to do?”

Mueller succeeds Larry Eils, a volunteer who led the diaper bank service for several years. Founded in 2009 under the initiative of St. Paul’s former rector James E. Swarthout, it was the first diaper bank in Illinois and is believed to be one of the first five in the country. Now there are more than 320.

When Lowe arrived at St. Paul’s in July 2012, the little church was literally drowning in diapers.

“When I first came here the diapers were kept stacked up in

the parish hall and the hallway. Our partners who distributed the diapers would pick them up at church,” said Lowe. “When I arrived arrangements were being made for a storehouse and a few months later we had a grant to rent warehouse space. All the diapers were moved to the warehouse, so the partners pick them up there. The bad part is the parish is not as connected; the good part is that we aren’t inundated.”

St. Paul’s diapers are collected, stored, and distributed primarily through the program’s 14 social service partners that include food banks, senior centers, pregnancy centers, and domestic violence agencies.

“It started out very tiny and extremely fragile,” Mueller said. “The four main volunteers are worker bees here. They work so hard, collecting, and sorting before our partners pick up the diapers every Wednesday. Prior to my coming on, most people in the community had no idea what the Diaper Bank was. People on the street had no idea it existed or what it did.”

A diaper manufacturer funded the first few diaper banks but as the number of diaper banks grew (from a handful in 2009 to about 150 in 2011 to 320 this year), diaper manufacturers said they

couldn't give away that many diapers. So diaper banks must raise the money to buy the diapers, which they usually get for a reduced rate from the diaper manufacturers.

"Diaper manufacturers stopped donating diapers in the year and a half that I've been here," Lowe said. "We try to get different organizations to have a diaper drive—local service clubs, schools and youth service clubs, churches. We have a standing box inside our double doors at church, and it's very common to see people dropping off diapers."

Mueller added, "A lot of gracious and understanding people are starting to get educated about the Diaper Bank and writing us checks. The volunteers are starting to expand. As soon as you educate people, they step forward."

If you want to know more contact Mueller at 815-385-0390, or email at revphyllis.stpauldiapersrus@gmail.com.

***Lu Stanton León** is a staff writer for Canticle Communications. This article is an abridged version of an article posted on the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago's website.*

Resources

- Diaper Bank Facts and Impacts

<http://www.stpaulmchenry.com/st-paul-diaper-bank/facts-and-impacts/>

- Host a Diaper Drive and Diaper Drive Kit <http://www.stpaulmchenry.com/st-paul-diaper-bank/diaper-drives/>
- National Diaper Bank Network: <http://nationaldiaperbanknetwork.org/>.
- Start a Diaper Bank (link to webinar and manual) <http://nationaldiaperbanknetwork.org/startadb.html>
- St. Paul's Diaper Bank <http://www.stpaulmchenry.com/st-paul-diaper-bank/>

I'll Go With You

BY EMA ROSERO-NORDALM

THIS ARTICLE HAS BEEN TRANSLATED FROM SPANISH. READ THE SPANISH LANGUAGE VERSION FOLLOWS.

Pastoral Accompaniment to Medical Visits

Those of us who have received bad news regarding our health know how shocking, devastating, frightful, and unsettling those moments can be. Family doctors often ask us to come to those fateful appointments, which we fear might signal the end of our lives, accompanied by a loved one.

On the one hand we are overcome with astonishment, sorrow, and fear. We tell ourselves "My God, why me, why now, when no one in my family has had this type of cancer. I take care of myself, I exercise, I lead a healthy life." On the other hand, survival instincts go into full gear and new strengths that seems to come from deep within our beings become focused on the details of when and where different procedures will take place to treat the disease, to cure us, and to make our hope to go on living a reality.

For the faithful, we cling to our faith in a God who is present and stands by us, who will give us the necessary strength to face the disease and who will also strengthen our loved ones who are experienc-

ing the illness with us. If we are able to overcome the emotional burden of everything we are told, for example cancer treatment and what it will entail, we tend to seek further information and we might even seek a second or third opinion. Otherwise, we just follow instructions and trust in the medical procedures.

It is for those who hear only where and when their disease will be treated, disregarding the why of that treatment, that I deeply believe pastoral accompaniment is extremely important. To show the importance of the need for pastoral support, I will share my experience with María del Carmen, a woman I have followed very closely and to whom I have given both spiritual and pastoral support since the moment she received the news of her cancer, as well as during her operation and chemotherapy treatments.

Recently María del Carmen asked me to go with her to her first radiation appointment. According to her, the therapy was going to start that same day. Since I had gone with her to several chemotherapy sessions I figured that this appointment was

what she was telling me it was: "They are going to make a mark on my breast for the radiation therapy." We were both surprised when we realized that in fact it was an initial visit with the oncology nurse and oncology radiology doctor. The nurse explained what to expect in detail over the six-week course of radiation, starting with what was needed to prepare for those six weeks. When the oncologist arrived it was explained why the radiology treatment was necessary and its importance for María del Carmen's survival.

Right after the appointment I very gently asked María del Carmen if she had any questions about what she had heard from the nurse and the radiology oncologist. Her answer worried me because she did not seem to know the purpose of the radiation treatments nor where she had to go for her treatments. I invited her for lunch and when we finished we sat down in the park near her house. There I told her what I had heard during the appointment. I also got her a book to read in Spanish, if she chose to, about radiation treatment.

It was in that moment with María

del Carmen that I realized the importance of offering pastoral accompaniment to initial medical appointments because it is in those first moments of surprise and pain that neither patients nor family members are paying attention to what is actually being said to them about their illnesses and medical procedures.

There is no more sacred moment in our lives than when we are able to serve those around us with love and humility. Christ constantly teaches us with his acts of kindness and compassion, acts that envelop our spirit and profoundly make us experience the divine among us. It is that power of the Spirit that gently and lovingly calls us, softly and clearly inspiring and guiding us to connect with the suffering, the pain, the surprise, the uncertain moment, the confusion, and the plight of another.

Emma Rosero-Nordalm is a missionary for Hispanic ministries in the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts. Ordained as a deacon, her work includes Spanish language and cultural translation for trainings, including Safe Church, Eucharistic Visitor, and antiracism trainings. She also gathers and documents best practices in congregations where there are people who are Hispanic to help with the development and implementation of strategy for Hispanic ministry in the diocese.

She works closely with Anthony Guillén, the Episcopal Church's officer for Latino/Hispanic Ministries, supporting communities of faith that nourish, strengthen, and develop disciples of Christ in the Anglican tradition within Spanish-speaking communities. Emma also serves as a member of ECF Vital Practices' Latino Advisory Committee and offers a monthly blog in Spanish on ECF Vital Practices.

Resources

- Association for Episcopal Deacons <http://www.episcopaldeacons.org>
- Congregations and the Daily Missions of Their Members http://www.ecfvp.org/files/uploads/Congregations_And_The_Daily_Missions_Of_Their_Members.pdf
- Family Caregiver Alliance <http://www.caregiver.org/caregiver/jsp/home.jsp> and Español http://www.caregiver.org/caregiver/jsp/content_node.jsp?nodeid=545
- Good Grief Work http://www.episcopalhealthministries.org/files/resources_attachments/good-grief.pdf Free booklet for use with those in the grieving process. Includes tools for emotional healing, Bible study,

exercises, and advice for coping on holidays. Package of 5 booklets and one extensive bibliography.

- Living Compass <http://livingcompass.org> A whole new direction in personal, family, and congregational wellness.
- Lotsa Helping Hands <http://www.lotsahelpinghands.com>
- Member Mission <http://www.membermission.org> Resources for meeting the desire of every church leader's heart for a way to help the baptized to live out their role in God's mission daily from Monday to Sunday.
- Resources from the National Episcopal Health Ministries <http://www.episcopalhealthministries.org/resources?pg=19>

Acompañamiento Pastoral a Visitas

BY EMA ROSERO-NORDALM

THIS ARTICLE IS ALSO AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH.

Aquellas personas que hemos recibido malas noticias sobre nuestra salud sabemos lo sorprendente, devastador, llenos de miedo y de zozobra de esos momentos. Muchos médicos y médicas de cabecera nos piden que vengamos acompañados de seres queridos a esa cita casi fatídica que ya nos imaginamos como el final de nuestras vidas.

Por un lado, nos embarga el estupor, la pena, el temor. Interiormente nos decimos, Dios Mío, por qué a mí, por qué en este momento si no hay nadie en mi familia que haya sufrido de este cáncer, si yo me cuido, hago ejercicio, vivo una vida sana. Por el otro, el instinto de sobrevivencia entra en pleno vigor y con una fuerza nueva que proviene de muy adentro de nuestro ser, comenzamos a enfocarnos en el cuándo y dónde de las diferentes intervenciones para tratar de llenar la enfermedad, para curarnos y realizar la esperanza de seguir viviendo.

Si somos personas de fe, nos aferramos a esa fe en un Dios presente, un Dios que nos acompaña, que nos va a dar la fortaleza necesaria para afrontar la enfermedad y for-

talear a los seres queridos que en ese momento también pasan por lo mismo. Si podemos sobreponernos al peso emocional de todo lo que se nos informa sobre lo que implica por ejemplo el tratamiento contra un cáncer, llegamos a buscar información y tal vez pensamos en segundas y terceras opiniones. De otra manera, nos limitamos a seguir con las instrucciones y confiamos en los procedimientos.

Es para las personas que simplemente escuchan dónde y cuándo van a tratarse sus enfermedades sin haber escuchado el por qué de dicho tratamiento, es para precisamente esas personas que creo profundamente que el acompañamiento pastoral es de gran importancia. Para apoyar esta necesidad de acompañar de manera pastoral a nuestras comunidades, les comparto mi experiencia con María del Carmen a quien he seguido de cerca ofreciéndole apoyo espiritual y pastoral desde el momento en que recibió la noticia de su cáncer, durante la intervención quirúrgica y mientras duró su tratamiento de quimioterapia.

La semana pasada María del Carmen me pidió que la acom-

pañara a su primera cita médica para comenzar su tratamiento de radiación que según ella empezaría ese mismo día. Yo la había acompañado a unas cuantas citas de quimioterapia, entonces pensé que esta cita era lo que ella decía: “me van a marcar el pecho para hacerme la radioterapia” La sorpresa para ambas fue darnos cuenta de que en realidad se trataba de una cita inicial con la enfermera asistente de la oncóloga radióloga y con la oncóloga radióloga. La primera pasó largos minutos explicando las seis semanas de radiología, comenzando con lo que se necesitaba antes de esas seis semanas. Luego vino la oncóloga quien explicó el por qué era necesario hacer el tratamiento de radiología y la importancia para la sobrevivencia de María del Carmen.

A la salida de esas citas, muy suavemente le pregunté a María del Carmen si tenía alguna pregunta sobre lo que escuchó de la enfermera y de la oncóloga radióloga. Su respuesta me preocupó, porque me dio a entender que realmente no sabía el por qué del tratamiento de radiación y que lo que sólo había escuchado

eran las fechas y dónde tenía que ir para los tratamientos. La invité a almorzar y al terminarnos sentamos en el parque cerca de su casa. Allí le expliqué lo que había escuchado en la cita médica, le conseguí un libro en español para que leyera si así lo deseaba sobre tratamiento de radiación.

Debo decir que desde ese momento, me comprometí a divulgar la necesidad de ofrecer acompañamiento pastoral a las citas médicas iniciales porque muchas veces en esos momentos de sorpresa y de dolor, ni pacientes ni familiares están escuchando lo que se les está comunicando sobre sus enfermedades y procedimientos médicos.

Emma Rosero-Nordalm is missioner for Hispanic ministries in the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts. Ordained as a deacon, her work includes Spanish language and cultural translation for trainings, including Safe Church, Eucharistic Visitor, and antiracism trainings. She also gathers and documents best practices in congregations where there are people who are Hispanic to help with the development and implementation of strategy for Hispanic ministry in the diocese. She works closely with Anthony Guillén, the Episcopal Church's

officer for Latino/Hispanic Ministries, supporting communities of faith that nourish, strengthen, and develop disciples of Christ in the Anglican tradition within Spanish-speaking communities. Emma also serves as a member of ECF Vital Practices' Latino Advisory Committee and offers a monthly blog in Spanish on ECF Vital Practices.

Resources

- Association for Episcopal Deacons <http://www.episcopaldeacons.org>
- Congregations and the Daily Missions of Their Members http://www.ecfvp.org/files/uploads/Congregations_And_The_Daily_Missions_Of_Their_Members.pdf
- Family Caregiver Alliance <http://www.caregiver.org/caregiver/jsp/home.jsp> and Español http://www.caregiver.org/caregiver/jsp/content_node.jsp?nodeid=545
- Good Grief Work http://www.episcopalhealthministries.org/files/resources_attachments/good-grief.pdf Free booklet for use with those in the grieving process. Includes tools for emotional healing, Bible study, exercises, and advice for coping on holidays. Package of 5 book-

lets and one extensive bibliography.

- Living Compass <http://livingcompass.org> A whole new direction in personal, family, and congregational wellness.
- Lotsa Helping Hands <http://www.lotsahelpinghands.com>
- Member Mission <http://www.membermission.org> Resources for meeting the desire of every church leader's heart for a way to help the baptized to live out their role in God's mission daily from Monday to Sunday.
- Resources from the National Episcopal Health Ministries <http://www.episcopalhealthministries.org/resources?pg=19>