

## **Community Engagement Committee**

Throughout 2018, the St. Luke's Community Engagement Committee remained wholeheartedly committed to its mission of sharing extravagant hospitality and the inclusive love of God to change people's lives for the better. The Committee continued implementing the re-focused, issue-based "Cluster" approach begun in 2017, while also undergoing leadership and membership changes. As one Cluster transitions to the next, the Committee organizes an All-Parish breakfast meeting on a Sunday morning between services three times per year, which provide regular updates to parishioners about Community Engagement activities.

### **Basic Needs Cluster** *(January-April)*

This Cluster supports activities that address the basic needs of people living in our community – helping them to find jobs, shelter, sustenance and dignity. Organizations supported by this Cluster include Samaritan Ministry, Loaves & Fishes, Bethesda Help, and Bethesda Cares. During 2018, January coincided with the Rector's farewell, and many activities took place in her honor. Throughout the remainder of the Cluster time period, parishioners heard from multiple guest speakers. Other highlights included:

- Collection of layettes and diapers for Interfaith Works, totaling nearly \$3,000 (Epiphany gifts in honor of the Rev. Dr. Stephanie Nagley)
- Assembled 100 Blessing Bags, held a bone marrow swab drive for Be the Match, and collected winter clothing (35 coats, 27 pairs of gloves, 51 pairs of socks, as well as toiletries and hats) for Bethesda Help valued at \$1,600; also collected cans for Bethesda Cares (January-February)
- Hosted celebration and guest speakers honoring the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Loaves & Fishes, the longest-running feeding program in the DC area. St. Luke's has been a faithful participating parish since 1982. (February 25)
- Hosted a speaker from Bethesda Help, also celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary; the youth continued to make snack bags for Bethesda Help clients on a monthly basis (March 11)
- *Empower the Homeless* Sunday featuring Samaritan Ministry – Guest preacher (and former participant) Larry Gooch and Director David Wolf; Carmen's Italian Ice followed the 10am service (April 22)

### **Human Rights, Dignity, and Safety Cluster** *(May-August)*

This Cluster supports activities focused on safety, respect, and equal rights for all, while devoting some resources to the newer Community Engagement issues of interest to parishioners, such as advocacy and interfaith activities. Organizations supported include the Interfaith Works Women's Assessment Center. Throughout the summer some of our efforts focused on building a relationship with the Islamic Community Center of Potomac. When the parish felt called to respond to the horrendous family separation crisis at the southern border,

the flexibility of the Cluster approach allowed for new fundraising activities to be implemented quickly and effectively. Cluster highlights included:

- 20+ parishioners attended an interfaith Iftaar at the Islamic Community Center of Potomac (ICCP) during the month of Ramadan (May 23)
- Provided breakfast, lunch, and dinner to the 35 residents of the Rockville Interfaith Works Women's Assessment Center. For 20 years, this has been a multi-generational, interactive ministry - more than 50 parishioners participated this year and many took on multiple duties! (May 27-June 3)
- Hosted Alan Yarborough, Communication Coordinator and Office Manager, of the Episcopal Public Policy Network. He provided 2 advocacy trainings focused on putting faith into action while affecting public policy and practicing civil discourse. (June 3)
- Raised \$4,230 for the Lutheran Immigration Refugee Services' efforts to reunify families separated at the border and to provide services to those seeking asylum (July)
- Reciprocated to ICCP by hosting them for an instructed Eucharist and vegetarian picnic (July 29)

#### **Looking to our Future Cluster** *(September-December)*

This Cluster supports activities that are dedicated to the well-being of all people and their environment, and are educational in nature. Our engagement at St. Luke's ranges from in-kind donations to financial support to hands-on projects. Organizations supported include Cornerstone Montgomery, Episcopal Relief & Development, Bishop Walker School for Boys, and the Episcopal Center for Children. We seek to heal a hurting world through compassion and generosity, provide educational opportunities to underserved youth and adults, (regardless of their beliefs) and care for our planet and its people. Highlights included:

- Collected more than \$3,000 worth of school supplies for the Bishop Walker School for Boys (BWS) and the Episcopal Center for Children (August-September)
- Toured the new BWS campus at the Town Hall Arts & Recreation Center, while others attended the Annual Evensong Service at the National Cathedral, in support of BWS (October 19 & 23)
- Cornerstone Sunday – Pamela Spears, Chief Development Officer of Cornerstone Montgomery, the largest behavioral health services organization in the County that was founded at St. Luke's in 1971, preached at both services (October 28)
- Collected toys, clothing, and gift cards for the Samaritan Ministry Christmas parties through the Annual Giving Tree (November 18-Dec. 2)
- Between 2007-2017, generous St. Luke's parishioners raised nearly \$150,000 for Episcopal Relief and Development (known to us as 'Holy Cow!'), impacting our brothers and sisters all over the world. We hope to continue the success as we move into year 11! (Advent 2018 - forthcoming)

## **First 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday “Be the Church” Day – September 30**

Part of Jessica’s vision for Community Engagement is the notion that church is not only somewhere we ‘go,’ but rather, something we ‘are.’ By doing something different each month that has a 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday (about 4x/year), we have opportunities to be Christ’s love in the world together. On July 29, we took a first step at this new endeavor by hosting our Muslim brothers and sisters for an instructed Eucharist, followed by a vegetarian picnic. About 10-15 ICCP congregants attended, took home beautiful flowers, and felt welcome!

On September 30, more than 20 parishioners of all ages headed to the Episcopal Center for Children to do groundskeeping and yard work on a beautiful Sunday morning, while others headed to the National Institutes of Health (NIH)-Children’s Inn to serve a tasty homemade brunch. Those on-site at St. Luke’s were busy making 4 days’ worth of “Thoughtful Treasures” for children undergoing treatment at NIH, 80 comfort bags for Bethesda Cares clients, and numerous snack bags for Bethesda Help. More faithful servants rounded off the day by providing dinner to 100+ people at Shepherd’s Table in Silver Spring. And still others contributed supplies for the comfort bags or struck out on their own.

Going forward, Jessica and the Committee plan to continue Be the Church Day during each month that has a 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday, with a variety of activities on and off-site - so that all St. Lukers can experience the transformative power of serving Christ in our neighbor, alongside one another.

## **Dissolution of Turner-Berger Education Fund**

The church's budget has long included a "Turner-Berger Education Fund" - a fund established by the Women of St. Luke's to provide small loans to parishioners for educational purposes. It has been used minimally over the years, and when it has been used it has been difficult to administer. In the spring, the Vestry approached the Women of St. Luke's to ask if they would consider abolishing the fund and donating the money in it (\$12,000) to the Bishop Walker School for Boys and the Episcopal Center for Children, dividing it evenly between both schools. The Women of St. Luke’s agreed that this would be a sensible course of action, consonant with the wishes of the original donors. The Vestry has approved this change, and the Community Engagement Committee was notified at their July meeting and was unanimously in-favor. The Bishop Walker School and the Episcopal Center for Children are each very grateful for this additional one-time donation during 2018.

## **Leadership**

As per the Committee Charter, Elliott Milhollin completed his two-year Chair term at the end of 2017. At the Committee’s spring quarterly meeting on April 12, Marta Montoro was voted Chair and the Vestry was notified of the change at their April 16 meeting. Thank you, Elliott, for all the work that went into re-focusing St. Luke’s Community Engagement activities in a thoughtful, flexible way! He remains a Committee member.

Soumaia Amin serves as Vestry Liaison for Community Engagement and the Committee greatly values this new role and her active participation.

### **Membership**

Members of the Community Engagement Committee during the past year include Jack Orrick, Clay Miller, Jenny Bradley, Quinn Cassidy, and Elliott Milhollin.

After many decades of faithful service, Anne Elsbree retired from the Committee in September. She will still serve as an Officer of the Day for Bethesda Help. In August, Claire Prono and her family moved to Boston. Claire was an important contributor during the Committee's "discernment" process and helped to formulate the new issue-based approach to Community Engagement. Thank you, Anne and Claire!

With gratitude, the Committee welcomed new members Brian Riley and Carrie Oleson in October 2018.

There are many other parishioners involved in Community Engagement at St. Luke's, whether serving on a Board, Advisory Committee, or as a liaison from our parish to an organization we support, volunteering on a regular or one-off basis, contributing in-kind or monetary donations, organizing a structured activity, and providing other services as needed. Thank you to all who participated in Community Engagement over the past year! Special thanks to Jack Orrick, Clay Miller, and Jenny Bradley for their Cluster leadership.

If you are interested in joining either the broader Committee, a Cluster, or supporting a 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday activity, please contact Marta Montoro at [montoro75@yahoo.com](mailto:montoro75@yahoo.com) – all ages welcome!

Respectfully Submitted,

Marta Montoro