



Social Justice and Advocacy

Outreach Guide

Fall 2012



Diocese of Toronto
Anglican Church of Canada

INTRODUCTION

FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST is of fundamental importance to us as Anglicans. But being Christian requires much more than this personal faith. It requires that we act in a way that reflects that faith. In the Book of Proverbs, we read: “Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.” God requires that we work for justice. When Jesus delivered his Sermon on the Mount, he called his followers to work for peace and justice. That call was intended as much for us now as for his disciples then. We are called to build the

Kingdom of God by both caring for those who are poor and vulnerable, and by creating policies and systems that ensure fairness and equity.

Across our Diocese, parishes are responding to this call.

The manner in which parishes respond varies as greatly as the communities they serve. Some dynamic examples of outreach and advocacy are outlined in this guide. We also offer some ideas, theological insights, and resources you can use in your own parish. We invite you to use this material in whatever direction the Spirit calls you. ■

SERVICE-PROVIDING MINISTRIES



John Stephenson, left, with Take This Bread bakery workers.



Reaching out to Mexican farmworkers at St. Paul's, Beaverton

A SERVICE-PROVIDING ministry is a program that responds to a need in the community. For example, an emergency meal program responds to hungry people, one of many examples of how service programs meet a real and immediate need.

All Saints, Sherbourne in Toronto is a great example of a parish engaged in service ministry. It holds daily drop-in programs for a variety of vulnerable people and engages in street outreach. A social worker provides counselling and assists people as they navigate the social services in the area.

All Saints has also undertaken a new project to open a bakery called *Take This Bread*. Twelve unemployed people are invited to work at the bakery where they earn a food-handlers' certificate which

qualifies them to work in a professional kitchen. Participants meet regularly with a social worker to develop employment goals and financial skills. The bakery produces bread, cookies, and communion wafers and hopes to make quality food accessible to those who could not otherwise afford it. Find out more at their website www.takethisbread.ca. Perhaps your parish could buy some of its products?

Service ministries typically arise when a community need is identified by a group of people who decide they want to meet the need. Take St. Paul's, Beaverton, for example. A few years ago, the Rev. Ted McCollum noticed an increasing number of seasonal agricultural workers in the town. In 2009, Ted and others from the parish started talking to these

workers. The parishioners discovered that the workers were Mexican and Roman Catholic; they came to Canada to work from May to November.

St. Paul's congregation started building a relationship with the Mexican workers, and asked what the workers needed. In collaboration with the workers, the church started arranging movie screenings and soccer games, and even provided bicycles to enable the workers to get around more easily. The workers also shared that they would like the opportunity to worship in Spanish. So Ted arranged to have Fr. Hernan Astudillo from the parish of San Lorenzo in Toronto come up every Wednesday evening to celebrate mass for the workers during their stay. St. Paul's parishioners drove to the farm and brought the men into town for the service.

This ministry continues to expand. A language teacher has been hired to teach English to the workers and Spanish to the parishioners. The parish also helps the workers with their taxes, shopping, government claims, and provides free phones and internet which

allow the workers to connect with their families at home via email and Skype. The town's Roman Catholic parish is now getting involved, as well. When the workers arrived in Beaverton this year in 2012, they reconnected with St. Paul's right away.

"A lot of people from the parish have also had to leave their families behind at an earlier point in their lives," says Ted. "They know what it's like to go somewhere and not know anyone or even speak the same language. So they appreciate us helping people who experience the same loneliness. Remember, some of these Mexicans have left families with very young children behind."

This ministry is a great example of how a simple conversation between a parish and the community can blossom into a relationship of appreciation, respect, and reciprocity. This is also an example of a growing movement in our diocese known as "missional transformation": finding out what God is already doing in the community, and joining in. ■

ADVOCACY MINISTRIES

SERVICE MINISTRIES provide vital services to people who are struggling to get through their daily lives. But these programs provide only a band-aid solution to the underlying issues. As U.S. journalist Bill Moyers stated: "Charity depends on the vicissitudes of whim and personal wealth; justice depends on commitment instead of circumstance. Faith-based charity provides crumbs from the table; faith-based justice offers a place at the table." Providing people with emergency meals feeds them for a day, but it is not a reliable or dignified source of food. Advocacy ministries address the underlying justice issues that perpetuate the inequalities of our society. Their efforts impact large numbers of people beyond their parish or community boundaries. Advocacy ministries work for systemic social, political, and economic changes to create a fairer society.

The Diocesan Social Justice and Advocacy team coordinates advocacy efforts across the Diocese so there is a consistent message from our church. To this end, the team has organized several larger-scale advocacy initiatives with some success. In 2011/2012, it coordinated an advocacy campaign that resulted in

Anglicans, our ecumenical partners, and some of our Bishops meeting with 26 Members of the Provincial Parliament (MPPs) across the Diocese. The campaign was centred on the 2012 provincial budget and made several requests of the government including indexing social assistance rates to inflation and freezing corporate tax rates instead of lowering them as planned. The government eventually decided to cancel the planned corporate tax cuts, increased social assistance rates by 1%, and added a 2% surtax on incomes exceeding \$500,000.

Although the increase in social assistance rates is still grossly inadequate, in a time of austerity and in the wake of the Drummond report, we counted any increase as a victory. This advocacy example demonstrates how a large, coordinated effort can have positive results on governmental policies that can help create a fairer society. Campaigns like this are important and require the support and involvement of parishes across the Diocese to be a success. We hope your parish will consider being involved in our next campaign. But there is no need to wait until the next campaign to get started, as our next story shows.



Rev. Maggie Helwig speaks at Queen's Park prayer vigil against poverty

Saint Matthias, Bellwoods rents its former rectory at a very low rate to Bellwoods House, a home for older women who have experienced abuse. When the City of Toronto proposed early in 2012 that Bellwoods

House be closed, parishioners swung into action. They joined hands in prayer and solidarity. A group was formed to organize resistance. They petitioned city councillors with phone calls and email, and spoke to city council. One by one, the group won over the city councillors, convincing them that programs to protect women's lives were not something to cut back on. In the end, the women were allowed to keep their home for another year, but the parishioners started asking: why was there a need for such a house in the first place?

This campaign of St. Matthias demonstrates the political clout that churches hold, even if they are small, and what a formidable force they can be when their time and resources are pooled in support of justice. The campaign was driven, not by a small group of lifelong activists, but rather by a large group of people driven by faith that opened their eyes to injustice, and who refused to sit by idly. Even when their cause was won, they began to question the underlying social, political, and economic systems that created the need for this advocacy campaign. ■

WHERE SERVICE AND ADVOCACY MINISTRIES UNITE

SO FAR, WE HAVE examined service and advocacy ministries separately. However, the most effective social justice ministries are those that incorporate *both* of these elements.

A parish's service ministries have more credibility if that parish is also involved in advocacy work. Like the advocates for Bellwoods House at St. Matthias, a parish involved in service-providing work should ask the hard follow-up question: *why* is this program needed? The parish should examine the underlying policies that are creating the need for its service program, and respond by engaging in advocacy work.

Likewise, advocacy work is more effective when the people raising their voices are on the front lines, directly involved in programs that are related to the advocacy topic. Nothing beats speaking from personal experience. Many times when we meet with politicians to advocate around social justice issues, we are asked: "What are *you* doing about it?" Being able to answer that you've been working in this area, have seen the need first-hand, can tell a personal story, and have witnessed increased demand for the service can all

help your cause. Better still, you can actively involve people affected by the issue as full, equal members of your group, including them in delegations meeting with politicians. They can speak for themselves about their experiences and needs.

Freedom 90 is an example of a group that has brought service and advocacy work together. It's a group of elderly food bank and emergency food volunteers from across Ontario who started volunteering for these programs many years ago, believing that they would only have to help meet emergency food needs for a short time, before those needs would soon be met by improved public programs. Today, however, the need for food banks is greater than ever. Over 400,000 Ontarians rely on food bank handouts each month. Therefore, these frustrated volunteers have formed a union to demand that the Government of Ontario end poverty and make food banks and emergency meal programs unnecessary so that they can retire from their volunteer positions before they reach the age of 90. A clever, innovative approach to advocacy work,

the Freedom 90 group is a great example of service and advocacy work coming together and enriching

one another. For more information, visit their website www.freedom90.ca. ■

EDUCATION

EDUCATION IS A VITAL element of social justice work. Too often, the social justice work of a parish is done only by a small group of dedicated and passionate parishioners. This core group is a vital part of sustaining and growing the ministry of your parish, but it's important to engage *all* parishioners. The more people you get involved, the greater emotional, physical, and financial support you will have. As you attract new members, you will find that they will have different gifts and new ideas, as well.

Here are a few ideas to consider for your parish's educational initiatives:

- Ask a guest speaker to address your congregation at an information evening. For suggestions of Diocesan-affiliated speakers, contact the diocesan Social Justice and Advocacy Department. You can also invite a speaker to preach at your parish on Sunday, so that more members of your parish will hear the message.
- Ask Diocesan Social Justice and Advocacy Consultant Murray MacAdam to present the Diocesan workshop "Charity with Justice." It compares Biblical and modern concepts of charity and justice, stimulates participants to re-examine their practices around charity and justice, and prompts discussion of new ideas and next steps. To schedule a workshop, email Murray at mmacadam@toronto.anglican.ca.
- Hold a "Poverty Is No Game" event at your parish. This board game puts participants into the shoes of a person who struggles to meet their basic expenses, and includes a debriefing afterwards about the issues involved. The experience helps participants understand what it's like to live in poverty. Social Justice and Advocacy Committee member Kyn Barker can lead your parish through this two-hour process at no cost. For more information, you can email Kyn at barkerk@rogers.com.



Murray MacAdam and Leah Watkiss with the "Poverty Is No Game" board game

- Encourage your parish to use the bulletin inserts produced by the Diocesan Social Justice and Advocacy Department. These bulletins typically focus on a specific justice issue and include a theological reflection with a list of action ideas that parishioners can adopt. You can find these bulletins on our website: www.toronto.anglican.ca/sjac.
- Hold a movie night where you show a video about a social justice issue and discuss it afterwards. Several parishes have held a four-part film series on environmental issues, helped by members of Creation Matters, our diocesan environmental group. Many excellent films and documentaries can be borrowed from your public library. You can also stream many from websites such as www.freedocumentaries.org.
- Encourage your Incumbent, parish wardens and other key parishioners to support your efforts. Their support can make a big difference in your impact. ■

A BREATH OF FRESH AIR



Reaching new people with a community garden at Church of the Resurrection, Toronto.

OUTREACH IS NOT just offering help to people and meeting local needs. It also evangelizes our congregations, reclaiming the Good News and reminding us of who we are and what God is inviting us to do. Social justice and advocacy work brings life, energy, and meaning to parishes. It invigorates people and contributes to creating the Kingdom of God here on earth. When a whole parish gets involved, it is rejuvenated. Such has been the experience of Saint David's Anglican-Lutheran Church in Orillia. Early in 2008, Saint David's Anglican Church and the Holy Cross Mission Lutheran congregation both faced serious questions about their future. Parish numbers and resources were dwindling. After months of prayerful conversation, supported by both Anglican and Lutheran bishops, the congregations voted to move ahead with an exciting new partnership. Saint David's Anglican-Lutheran Church was born.

Soon the congregation began to worship together, and in January 2009, the partnership became official. A visioning process began in which parishioners and church leaders worked together to discern where God was leading them. St. David's held a free neighbourhood barbeque that fall. The meal was designed to offer an opportunity for the church to get to know its neighbours, and guests were invited to write down and discuss their concerns for the neighbourhood. A series of initiatives sprang up from

this gathering: a breakfast program, a community garden, affordable housing advocacy, involvement in city politics, a children's program, links with other churches for education and advocacy about Aboriginal relationships, and a counselling program. The neighbourhood BBQ has become an annual event and an important means of staying connected with what God is up to in both the church community and the surrounding community God has called St. David's to serve. Parish membership has risen sharply. To learn more, please visit www.stdavidSORillia.org.

The example of St. David's shows that embracing new ministries can reawaken and enliven parishes. Other parishes are forming new ministries with similar results. Several parishes have launched community gardens. A community garden is a piece of land gardened by a group of people. These gardens improve the quality of life for the people involved; enrich neighbourhood development; produce nutritious food; and enable people from diverse backgrounds to meet each other and work together.

In 2012, Toronto's Church of the Resurrection transformed their outdoor property into a full-scale community garden, inviting parish members to garden alongside neighbours. Thanks in part to a Diocesan REACH grant, the garden now has 37 active gardeners and countless garden volunteers who have turned what was once a piece of unused

private land into a thriving neighbourhood hub, with garden gatherings, work bees, jam-making, BBQs, and impromptu water fights and picnics. The garden has become an essential part of the parish's mission to know Christ and make Him known beyond the walls of the church as we develop authentic community relationships, through and beyond the garden – missional transformation in action. For

more information, visit www.gardenattherez.com.

These are just a few examples of how social justice ministries reinvigorate parishes. These programs may seem intimidating for you to consider for your parish, but remember that each one started with a group of parishioners deciding that they care – that they want to make a difference. Once you take that first step, the Spirit will take you to amazing places! ■

GETTING THERE

WHEN CONSIDERING HOW your parish wants to move forward with service-providing and advocacy ministries, here are a few questions to keep in mind:

What programs and services already exist in your community?

All communities have programs and services of some kind. Look into what some of these programs and services are. You may want to partner with other groups and offer supplementary programs and support, or you may want to initiate something new. Either way, you should know what else is going on in your area.

What needs are not being met in your community right now?

If you want to start your own program, you need to find out what's needed and why that need isn't being met. The best people to talk to about these gaps in services are the people that you want to serve. Build relationships and ask them about their experiences. What programs do they appreciate? What programs work well? Why? What about programs that don't work well? What needs of theirs aren't being met and how do they think those needs could be met? By asking these questions, your parish's response becomes a collaboration, working *with* these vulnerable groups in your community the way Jesus worked with vulnerable people in his community.

What has your parish been involved in so far?

If you're looking for support for a new program, you're more likely to get that support if you're

entering territory that is familiar to the rest of the parish. Reflect on the work that the parish has been involved with so far. Which areas had the greatest response from the congregation? Which programs had the greatest success? Be open to new directions but build on those areas of interest and keep the momentum moving forward.

Who do you have on your outreach committee?

It's tempting for a social justice group or committee to lament their limitations, but you might be surprised at the wealth of resources that exist in your group. Ask each member to share the gifts they can offer. These can range from a knack for making posters and pamphlets with Microsoft Publisher that the group can use to distribute educational and promotional material, to a flair for baking that the group can appreciate by enjoying baked goods at a meeting. You might be surprised at the abilities of your group that can be revealed when you give it a chance.

ONCE YOU HAVE looked at these questions, it's time to move to the next step. Consider the following elements as you move ahead with your campaign:

Support from your Incumbent, clergy, and wardens

Support or lack of it from your parish staff has a big impact on your work. A supportive staff team can ease your work. An unsupportive staff can impede it. If your staff is not supportive at this time, consider how you might reach out and include them in your work. This could include a personal invitation to attend or address a committee meeting.

Support from the broader parish

Getting your entire parish behind your work will help in many ways: you will have a larger volunteer base; your work will be upheld in prayer; you will have access to more funding; your efforts will become better known; and you will have the satisfaction of knowing that your work is understood and appreciated by your fellow parishioners. If your broader parish is not currently involved in your work, strategize about ways to get them more engaged. This could include an education or outreach effort, and a meeting with the Incumbent.

How much money do you have in your budget, and how is this allocated?

Insufficient funds can hold back plans and projects. Sometimes, if the committee controlling outreach funds is the same group of people that it has been for years, the members may be merely upholding the status quo and/or funding their own pet projects instead of being open to new and innovative ideas. Consider advocating for new ways of allocating funds that are open and fair.

Setting goals

To help keep your work focussed, productive, and accountable, it's useful to articulate and record your goals. When deciding on goals, it can be useful to consider SMART criteria: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Results-oriented, and Time-specific. These criteria will help you understand what your goal is and how you can go about achieving it. Instead of saying "We want to engage our parish in social justice work" your group might decide: "In a year's time, we want at least a quarter of our congregation to be actively involved somehow in the social justice work of the parish", and go from there.

However, do not feel constricted by the SMART goals criteria. Often, in justice and advocacy work, results are hard to quantify. We rarely accomplish what we set out to accomplish in the way we thought we would accomplish it. Take, for example, the advocacy campaign that many Anglicans were involved in around war resister Kim Rivera. Ms Rivera enlisted in the U.S. Army to serve in Iraq in 2006. Once in Iraq, however, where she witnessed the war's devastation and civilian casualties, she developed a conscientious objection to the war and fled to Canada with her husband and two young children. In 2012,

after investing five years in her new community and having two more children, she faced deportation by the federal government. A groundswell of support across the country led to tens of thousands of Canadians signing petitions, writing letters, making phone calls, and protesting in the streets in support of her cause. Unfortunately she still had to leave in September, 2012.

Some would say that the campaign failed because Kim was refused asylum. In some ways, though, the campaign was a success. It attracted national press coverage, it drew the cause of war resisters into the forefront, and it moved tens of thousands of Canadians to take action. When another war resister inevitably faces a deportation order, that network of supporters already in place for Kim will surge forward into action, picking up more supporters on the way. This group will have learned from their experience of advocating from Kim and be an even more effective force. Kim's campaign has planted the seeds for the next person in her situation.

Similarly, with your other social justice initiatives and advocacy work, you will hit roadblocks and unanticipated difficulties that prevent you from achieving what you hope to accomplish. Rather than give up, view those challenges as learning opportunities and remember that social justice and advocacy work is never wasted. Even if it doesn't work the way you wanted, you are always planting seeds for the future. ■

Do you want to make comments or contributions to this document? Send your comments to: Diocesan Social Justice and Advocacy Consultant Murray MacAdam:

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Thank you!