

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 continued challenges of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, 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 8.0 community (Alex Nessi, *Inter-Faith Committee on Latin America*; Bryan Moore, *The Haven of Grace*; Mtipé Koggani, *Christ Church Cathedral*; and Maddy Bishop, *Rockwell Campus Ministry*), while limited by the pandemic from many of the usual opportunities to explore St. Louis beyond their house “bubble,” did form relationships across the entire ESC network. The ESC network “traveled across time and space” on a series of virtual pilgrimages with the Rev. Dr. Saint Pauli Murray, who left a compelling legacy in the Episcopal Church. Murray’s life witness invites young adults to listen deeply for how God is calling them through their intersecting identities to serve their neighbor and bring about God’s justice. The series culminated in February, on the anniversary of Murray’s first celebration of the Eucharist, with time in conversation with Dr. Catherine Meeks of the Absalom Jones Center for Racial Healing in addition to virtual tours of Murray’s home in Durham, NC with the Pauli Murray Center for History and Social Justice and the Chapel of the Holy Cross with local clergy from Chapel Hill.

The 8.0 community took advantage of every opportunity to connect safely with others in the DAH and DioMO networks. With the donation of new benches by an Eagle Scout, corps members transformed their backyard into an outdoor chapel, equipped with string lights and a warm fire pit, as they continued to invite their neighbors, local alumni Prayer Pals, Trinity-St. Louis Host Families, and friends from Sponsoring Parishes to join them for a service of Holy Communion on the last Mondays of each month. As temperatures dropped, the corps members moved online to offer a livestreamed service of compline prayers.

The community continued the tradition of Parish Visits, both virtually and in-person, preaching and leading the forum when invited. Corps members visited Emmanuel, St. Paul’s, St. Francis, St. John’s, St. Tim’s, St. Martin’s, and Christ Church Cathedral! 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 inviting corps members for a Parish Visit to preach/teach, attending DAH events when possible, and providing financial support for the program. Corps members also worshiped at their host church, Trinity-St. Louis, where Rev. Michaelene Miller, DAH Director, regularly supplies as preacher and celebrant. Trinity opened their parish hall to DAH as a larger, safe space to spread out for Friday formation with guests.

8.0 delighted in hosting DioMO friends for a Walking Stations of the Cross in Old North St. Louis on Good Friday and a Thank You/Share Back Day in early July, the first time that corps members were able to welcome others *inside* their home thanks to the high rate of vaccination!

From across computer screens or behind masks, corps members served at their placement sites as they also connected with personal spiritual directors, counselors, mentors in their anticipated professional fields, Undo Bias trainers, and other guest facilitators including the Rev. Edie Bird, who taught Nonviolent Communication skills, and the Rev. Canon Whitney Rice, who led sessions on Leadership in Systems, Evangelism with Integrity, and Community Listening.

The 8.0 corps members ended the program year with a relaxing closing retreat hosted by St. Vincent's in the Vineyard at Chaumette in Ste. Genevieve, MO. All members moved forward in their faithful discernment of next steps seeking God's justice, with two continuing in their studies and discernment processes at Princeton and Virginia Theological Seminaries.

Summer break provided an opportunity for a House Workday to gather friends of DAH to deep clean and prepare the house for the next cohort. Projects included adding landscaping pebbles and more lights to the backyard chapel in addition to building new stairs for and painting the back porch. An anonymous donation enabled DAH to purchase a Toyota Prius, ensuring members access to serve where they are called in St. Louis, no longer limited by public transit.

Recruitment was in full force by early 2021 and has already re-opened for the 2022-2023 program year! Rev. Michaelene has virtually represented DAH and ESC at Washington University, Catholic University, Valparaiso University, the Catholic Volunteer Network events, and, most recently, on campus at the St. Louis University Service Year Fair. She continues to tell of the good news found in the mighty little community of DAH nestled in the loving DioMO.

With (vaccinations administered and) the groundwork laid for how to safely bring together a community in the midst of a pandemic, DAH welcomed the 9.0 community members in August. In a time of continued physical distancing, the diocese was blessed again 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. Erin O'Rourke of Orchard Park, NY and Pittsburgh, PA (*Rockwell House Campus Ministry*), Krista Osborne of Spokane, WA (*L'Arche*), Megan Oakes of San Diego, CA and Seattle, WA (*The Youth and Family Center*), and Remington Willis of Sacramento, CA and Harrisonburg, VA (*St. Vincent's Home for Children*) all answered "yes!"

The start of the new program year also brought with it the added excitement of a new deacon being placed at DAH! The Rev. Dayna Jewson, a retired Registered Nurse, brings a fount of wisdom around mental and physical health as well as pastoral care to the DAH community.

The fall semester has already been an intensive time of orienting to the St. Louis context and finding God in completely ordinary moments of service, daily prayer, play, and rest. At the close of Orientation, Bishop Deon Johnson commissioned the 9.0 community and Deacon Dayna at Trinity-St. Louis. The 9.0 community continues to be committed to spiritual formation rooted in the Benedictine tradition and the Episcopal Church, transformative non-profit service, daily prayer, and love of neighbors in Old North! The corps members gather all day on Fridays for 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) and formation (in the Enneagram, anti-racism work with Undo Bias, or Jesus and Empire class). In recognition of the

stress of the ongoing pandemics (covid-19, racism, climate crisis), ESC allocated funds to support two network wide and monthly, local Resiliency Trainings for corps members.

October brought a Fall Retreat on the Black River “with” Saint Pauli Murray as corps members explored their unique and converging strengths and identities. Rev. Michaelene again zoomed with other ESC Program Directors for their annual Fall Meeting, where she was elected to serve on the ESC Advisory Council. Diving deep into relationships, 9.0 has hosted several Monday Night Backyard Eucharists, worships regularly with Trinity-St. Louis, and has already gone on an official Parish Visit to St. Barnabas. They tended a little plot at the 13<sup>th</sup> Street Community Garden and are currently having an in-gathering for donations of winter essentials to redirect out to their neighbors in need at a Little Free Pantry “Chili and Coats” event.

With the continued support of Bishop Deon Johnson and so many friends across the Diocese of Missouri, DAH continues to grow and thrive in its 9<sup>th</sup> year as a community centered around the love of Christ. We look forward to 2022 and beyond! In recognition of the faithful and prayerful presence of this young adult community in DioMO, 8.0 drafted and the Director submitted a proposal to amend the Constitution and Canons to give this community a seat, voice, and vote at future conventions. If you would like to learn more, apply for a service year, or join us for worship, please email Rev. Michaelene at [mmiller@diocesemo.org](mailto:mmiller@diocesemo.org).

The Rev. Michaelene Miller, Deaconess Anne House Director

The Rev. Dayna Jewson, Deacon

The Rev. Jon Stratton and Rev. Aaron Rogers, Teachers, Jesus and Empire Class

Krissi Vandagriff, Coach, Enneagram Class

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

2021-22 Sponsoring Parishes: Trinity-St. Louis, St. Barnabas, Christ Church Cathedral,

Emmanuel, St. Francis, Holy Communion, St. John’s, St. Martin’s, St. Paul’s, and St. Timothy’s.