



Ministry Report from Emmanuel Episcopal Church, Webster Groves, MO  
181<sup>st</sup> Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Missouri  
November 19-21, 2020

At Emmanuel the mission committee provides a place for parishioners to engage in and share their passions, seek and find opportunities to work for equity and justice, and build relationships in our local, regional and wider community in the name of the Risen Christ.

In 2019 the Vestry and staff worked on an Identity Statement and had begun to work on our call. Part of the call work involved listening to the community about places of brokenness. We were on a path to determine 2-3 areas of focus for our call to ministry when the pandemic happened. The pandemic brought that work around call to a screeching halt in March. However, three areas of focus had begun to emerge. They are ministry around food, racial equity and housing. The mission committee also had begun to focus on those same areas as well as additional issues of advocacy despite the work not being finalized. Because of that groundwork, in 2019 Emmanuel's mission committee began examining what we were doing, who we were serving and how effective the work was in empowering others, building relationships and connecting our faith to our lives, in other words living out our Baptismal covenant. Due to the pandemic, the work is not especially organized and certainly not finished. But, we have re-focused efforts this year as you will read in this report.

#### FOOD MINISTRY

Each November we participate in Empty Bowls, a community event that benefits Webster-Rock Hill Ministries. This is a soup meal that is supported by the churches in Webster Groves. Emmanuel has a board position at WRHM, and they are also a partner in our food center. Typically, referrals to Emmanuel's food center come from WRHM. In addition, Emmanuel's food center provides grant monies to WRHM, so they can provide meat and produce vouchers to their clients. The year started out normal until COVID. Emmanuel's food center board made the decision to remain open during the pandemic but reduce hours to Monday-Friday 9 am to noon.

Because of the pandemic, by April we were not able to purchase bulk food from Aldi's. Through generous gifts by parishioners we have been able to maintain inventory. By May 2020, we realized our demand has slowed and through parishioners and Faith and For the Sake of All the food center donated food to Isaiah 58 Ministries and Free COVID Testing sites. Webster Groves is an affluent community and the food center leadership has been actively working to get food into the community v. expecting those in need to find us. In March and again in September, through parish communications we educated parishioners on the need and ways to meet those needs outside our doors.

Emmanuel also participates in Miss Carol's Breakfast at Christ Church Cathedral. That program was discontinued in the spring due to the pandemic. Emmanuel also remains committed to being involved with Peace Meal at St. John's Tower Grove. In 2019 our Sr. High youth began to make Peace Meal one of the service projects they do during the year. Participating in food ministry has allowed us to encourage discussions about advantage and equity at all ages.

## EQUITY AND RACE

Emmanuel has long had individuals involved in the community and on the diocesan level with racial equity. However, we have never been terribly successful as a parish with a consistent program. But, in 2019, thanks to Faith and For the Sake of All and the identity and call work, we re-engaged people. Between September 2019 and February 2020, we committed to the Sacred Ground program presented by members of the Diocesan Dismantling Racism Commission. Approximately twelve people completed the 10-session program.

After that class we shared at adult formation various films and readings, and clergy actively preached about racism. When George Floyd was murdered May 25, 2020 in Minneapolis and protests started happening, we knew the call was urgent to educate and participate. Despite the pandemic many participated in local marches. Peace UCC in Webster Groves started a Friday evening vigil for Black Lives Matter. A couple other churches, also located on Lockwood Ave, joined in. In July Bishop Deon K. Johnson published the *Antiracism Covenant*. That document ignited us and in August Emmanuel began doing our own vigil. We average 30 people per week standing for our brothers and sisters of color. The plan is to continue and as it grows dark earlier and gets colder we will have candles.

Parishioner, Jackson Hotaling organized a community education event around race, equity, voting and advocacy on September 25, 2020 at Peace UCC. That event included speakers from Emmanuel, WG School District, WG City Council, and Metropolitan Congregations United. At the end of the speaking a vigil was held. There were approximately 200 people in attendance.

## ADVOCACY

Mission committee members engaged in advocacy work began a letter writing campaign in 2019 related to immigration reform. A surprising number of parishioners took packets and wrote cards to their government representatives. Then, in the fall of 2019 parishioner Jacob Mohrmann led the effort to get Amendment 2 (Medicaid Expansion) on the ballot. In July 2019 Emmanuel held rallies in support of Amendment 2 (Medicaid Expansion). In August Emmanuel became a paid member of Metropolitan Congregations United (MCU) and has been active in the Sacred Votes program since then. Two parishioners received their Notary Public licenses allowing us to offer free notarization of ballots at the food center, individually and on Saturday, Oct. 10 at Emmanuel. October 24 and 28 several parishioners held a rally to show support for No on Amendment 3. Our goal is to continue to be involved with care for children at the border.

## FAITH AND FOR THE SAKE OF ALL

In 2019 FFSOA received grant monies to expand their Mobilizing the Faithful program. A pilot program was designed to pair predominantly black congregations with predominantly white congregations. The kick off event for the four churches in the pilot was held February 23, 2020 at St. John's AME Church with Rev. Dr. James A Forbes (Riverside Church NYC) preaching. Emmanuel was paired with Shaare Emeth congregation and did our first training Sunday, March 1. We were to train throughout March, April and May separately as white and black congregations, then join our paired congregations in a shared worship service and a celebration and relationship building event in August. The pandemic blew a big hole in those plans. But, through Faith and For the Sake of All, in May and currently going on now there have been several education opportunities to learn about racism in our area.

In June FFSOA partnered with Healthcare StL and churches in north city and county to offer free COVID testing sites. They have been doing approximately 6-8 free testing sites per month. Some from Emmanuel have volunteered at these sites helping direct traffic, hand out bags of food and donate supplies. In August FFSOA took some volunteers including Rev. Michael Nchimbi and

Jackson Hotaling to Indiana to harvest vegetables. They brought back 900 lbs. of vegetables that were given away at the free testing sites.

FFSOA has resumed doing Healthcare workshops and Housing workshops for faith congregations virtually in early October. The presentations have been enhanced to deal with race issues in our region in a more direct manner; in other words, they are more uncomfortable. Emmanuel has two liaisons with FFSOA and would like more. Spreading the word of racism to faith communities through the lens of faith helps open hearts and minds.

In addition to the above Emmanuel continues to support through donations, volunteers and/or mission trips:

- Deaconess Anne House
- African seminarians at Eden Theological Seminary
- Episcopal City Mission
- Lydia's House
- Rosebud Episcopal Mission in South Dakota
- Firewood for the Elders at Rosebud
- God's CHILD Project in Guatemala
- Gateway 180 Shelter
- Overdose Awareness
- Isaiah 58 Ministries
- LifeWiseStL
- Shoe Crew (water project)

# Advocacy at Emmanuel:

Since opening the Food Center in 1983, individuals at Emmanuel have worked to do something when they witness injustice, need or systemic oppression. Over the years the needs have not diminished, but they have changed, as have we by doing the work.

As a direct result of the identity and call work begun in 2019, missions committee has begun to engage in advocacy work. The mission committee consists of individuals with a passion and many of those passions overlap. There are individuals responsible for

- ⇒ Advocating for immigration reform
- ⇒ Advocating for healthcare equity through Faith and For the Sake of All
- ⇒ Advocating for racial equality and justice
- ⇒ Advocating with other faith communities through Metropolitan Congregations United
- ⇒ Being liaisons with Faith and For the Sake of All for housing equity training
- ⇒ Building relationships with Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota
- ⇒ Engaging with and advocating for African seminarians
- ⇒ Engaging with LifeWiseStL as volunteers to stock shelves, sort diapers, etc.
- ⇒ Feeding the community through the food center
- ⇒ Feeding through the Miss Carol's breakfast for the homeless
- ⇒ Feeding through volunteering at Peace Meal at St. John's Tower Grove
- ⇒ Offering monthly ingatherings for parishioners to support agencies in need
- ⇒ Promoting awareness of Overdose and Addiction
- ⇒ Working to educate and learn where systemic racism is present today
- ⇒ Volunteering as board members at Webster-Rock Hill Ministries
- ⇒ Supporting Deaconess Anne House
- ⇒ Supporting youth in detention through Episcopal City Mission

**Are you ready to be a part of any one of these actions?**  
**We hope so! Please contact Mary Jane Kuhn to plug in a little or a lot!**

