

Community Outreach at St. Mark's—May 2022



PERSON TO PERSON UPDATE

[Our weekly fruit cup donations are part of this. Thanks to all who donate!]

Some things must be shared. Recent events fall under that category. Our ministry touches the lives of many. Much of the time the ordinary encounters get taken for granted. This past Sunday morning we had the pleasant surprise of a young man walking past our cars on 19th and Olive Streets as we, Laurie and myself, were combining our foodstuff in preparation for sharing our supply of food, hygiene items, and small clothing items with the street people. This young man thanked us for helping him earlier to sustain himself while he was homeless and looking for a job and a place to live. He now has a job and an apartment.

It is with much gratitude that I relate this story to you. We expend much energy and time in carrying out our ministry. The results vary. In many cases we help sustain the lives of those who have no hope. We have become a community with them. Their gratitude and their need keep us coming.

Recently a tragic happening broke our hearts. We had met a homeless woman, Bridgette, who having her own needs, made us aware of a group of her friends sheltering in an abandoned building. We drove to the location, left a large supply of food, water, hygiene, socks, etc. We returned the next Sunday and while supplying them with their needs, asked about Bridgette. Shockingly we learned that she had been tragically killed by a hit-and-run pickup three nights prior. A vigil was planned, but plans were unclear. I drove back downtown on Tuesday to learn of the plans. I had no phone contacts, so in-person was the only form of contact. I spoke with her brother-in-law and learned that the vigil would happen on Friday in the field in front of the abandoned building.

The vigil, made up of family, ministers, and homeless friends, was an occasion of paying tribute, and healing. One of the homeless men played his guitar and sang from his heart. There was the added grace of the presence of several two and three year olds playing in the grass (and weeds). Children of family and ministers. Death and new life. My heart was comforted.

—Correne Murphy, Founder and Executive Director, Person To Person Street Ministry

RIP Medical Debt: Our Convocation's Response to the Diocesan Surplus Grant

As you may have heard, the Episcopal Diocese of Missouri ended 2021 with a surplus, largely do to COVID relief funding as well as increased parish giving. The decision was made to grant \$1,000 to each congregation with the stipulation that it be used solely for outreach.

Members of the Emery Washington Convocation (EMC) of which St. Mark's is a part discussed pooling our individual parish grants to have a broader impact. The decision was made to donate our pooled resources to RIP Medical Debt, a non-profit organization that purchases people's medical debt for pennies on the dollar—and then retires it! The vestry at St. Mark's approved this use at its April meeting.

As of this writing, 13 EMC congregations have signed on which means that a minimum of \$1.3 million dollars in debt will be retired. Our RIP Medical Debt site is up and live so you, too, can make a contribution to help relieve the burden of medical debt. You can learn more about RIP Medical Debt and donate at this link: <https://ripmedicaldebt.org/campaign/episcopal-medical-debt-forgiveness-campaign/>

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Isaiah 58 Ministries –Hands-on Volunteer Opportunities

Isaiah 58 is excited to be reopening inside and offering for the first time a full choice food pantry 5 days per week. Guests will no longer just have to take what has been bagged for them. They select their own food choices. To accomplish this, Isaiah 58 needs to expand its team of volunteers.

Isaiah 58 is looking for volunteers to serve from 9:45 AM to 1:00 PM on weekdays. Opportunities include: personal shopper in the food pantry (assisting guests), greeter & hospitality, receiving & sorting donations, and clothing room host. A sign-up sheet is sent out monthly electronically, so you can easily just sign up for the times and activities you would like. All volunteers are given training and receive regular ministry updates. For more information click on this link. <https://i58ministries.org/services/> If you have additional questions, or would like a tour of the facility, feel free to contact Deacon Jerre. To register as a volunteer, contact Deacon Jerre at jerre.birdsong@gmail.com

COVID-19 vaccination and booster (if eligible) are required for all volunteers. Masks must be worn while working with guests. If volunteers are working in a non-guest area, they may choose not to mask.

About Isaiah 58 Ministries: Isaiah 58 Ministries is a non-profit agency that has been in existence in on South Grand and Flora in South Saint Louis city since 1970. It was established to meet the needs of low-income individuals in our community. Services today include a 5-day a week food pantry, ongoing clothing room, once a week fresh food distribution, and monthly Mobile Markets. Special events include a back to school fair, Thanksgiving and Christmas food, a holiday store and more.

St. Mark's Outreach Donations

As reported at the Annual Meeting in January, St. Mark's ended 2021 with a \$13,750 budget surplus. In light of not being able to hold in-person fundraising events since 2019, the vestry voted to transfer \$5,000 of this surplus to our Community Outreach Fund.

When we initially heard about the Diocesan \$1,000 grant to all parishes from their surplus, we discussed donations to outreach ministries that we usually support. When the RIP Medical Debt opportunity came up the vestry decided to use the Diocesan grant for that outreach AND decided to go ahead and fund the other discussed donations from our own surplus funds.

Consequently, the following outreach donations were made in May:

RIP Medical Debt	\$1,000.
Isaiah 58 Ministries	\$584. (Includes \$84 from Maundy Thu Soup Supper)
Food Outreach	\$250.
Feed My People	\$250.
United Thank Offering	\$350. (Lent / Easter UTO Ingathering)