

News from Deaconess Anne House 2020
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The Deaconess Anne House (DAH) is an intentional Christian community of young adults living, praying, learning and serving together in Old North St. Louis (ONSL). Throughout all the changes and challenges of this past year, the Episcopal Service Corps (ESC) members at DAH continue to grow deeper in their discernment of *how* God is calling them to be in the world and their practice of the Benedictine pillars of Stability, Obedience, and Conversion of Life.

The start of the 2020 year was marked with reorienting the 7.0 community as it welcomed Maddy Bishop of Wichita, KS as a corps member (*Rockwell Campus Ministry*) and Helen French of St. Louis and senior at Eden Theological Seminary as a Resident Volunteer (*Episcopal City Mission, part-time*); the first ever Gen Z and Boomer, respectively, to live in the DAH community. It was a blessed experience of intergenerational community! Together, with Measha Ferguson Smith (*Missouri Health Care for All*), they were welcomed by our local alumni, friends from Sponsoring Parishes, and Bishop Wayne Smith as they were commissioned as a community of service over dinner and the Eucharist at DAH. The new community enjoyed a Winter Retreat at the Pallottine Renewal Center in Florissant, MO, where they reflected upon the life of Saint Pauli Murray, the unofficial patron saint of the ESC, and the theme of converging identities within themselves and the community they were forming.

7.0 also enjoyed hosting 3.0 alumnus, Peter Levenstrong, and his wife, Kaitlin, as they traveled from Yale Divinity School for his Ordination to the Diaconate. He is now serving as a priest at St. Gregory's in San Francisco, CA! As Peter's sponsoring community, we are so proud of him.

Recruitment was in full force by early 2020 and has already re-opened for the 2021-2022 program year! The Rev. Michaelene Miller, DAH Director, has represented DAH and ESC at St. Louis University, Washington University, Fontbonne University, Eden Theological Seminary, The University of Arkansas (virtually), and Hendrix College (virtually). The Rev. Michaelene also shared about the opportunity of a DAH year at "Rooted in Jesus," a Christian Formation conference in Atlanta, GA, the Diocese of Arkansas' Clergy Retreat at Camp Mitchell, and at the Catholic Volunteer Network Virtual Recruitment Fair. Measha and Maddy even visited the Diocesan Youth Lock-In at the Cathedral to share about their service year experience.

DAH 7.0 continued to feel diocesan support and meet faith mentors as they made Parish Visits around the region, including Christ Church Cathedral, All Saints and Ascension, Trinity CWE, and a virtual visit with St. Timothy's. Several of these are Sponsoring Parishes, which are faith communities that intentionally commit to live into the diocese's role as faith mentors for these young adult sojourners by attending DAH events in addition to providing financial support for the program while corps members make an annual visit to attend worship, preach, and/or lead a forum about life at DAH. Furthermore, DAH entered a deeper relationship with Trinity CWE. The parish formed a support team to meet the spiritual needs of corps members in ways like identifying corps member Host Families, the Rector Jon Stratton leads a yearlong hermeneutics course called Jesus and Empire, Rev. Michaelene serves on the preaching and presiding rota, and corps members worship together and serve regularly in liturgical roles at Trinity.

As the pandemic unfolded in Missouri, DAH also faced disruptions and the unavoidable invitation to adapt. As all diocesan buildings closed out of care for the most vulnerable, DAH 7.0 members returned to their family homes, formation went virtual, placement sites transitioned to remote service work, and, through it all, the community remained in prayerful relationship. Measha even served remotely in the diocesan office to curate intercultural competency resources for future DAH programming. 7.0 regathered at the end of June for a one-day closing retreat in the DAH backyard to reflect upon and celebrate their resilience as a community.

The rise in virtual spaces allowed DAH to host Monday night zoom guests across the Episcopal Church and DAH alumni living across the United States! It also presented an opportunity for the greater ESC network to build its inter-program community as current members, alumni, and applicants came together for weekly Compline prayers. ESC continues to collaborate and has several network wide virtual trainings and retreats scheduled for this program year.

Over the summer months, the DAH Director met regularly with ESC directors, other St. Louis service year directors, and the diocesan pandemic task force to plan how to deploy corps members safely during a pandemic. The incoming 8.0 community began to connect virtually to start building trust and support as they laid the groundwork for their covid covenant. Throughout this transition, DAH felt the stability of diocesan support as we received a grant to hire a local ONSL cleaning service to help prepare the house and friends from around the diocese responded generously to a call to replace worn out AC window units (thanks, St. Peter's) and old linens!

The summer shower of support continued as DAH welcomed the 8.0 community members in August for Quarantation (quarantine+orientation)! In a time of physical distancing, the diocese was blessed with the faithful "yes" from four young adults answering God's call to be present – to each other, to those in need, to the work of Christ already happening in ONSL and the St. Louis region. Alexandria Nessi of Wenatchee, WA and Tuscaloosa, AL (*Inter-Faith Committee on Latin America*), Bryan Moore of Columbia, TN (*The Haven of Grace*), and Mtiipe Koggani of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (*Christ Church Cathedral*) all answered "yes" along with Maddy Bishop (*Rockwell Campus Ministry*) who said "yes" to a second DAH year!

The Fall has been an intensive time of orienting to the St. Louis context, learning with amazing guest facilitators, and finding God in completely ordinary moments of service, play, and rest. After Orientation, Bishop Deon's first official visit to DAH for a backyard commissioning service, and a month of settling into new routines at placements, DAH 8.0 began October with a Fall Retreat on the Black River with Saint Pauli Murray as they explored their unique and converging strengths and identities. Virtual gatherings have also populated the DAH calendar as Rev. Michaelene zoomed with other ESC Program Directors for their annual Fall Meeting and the members continue the tradition of visiting communities across the diocese, only now from their computer screens! So far, they have enjoyed their time worshiping with Trinity CWE, leading the forums at St Barnabas and Rockwell House, and the opportunity to preach at St John's Tower Grove. 8.0 has also enjoyed inviting diocesan friends to Old North for neighborhood events like the Mural and Door Tour that supported several ONSL nonprofits.

The 8.0 community continues to be committed to spiritual formation rooted in the Benedictine tradition and the Episcopal Church, transformative non-profit service whether its 32 hours in-

person or 32 hours remote, and love of neighbors in Old North! The corps members meet Tuesday-Friday for Morning Prayer, and gather all day on Fridays for formation and Chapter Meeting (a time to revisit their common Rule of Life and intentionally examine the past week's regrets, grievances, and thanksgivings of living in community). Either over zoom or from across the room in masks, 8.0 has jumped into their community formation in Group Spiritual Direction, their work with an Enneagram Coach, their anti-racism/anti-oppression trainings with Undo Bias Consulting, and their Jesus and Empire class as they discern how to continue Jesus' bold revelation of God's justice as the Body of Christ living amongst and against the empires of today. On Monday evenings, they gather as a house for dinner and worship and, on the last of the month, they continue to practice radical hospitality by welcoming their Host Families, Prayer Pals and other local DAH alumni, friends from Sponsoring Parishes, and/or ONSL neighbors for a backyard Eucharist and warm cuppa' fellowship.

With the continued support of Bishop Deon and so many friends across the Diocese of Missouri, the DAH community continues to grow and thrive in the love of Christ. We are looking forward to 2021 and beyond. If you would like to learn more, apply for a service year, or join us for a Monday Backyard Eucharist, please email Rev. Michaelene at mmiller@diocesemo.org.

The Rev. Michaelene Miller, Deaconess Anne House Director

The Rev. Mike Angell, Advisory Committee Chair

Mary Zabawa Taylor, Spiritual Director

Krissi Vandagriff, Teacher, Enneagram Class

The Rev. Jon Stratton, Teacher, Jesus and Empire Class

Zenique Gardner-Perry and James Meinert, Facilitators, Undo Bias Trainings

2020-21 Sponsoring Parishes: Trinity-CWE, Christ Church Cathedral, Holy Communion, Emmanuel-Webster Groves, St. John's-Tower Grove, St. Barnabas, St. Timothy's, St. Martin's, and St. Paul's-Carondelet

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