

# thrive!



**FALL 2016**

EPISCOPAL  
DIOCESE  
OF CHICAGO  
MAGAZINE

Church, school partnerships change lives  
Health clinic breathes new life into parish  
Moline church improvises and endures



## Letter from Bishop Lee



*"Every time we gather at the Eucharist we pray for the presence of the Holy Spirit in the food we're about to receive so that we might become food for the world."*

You have heard me say, perhaps more than once, that the Episcopal Church is in the transformation business, that it is our job to manifest the life-changing power of Christ in practical ways that make an impact on our friends and neighbors, our communities and the wider world. In this issue of Thrive! you will meet people in our diocese who have risen to that challenge.

I like to joke that salvation through education is my favorite heresy. We don't have to pass a standardized test to receive God's grace. Yet getting a good education is essential to making one's way in our competitive society, and it is difficult to do if you live in one of the many underfunded school districts in our state. Our cover story introduces you to volunteers from Christ Church in Waukegan, St. Mary's in Park Ridge, Christ Church in Winnetka, Holy Spirit in Lake Forest and Emmanuel in Rockford who are working to give students in urban schools a better opportunity to succeed in the classroom and beyond.

At Good Shepherd in Momence, a tiny congregation has experienced a renewed sense of mission by opening a weekly wellness clinic for Spanish-speaking neighbors. These former migrant workers have settled in and around Momence and, as it turns out, were looking not only for health care, but also for a place to worship. Their arrival has opened a new phase in the parish's life.

All Saints Church in Moline is also entering a new phase in its life. Seven years ago, during the upheavals that led to a split in the former Diocese of Quincy, members were meeting around dining tables in one another's homes because they had lost the buildings in which they once worshipped. But at our diocesan convention this month, All Saints will be admitted to parish status, an acknowledgment of the congregation's resilience

and perseverance in the face of hardships that most parishes do not face.

And speaking of diocesan convention, in this issue you will find an interview with Bishop Yvette Flunder, presiding bishop of The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries, a multi-denominational coalition of more than 56 churches and faith-based organizations, who will be our keynote speaker. She speaks in her interview, as she will at convention, about the commitment that the Gospel calls us to make to building a more just and peaceful world, commitments our diocese tries to live out, in part, through its work against racism and against gun violence. Bishop Flunder is a renowned preacher, but she is also an accomplished singer, so this keynote address may be a bit different than what we are used to.

Our convention Eucharist, with its boisterous, spirited singing, is one of the spiritual high points of my year. I look forward to experiencing the great spirit of togetherness that fills that vast hotel ballroom in Lombard. Every time we gather at the Eucharist we pray for the presence of the Holy Spirit in the food we're about to receive so that we might become food for the world. That invocation is over the bread and wine and over us, the Body of Christ, to go out and transform the world. At the convention Eucharist, with more than 600 of us worshipping together, I can sense that with God's help we have the power to do so.

Sometimes, when we are not in such supportive company, the realization that God has given us both work to do and the tools to do it can be difficult to sustain. If you have that experience, please read this issue of Thrive! You'll see that wherever two or three of us are gathered, the work goes on.

In Christ,  
+ Jeffery



# thrive!

EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF CHICAGO MAGAZINE | FALL 2016



## *Back to Class* 02

Many of Illinois' schools are underfunded, especially those in impoverished neighborhoods. Through parish-school partnerships, Episcopalians like Linda Roddy (above) are working to give more students a chance to succeed by tutoring, providing supplies, offering financial aid and more.

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#### On our cover

Gabriel Murray and his mother, Reyna Montes de Oca. Gabriel is enrolled in Waukegan to College. Photo by Marc Berlow.

## SAVE THESE DATES

### Deanery Conversations with Bishop Lee

March 18, 2017, 8:30-10 am

Elgin Deanery, St. Nicholas, Elk Grove Village

October 14, 2017, 8:30-10 am

Aurora Deanery, St. Andrew's, Downers Grove

Sunday, November 12, 2017, 2-4 pm

Joliet Deanery, St. John the Evangelist Flossmoor

### College for Congregational Development

Friday & Saturday weekend intensive format

October 6 & 7, 2017; December 8 & 9, 2017

February 9 & 10, 2018; April 20 & 21, 2018

### Summer Session

July 16-22, 2017

### Fierce Conversations

January 17-18, 8:30 am-4:30 pm

Great Hall, \$150, scholarships available

### Fierce Conversations cont'd

April 23-26

Nicholas Center, \$600, scholarships available

### One Day Fierce Conversations

March 11, 8:30 am-4:30 pm

Great Hall, \$100, scholarships available

### All Our Children Chicago 2017 Regional Forum

March 24-25, 2017

"Ensuring High Quality, Accessible Public Education for All Our Nation's Children"  
St. James Commons

### Unholy Trinity: the Intersection of Racism, Poverty and Gun Violence

April 20-22, 2017

A Conference Facilitated by Bishops United Against Gun Violence  
Lutheran School of Theology



# Teaching Assistance

## In Poor Schools Across the Diocese, Parish Volunteers Make a Difference

By Rebecca Wilson



*"It's clear that the idea of social justice and making a systemic impact is part of the Episcopal ethos, and I really am grateful for that."*  
— Elyse Danckers

**R**eyna Montes de Oca, a member of La Iglesia Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe in Waukegan, has always known that she wanted her children to go to college. But because she attended secondary school in Mexico before immigrating to the United States, the jargon of the American education system was initially a bit baffling.

"What is GPA?" she remembers wondering when her daughter, Sasha, began to consider college. "What is a freshman or a sophomore?"

Sasha, set to graduate from Columbia College in Chicago this December, first attended the College of Lake County, a community college in Grayslake. "There were things I didn't understand," she says. "I wish I would have had something to guide me. I would have finished school faster."

So when Montes de Oca had the chance to enroll her son, Gabriel Murray, in a program called

Waukegan to College, housed at Christ Episcopal Church in Waukegan, she jumped at the opportunity.

W2C, as volunteers and participants call it, provides Waukegan students and parents with tutoring, coaching, workshops and summer programs all aimed at helping students succeed in high school and prepare for college. Kids can start the program in fifth grade and, through coaching by phone and online, continue all the way through college.

About 78 percent of the students enrolled in the Waukegan City School District are Hispanic, according to the Illinois State Board of Education, and like Sasha and Gabriel, many of them are first-generation Americans who hope to be the first in their families to earn college degrees. Nearly all Waukegan to College participants are Latino, and many are the children of immigrants.

Gabriel, now a freshman at Waukegan High School who hopes to study engineering in college, has





*“Episcopal churches have been there since the beginning of Waukegan to College. If we don’t support these kids now, who will?”*

participated in Waukegan to College since he was in fifth grade. He’s gone on college visits and to summer camps, attended tutoring, and gotten help with time management and study skills.

“It opens up a lot of opportunity that we wouldn’t have,” he says, recounting his experience last summer at a Waukegan to College summer leadership camp at Northern Illinois University. “It’s a great opportunity to expand.”

His big sister agrees. “I see my brother now,” Sasha says, “and he already knows so much more than I did at his age.”

Waukegan to College got its start nearly ten years ago when Lake County United, an Industrial Areas Foundation community organizing coalition, held a series of listening sessions with Waukegan residents to identify their most pressing concerns.

“We assumed the need would be immigration reform,” remembers the Rev. Eileen Shanley-Roberts, rector of Christ Episcopal Church in Waukegan. “But what surfaced was the need for improvement in education.”

In 2009, Episcopal Charities and Community Services in the Diocese of Chicago gave the group a grant to develop a project, and Shanley-Roberts participated in a planning process with leaders from La Iglesia Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, Church of the Holy Spirit in Lake Forest, Annunciation of Our Lady Episcopal Church in Gurnee, and Lutheran partners from the community. The result, in 2009, was Waukegan to College. The program began with 25 students and today enrolls 130. The goal, says Executive Director Elyse Danckers, is 150.

The program’s growth and success—19 graduates have already gone on to four-year colleges—owe a good deal to financial and practical support from Episcopalians across the region, Danckers says. In addition to the Episcopal Charities planning grant, which Danckers notes came in the middle of the recession, W2C now receives funding and volunteer support from Christ Church, Waukegan, Christ Church, Winnetka, and Holy Spirit, Lake Forest. “Having volunteer tutors who are willing to come every Saturday morning from far away to help the students is extremely powerful for them,” she says. “It’s clear that the idea of social justice and making a systemic impact is part of the Episcopal ethos, and I really am grateful for that.”

“Episcopal churches have been there since the beginning of Waukegan to College, and so if we Episcopalians don’t support these kids now, who will?” says Christine Peterson, a member of Christ Church, Winnetka, who serves on the congregation’s Benevolence Committee and has reviewed grant proposals from Waukegan to College. Her daughters have volunteered with the program, and Peterson, a lawyer who now stays home with her children, has helped organize the W2C Career Day.

“I’m super-impressed with them and what they’re doing on a shoestring budget,” she says. “It’s very pragmatic and very positive—a great combination.”

Elizabeth and John McDonald, members of Church of the Holy Spirit, agree. “As an Episcopalian, I think it’s really important to









give back and reach out to people,” says John, a retired math teacher and high school administrator who has tutored Waukegan to College students on Saturday mornings since 2011.

The couple recently attended a conference with Danckers to talk about the importance of volunteering. Elizabeth, a retired school administrator and principal who started her career as an English teacher, first learned of Waukegan to College when she was preparing to retire and asked one of the parish’s priests what she could do to volunteer. “We expected the priest to say that we could help with the food pantry or something like that. But she said, ‘You used to be teachers, didn’t you?’ Sometimes I think we get more out of it than the students do,” she says.

Across the diocese, that same Episcopal ethos has led other congregations to form relationships with local schools to provide supplies, financial support, tutors, and more. While some congregations support neighborhood schools and students, others have gone further from home to find partners. At St. Mary’s Episcopal Church in Park Ridge, a partnership with CCA Academy on Chicago’s West Side, located nearly an hour away by car, has been a mainstay of the parish’s outreach since 1979.

“It has been a 38-year ongoing relationship that has been so fruitful and so helpful. There have been so many relationships,” says Dr. Myra Sampson, who founded CCA to serve young people who had dropped out of traditional high schools. St. Mary’s first grant to CCA, she says, was \$1000 to fund a reading lab. The United Thank Offering, a grant-making program of the Episcopal Church, contributed money for the school’s first van and later gave generously to a capital campaign for a science lab. “We are one of the few urban non-public high schools that has a science lab,” Sampson says.

In 2014, longtime St. Mary’s member Dava Kondiles, a recently retired music teacher, began talking with Sampson about starting a tutoring program at CCA, which is now a charter school. “The tutors have worked with many students, particularly seniors, helping them with college readiness skills and graduation requirements,” Sampson says. “For many of our students, this is the first time that they’ve had this kind of one-on-one assistance.

“We’ve had students standing in the hallway with their computers saying, ‘Where are the ladies? Where are the ladies?’ showing how much they appreciate the opportunity to address their challenges. It’s really helped them to grow,” she adds.

“When you see what they’re trying to do, you want to help,” Kondiles says. “It’s taken some time. Sometimes we’re able to connect with the kids. At first I don’t think

*“We’re connected to the kids at CCA through God’s love, and we’re called to be in relationships with each other. It’s in our DNA.”*

they thought we’d keep coming back. When our male volunteers can come, that’s especially important.”

The Rev. Patrick Skutch, St. Mary’s rector since 2015, says that the commitment of the CCA tutors is indicative of the congregation’s identity. “The folks here really do care about justice and the dignity of every human being. There’s a sense that folks feel like we’re called through our faith and through our baptism to people who could use our help, but it’s about partnership and relationship, not just dropping in to help out.”

“This is exactly the kind of the thing that the church needs to be up to,” he says of the CCA partnership. “We’re connected to the kids at CCA through God’s love, and we’re called to be in relationships with each other. It’s in our DNA.”

Both Kondiles and Paula Risk, a retired registered nurse and member of St. Mary’s who also tutors at CCA, acknowledge that their relationships with students at CCA can be sobering. In particular, their time at the school has brought Chicago’s gun violence epidemic, one of Bishop Jeff Lee’s advocacy priorities, into focus.

“What most of us find hard to believe is that what you read in the newspaper is going on,” Kondiles says. In April, a 16-year-old CCA student named Pierre Louri was shot and killed by a Chicago police officer after Louri had allegedly threatened him with a gun. According to media reports, some community members believe that Louri was trying to flee from police, and CCA tutors were in the building the morning after a demonstration over the boy’s death.

“Some of them wanted to talk about it,” Kondiles says. “We need to let people know that we’re there for them. When you talk to people, it gives you a different



*“For many of our students, this is the first time that they’ve had this kind of one-on-one assistance.”*  
— Dava Kondiles

*“Some of these kids are gang members. We know that. These aren’t just names, these are people. These are people who live and die. They’re us.”*

way of looking at it. They’re not just ‘them.’”

“Some of these kids are gang members,” Risk says. “We know that. These aren’t just names, these are people. These are people who live and die. They’re us.

“We’re called by our baptismal vows to make the world a better place,” she adds. “These kids have a particularly challenging life in many ways, and we can support them and let them know we’re there for them. That’s the church’s work.”

Gun violence is the starkest reminder that the young people who attend urban schools come from a different and more dangerous world than most of the Episcopalians who volunteer their time as tutors. And volunteers experience the disparities that result from the way Illinois funds public education. Raise Your Hand for Illinois Public Education, a grassroots advocacy initiative, reports that Illinois ranks last nationally in the percentage of public education funding that comes from the state. When schools must rely more heavily on local funds, communities with higher property values can draw on strong property tax revenues to support tutoring, field trips, sports and other enrichment and extra-curricular activities. In low-income districts, there is no money for extras. School advocates call the resulting disparities the “opportunity gap.”

Anne Tuohy, a member of St. Elisabeth’s Episcopal Church in Glencoe and a longtime leader in early childhood education initiatives, says that when Episcopalians volunteer in schools that lack resources, they often become advocates for closing the opportunity gap.

“Working in partnership with parents, educators and civic leaders, we discover the underlying needs and strengths of the community,” she says. “Then we can be respected participants in advocating for just systems in public education.”

“Ultimately, our goal as Christians is to build a just society in which every child has the opportunity to thrive, to experience loving, trusting relationships and to contribute to the larger community,” she says. “Having access to high quality public education and community support leads to success in school and throughout life.”

In Rockford, volunteers from Emmanuel Episcopal Church are determined to close the opportunity gap. The congregation’s longstanding partnership with Haskell Academy has recently been re-energized as more members have volunteered to tutor at the school, and other



downtown churches have been inspired to donate school supplies, community dinners and boots for every child.

“To me, education is the key,” says Jean Frana, a lifelong member of Emmanuel and lead volunteer at Haskell. “We have a lot of low-income families in this community, and until we educate kids, nothing else is going to improve. At Emmanuel, Pastor Andria and I decided that we will put our energy into transforming Rockford through education,” she says, referring to the Rev. Andria Skornik, Emmanuel’s rector. To keep the school fresh in parishioners’ minds, Frana displays Haskell students’ artwork in the church’s undercroft and changes the exhibit every six weeks.

When they began tutoring at Haskell, Frana and her husband recognized that many of the school’s students had no opportunity to





learn about the environment firsthand. Now the couple sponsors a field trip to Severson Dells Nature Center for both of Haskell's third grade classes. Though the preserve is just nine miles from the school, most of the students have never been there.

"It's the best money we've ever spent in our lives," she says. "The kids have never experienced going into wilderness to look at bugs or look at pond scum. They've never been swimming in anything but a swimming pool, never been to the beach, to a pond, a river or a stream. They need to know about the environment. I realized this through reading books with these kids, and I thought, 'This is something we can do for them.'"

Emmanuel's partnership with Haskell was born in the 1980s, at a time when the congregation decided to remain in the city while other

churches were following their members to the suburbs. Today, the parish is deeply involved in Jeremiah Development, a neighborhood organizing project that advocates for housing rehabilitation and infrastructure development, and ShelterCare, a program for adults who suffer from chronic mental illness and families who are homeless.

"We have a call to be an urban oasis of hospitality," Skornik says. "There's love for this area and a call. We are called Emmanuel, and we have this opportunity to be an experience of God's presence to the people around us. Our name is something we can live up to."

"We're all children of God," Frana says, "and these kids deserve the same chance as wealthy kids. If we can make that happen, we should. Jesus tells us to help each other. That's what's required of us. I take that very seriously." ✝







# A Wellness Ministry Inspires New Life At a Momence Church

By Lu Stanton León



*“Here they have found a church home; they have found friends. Many of them have now become regular parishioners and bring their children to Sunday school.”  
— Beverley Sailer*

When the tiny congregation at Good Shepherd decided to offer a weekly wellness clinic aimed at serving their Spanish-speaking neighbors, they didn’t foresee the consequences.

Yes, as they had hoped, it was a godsend to many in the community who were without health insurance or access to care. It was also a Godsend to the congregation, giving it a vitality and a purpose that had been missing.

“It has kept our church alive,” parishioner Nina Klooster says of the Wellness Wednesdays program. “Otherwise, we would have to close. We were on the verge of extinction.”

The wellness clinic, which serves an average of eight clients a week, operates out of Good

Shepherd’s parish hall from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. every Wednesday and has grown to include a pot-luck lunch, with both parishioners and clients contributing dishes. Retired nurse Beverley Sailer, a member of Holy Family in Park Forest, volunteers her time every week, focusing primarily on clients’ blood pressures and sugar levels and talking to them about healthy diets. “I can proudly say that because of the people coming to the program and getting checked, I have discovered four or five people who have diabetes, just by checking their blood sugar on a regular basis,” she says.

The seed for the wellness ministry was planted in early 2014 when the Rev. Jim Steen, then the diocesan director of ministries, met with members of the parish to discuss what they could do to increase the viability and vitality of the congregation.

It was Steen, says Dick Porter, the parish treasurer, who encouraged the church to start an outreach program.

“He talked about various things we could do to increase the congregation and maybe serve the community,” Porter says. “He suggested something along the lines of Wellness Wednesdays and our organist, Cathy Griesmeyer, said she knew a nurse at another parish, and we went from there.”

Griesmeyer had the connections to pull it all together. In addition to being a member and former organist at Holy Family, she’s the wife of the Rev. Walter Griesmeyer, a retired, former pastor of Good Shepherd. She approached Sailer—who said yes right away—and brought in Yolanda Hill-Hernandez, a native of Lima, Peru, and resident of Chicago Heights, to serve as translator. Good Shepherd’s congregation, which numbered about seven at the time, went to work, advertising on the radio and in local newspapers and placing flyers in the library, grocery stores and laundromat.

“Yolanda, who is our translator, didn’t know anybody in the community, but she made friends quickly,” Porter says. “The interesting part of this was that while they came for blood pressure checks and diabetes checks, they took the opportunity to look inside our church and fell in love with it. They saw similarities in our church and the Roman Catholic church they were used to. As they began to understand us, they started attending Sunday services.”

Sailer, who had started a more limited health ministry at Holy Family, says she often doesn’t need a translator. “You have to be inventive sometimes when there is a language barrier, but most of the people who come speak pretty good English. Many of them have now become regular parishioners and bring their children to Sunday school. Here they have found a church home; they have found friends. It is wonderful.”

Uriel Ortiz Alvarado first visited the wellness clinic at the invitation of a friend, Marina Torres, who was from Ortiz’s small hometown in Mexico and had attended Wellness Wednesdays.

“To be learning about God and helping the church is important to me,” says Ortiz, a former Roman Catholic who previously worked as a vegetable packer in Momence. Now he is the paid sexton at Good Shepherd.

With Hill-Hernandez translating his Spanish to English, Ortiz says, “I feel that I’m in the place where I belong now, that I’m home. I’m very grateful and very happy that all the people here support me and always stand with me. Coming to this church is a beautiful thing that has happened in my life. When I’m doing work for the church, I know that I am not alone. I have peace of mind because I feel the love of God watching me.”

Ortiz has been in the United States for about 33 years. He was one of the three million undocumented immigrants who received legal status in 1986 when President Ronald Reagan signed an immigration reform bill giving them amnesty. Seeking work, he moved from California to Momence 12 years ago.

Torres says she learned about Wellness Wednesdays when she picked up a flyer at the laundry where she works as an attendant. She also works a second job at a fruit processing plant.

“The interesting part of this was that while they came for blood pressure checks and diabetes checks, they took the opportunity to look inside our church and fell in love with it.”







"I am very grateful to have this program because I've lost weight and I've learned how to control my sugar level," says Torres, who has lived in Momence for 19 years and doesn't have health insurance.

Even though she works from midnight to 4 a.m. Sundays at her fruit processing job, she always makes it to Good Shepherd for the Sunday morning service.

"Good Shepherd is small, but the people are just filled with the spirit," says Hal Stewart, the former Bishop & Trustees liaison to Good Shepherd. "I think part of it is that the congregation, as well as the leadership, has totally bought into this health outreach. It's not reaching out to the typical member of Momence, but it is drawing in people.

"A few years ago the leadership realized there was a growing community of Hispanics in the area. Many of them work on farms and a lot of them have no health benefits. The church decided to set up a weekly clinic. Now they're talking about doing some Spanish services. When you're there on a Sunday there is just a feeling that this church is alive. There's a vibrancy there. We talk about rewarding parishes that are vibrant, and this is one."

Momence is located on the Kankakee River, some 50 miles south of Chicago. About 20 percent of its 3,300 population is Hispanic. Doug Hoffman, the Bishop & Trustees current liaison to Good Shepherd,

grew up not far from Momence and has a personal connection with the parish. Hoffman's mother used to work with Dick Porter.

"Good Shepherd is a little parish in a town that has had a demographic change," Hoffman says. "A Prairie style Episcopal church with beautiful stained glass, a pipe organ, and nice worship space. Yet they are struggling like heck to keep themselves going, and they're struggling for all the right reasons. They are surrounded by truck farming—gladiolas, tulips, that kind of thing—and the area is highly dependent on migrant labor. Now the workers have quit migrating and have stayed. That has caused a demographic switch.

"There are health needs that are not being met," Hoffman says, "and you have a core group of Christian people who see a need in their brothers and sisters and want to help them meet those needs. They are, in my view, doing something out of a commitment to the Gospel. It's a faith lived, not a faith learned. I really do think it comes from Christian conviction, although they may not say it that way."

Since the wellness ministry began, Sunday attendance has almost tripled to around 16 people. Good Shepherd never has been a large church; in fact, it's never gone beyond mission status. Ask Porter to identify the church's leadership, and he replies that every member is part of the leadership.









“We help people, but we get more out of it than we give. They provide us with so much spiritual light. They just have faith far beyond what I have, and being around people who have that kind of faith is awesome for me.”



“We’re forced to participate because there aren’t that many of us,” says Porter, who is 86 years old and has been a member of Good Shepherd for almost 40 years. “If we want to keep the Episcopal Church going in Mokenca, we all have to get behind and push.”

Porter is always present at Wellness Wednesdays, as are Nina Klooster and her husband, Dale. Nina Klooster, a member of Good Shepherd since 1990, does a little bit of everything when it comes to the clinic, including giving clients a ride to the church and, when needed, providing rides to their personal doctors or to Azzarelli Outreach Clinic in

Kankakee. She takes them grocery shopping and to the Social Security office, as well as on visits to the nursing homes.

Hill-Hernandez, who is 74 years old, often accompanies Klooster.

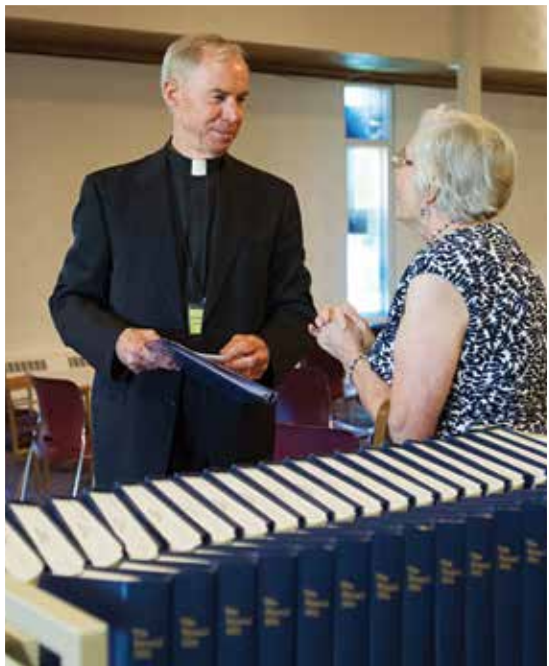
“I’m a client, a cleanup lady, interpreter, everything. I enjoy that. I am the chauffeur to take the people to the clinic,” Hill-Hernandez says. She also translates the Sunday sermons.

Porter says the congregation had been served by supply clergy but recently has had bilingual, lay-led services with Hill-Hernandez translating. The church would like to find a Spanish-speaking priest, deacon or seminarian.

“It’s a little bit of a chore for supply people to make this trip,” Porter says. “Our church used to be a lot more thriving, but we’re hanging in there. We love it. We don’t want to let it go.”

Porter and the Kloosters are the only remaining parishioners from the time prior to the beginning of Wellness Wednesdays. While they appreciate their past, they are living fully in the present.

“We help people, but we get more out of it than we give,” Klooster says. Of the Spanish-speaking Christians who began as clients and form much of the congregation now, she says, “They provide us with so much spiritual light,” she says. “They just have faith beyond what I have, and being around people who have that kind of faith is awesome for me.” ✚





# Steadfast in Faith

At All Saints, Moline,  
the Table Stays Open to All

By Kathleen Moore



*“Because of how this community got started and all the groundwork required to form a new church, All Saints became a worshiping community that is really lay-driven.”*

— Rev. Roger Hungerford

Seven years ago, the community that would become All Saints Episcopal Church in Moline began meeting around dining tables in family homes, having lost their church and its assets to the clergy and laity who broke away from the Episcopal Church over the ordination of an openly gay bishop. At the diocesan convention this fall, the itinerant church will become a full-fledged parish.

“When we got started, it was about being an open church that shows the love of God for all people and not just certain individuals who meet certain criteria,” says Sue Erickson, a member of All Saints. “We weren’t thinking in terms of eventually becoming a parish; we didn’t know what was going to happen.”

All Saints was formed in 2009 by members of Christ Church, Moline, and Trinity Parish, Rock Island, after the former Diocese of Quincy split in two. In 2013, All Saints and eight other congregations joined the Diocese of Chicago as its Peoria deanery.

All Saints has paid a price for remaining true to its

gospel convictions, but the Rev. Roger Hungerford, the church’s vicar, says it was worth it. “Not only was this sense of inclusiveness the energy or spark or catalyst that drove the creation of All Saints, but it is now a part of our DNA,” he says. “Being inclusive not only for sexual identity, but also for gender identity, for race, for age, for every category—we try to make sure that everybody is incorporated. This community here is one that believes that Jesus calls everyone, no exceptions, no strings attached. It’s just a part of our nature.”

“It was a wonderful collaboration of laypeople and clergy,” the Rev. Laurence Larson says of the early days of building the community. “The teamwork was inspiring. Everyone was willing to do what they could with excitement, whether it was offering something material or some skill.” Larson, the retired rector at Trinity, served as All Saints co-pastor along with the Rev. James Allemeier, retired rector of Christ Church, and Christ Church’s former deacon, the



“Always, someone stepped forward. Slowly, but surely we built up the basic needs that we had.”







Rev. Peggy Lee, who is now a priest.

“We had nothing, so we made an altar out of a table—a regular table,” Larson says. “But it was too low to use, so one of the men in the congregation made these four wooden pegs that lifted the table up. Then a woman in the congregation had some lace curtains that she donated, and another put those together to make a frontal to cover the whole altar. That’s the kind of thing that happened. Always, someone stepped forward. Slowly but surely we built up the basic needs that we had.”

Members of the All Saints community are quick to give credit to parishes in the Diocese of Chicago who offered early, vital support. “For example, our first chalice was from my communion kit,” Allemeier says. “It was small. We had it for about a month until a parish in the Diocese of Chicago came forward with some vestments and another chalice.”

Even in those challenging early days, the people of All Saints emphasized the importance of outreach. Following the 2010 Haiti earthquake, the congregation raised over \$1,600 for Episcopal Relief

and Development with a “buy back a brick for Haiti” fundraising project. “Outreach is our biggest thing,” Erickson says. “To me, that is what church is all about—it’s giving back. And we’ve done a lot of that.”

The congregation has a knack for coming up with creative, successful collection projects, including: Thanksgiving in July for the food pantry, Jeans for Teens in conjunction with the local high school, Outfit the House for the refugee community, The Heifer Tube, which collected quarters in an acrylic tube for Heifer International, and Feeding the 5,000, which collected 5,000 cans of soup in one year for the local food pantry. All Saints is also involved in the efforts of the local Red Cross and helps out with community meals offered by other local faith communities.

In 2015, members traveled to Belize on All Saints’ first mission trip. In September 2017, they will visit the Lakota reservation in Pine Ridge, South Dakota. The congregation plans to offer mission trips every other year.

In 2012, just three years removed from its dining-table origins, All



Saints called Hungerford as its first full-time clergyperson. “Because of how this community got started and all the groundwork required to form a new church, All Saints became a worshipping community that is really lay-driven,” Hungerford says. “A lot of people that had attended churches were very faithful in their attendance at their previous parish before this schism, but now had to get more actively involved in order to make this new church come alive. With all that getting involved, they felt a very deep connection not only to the church but to each other. They have grown in their understanding of Christ’s calling for us to reach out into the wider world and to care for each other.”

Members agree that this deepened involvement has fostered uniquely strong relationships. “It’s a real family,” Erickson says. “Most times in churches they’re so established, and you don’t feel like you’re really ever ‘in.’ But in this one, we get everybody involved because you have to be, and it just makes it more worthwhile if you do. And I think that’s why people really do enjoy All Saints, because we all do something to some

degree. If they can’t do something physically, people give monetarily. People want to be involved.”

All Saints currently worships in rented space inside the Riverside Life Center in Moline, a property owned by Riverside United Methodist Church. “We’re like the Israelites wandering in the desert,” says Hungerford. “They carried all their belongings on their pack animals, and everybody had their specific jobs. We started off literally with nothing, and it’s grown to where we have an organ, all the speakers, altar, vestments and hymnals and all this stuff associated with a liturgical-style church.” Every Sunday, members of the congregation must set up the worship space before liturgy begins, and take it down afterward. “Most clergy are always preaching that the church is the people and not the building,” says Allemeier. “In our community, we know that’s true.”

While the congregation has made do with the rented space, a permanent home would bring several benefits. “One of the biggest things that parish status means to the community is a sense of permanence,”





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Hungerford says. “Like the Israelites, the dream is to find your own permanent place in your own permanent home. When we have funerals and the family comes, we do the worship service, and then we’ll host a reception for them, but even before the reception is over, we end up having to put all the stuff in our worship space away—they can’t even go back for private prayer time because of the temporary nature of our space and life here.”

Members also dream of hosting community dinners and other outreach projects in their permanent home and of creating a space that more closely fits their liturgical tradition.

“This community has been able to move from a group of people who are sitting around a table talking about this, to a group of people who gathered together and found a place for the initial worship, to a group of people who found a semi-permanent place to rent, to a group that grew enough to be able to hire clergy full-time,” Hungerford says. “Now the next step is for us to become a full-fledged parish within the Diocese of Chicago. It’s like a plant that starts off as a seed and it sprouts up through the ground. Now we’re up to where we’re just a little plant, we’ve got a few leaves, but we’re working our way up to becoming a tree.” ✚









# Fear-based Religion

*Bishop Flunder is coming for you*

Bishop Yvette Flunder, presiding bishop of The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries, a multi-denominational coalition of more than 56 churches and faith-based organizations, will be the keynote speaker at this year's diocesan convention. Flunder, who gave the keynote address at the White House's 2014 observance of World AIDS Day, has spent much of her ministry working against what she calls "fear-based religion."

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*“Thank God for millennials. They have a voice and are raising some hell, and leaning toward relational spirituality. There is something very powerful in reformation mode. As a practitioner of faith, I am excited about it.”*

A

third-generation preacher with roots in the Church of God in Christ, Flunder is founder of the City of Refuge United Church of Christ in Oakland, California, a thriving, primarily black, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender congregation. She is an active member of the Religion Council of the Human Rights Campaign and the National Black Justice Coalition, and is the author of “Where the Edge Gathers: A Theology of Homiletic Radical Inclusion,” published by Pilgrim Press.

Prominent as an activist and sought after as a preacher, Flunder is also a well-known gospel singer, having recorded with Walter Hawkins and the Family, the City of Refuge Choir and Chanticleer. Here she speaks with Jim Naughton about some of the challenges facing the contemporary church in its work for justice.

**JN:** What can local churches do about racism?

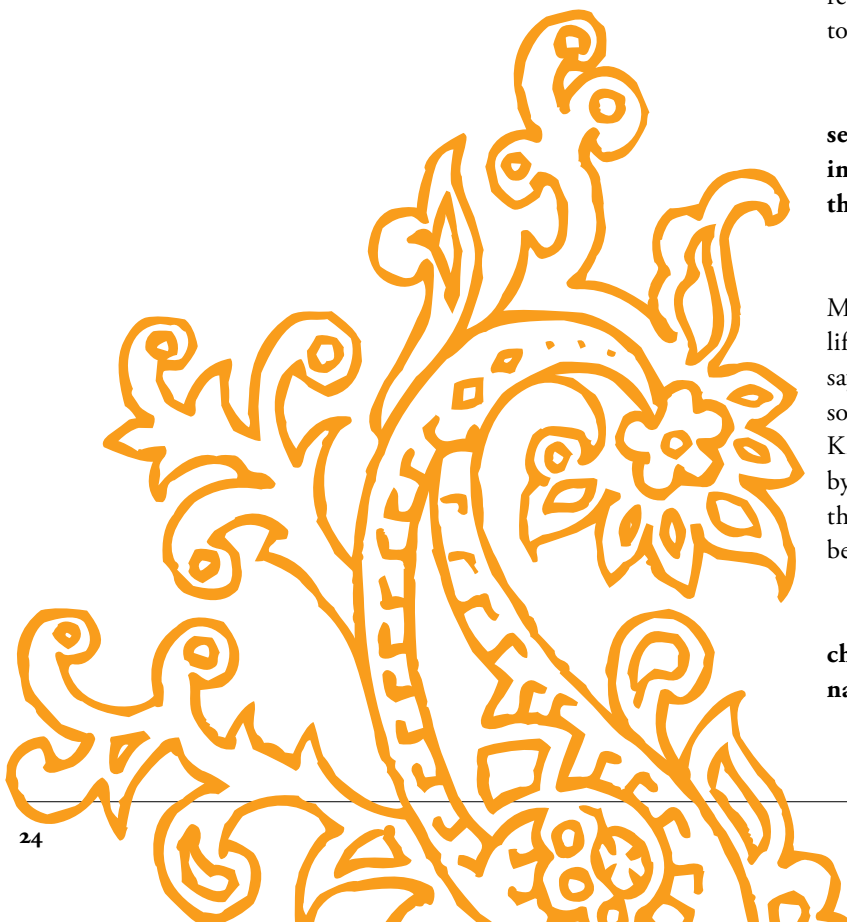
**BF:** Nothing happens without conversation. We need real, honest conversation around issues of race, but also around gender and sexuality and privilege and class. Those conversations don’t occur unless people get together and lay it all out on the table.

These divides are so often perpetuated by faith. I don’t know any other way to say it. Somehow or other we are going to have to change that, and I think it begins with some real conversation among ourselves. We need to work very hard to make those conversations a reality. Relationships begin with conversation. You don’t know how to make peace with someone until you’ve really gotten to know them.

**JN:** In addition to race you mentioned issues of gender, sexuality, privilege and class. How can the church focus on intersectional oppressions without making some groups feel as though they have been left out?

**BF:** It’s kind of like the whole thing between “Black Lives Matter” and “All Lives Matter.” I think it is okay when there is a proliferation of abuse to black people for our white brothers and sisters to say, “This is what we are going to focus on right now.” I think there is something very powerful about that. It reminds me of Martin Luther King and the civil rights movement. In so many ways it was funded by people who aren’t black. A lot of Jewish money went into making the movement for civil rights possible. Some way or other we need to be able to do that without feeling that we are betraying anyone.

**JN:** Do you think primarily white, relatively privileged churches have a particular role to play in binding up some of the nation’s wounds?





**BF:** Yes, I do. One of my friends, a very wealthy brother that lives up by Mt. Hood in Oregon, his family has obscene amounts of money, he brought me up there for a peace event. We were going to talk about peace and restoration for populations that have been historically marginalized, and we had a really good conversation, a really good conversation. I said to him, “You know what brother, real reconciliation can’t happen before or without repentance,” and he said to me “I don’t like that word.” I said “So why?” And he said in his life he had never done anything in his mind that was really evil and wrong to people. He’d always been a kind person and a fair person. But I said, “We cannot avoid the sins of our fathers. In reality, the money you have today to help us with was acquired by your fathers and grandfathers, and it was essentially on the backs of my fathers and grandfathers, and so I think it is important to acknowledge that and to repent of it.” And we were not able to talk anymore. We had to take a break from the meeting. And that’s just how hard it was.

We have got to be able to acknowledge that the blood on the ground is on the ground because someone put it there. It is hard for people to say, my people abused another people. There is no upper class without a lower class. But people want to deny that. After Michelle Obama said that slaves had built the White House, Bill O’Reilly went on television and said the slaves were very well housed and cared for. How do you put that in a sentence? How does that sound? They were slaves, for heaven’s sake. Why would you say that? And there is the justification for slavery. Because they were treated kindly.

My thinking about it is that one of the things we could proceed to talk about is repentance. Can we acknowledge the fact that that First Nations people; among Europeans, the Irish; Chinese people; African Americans in the south and in the north faced oppression? There needs to be some reconciliation. There needs to be repentance. I think there needs to be a ritual for it. We can create it together. And move it around in our churches. Just a desire to do it will give us a way how to do it.

**JN:** You are a singer. What is the role of art and music in the movement?

**BF:** For us, every freedom movement has its songs. And because every freedom movement has its songs, I am one that encourages and supports music because that is where the soul of the movement is. Everybody has their feelings about what is proper and not proper when it comes to church music, but the point is that it is music and the important themes, in so many ways, fly on the wings of music.

**JN:** What do you say to people who think that working for justice amounts to politicizing the gospel?

**BF:** Sometimes just a one-liner: Peace church is not always safe church. Justice church is not always safe church.

And perhaps to say that Jesus did not live a safe life. I think that makes very clear what is expected of us. You can’t do justice work and be afraid. It just doesn’t work.

**JN:** You’ve dedicated much of your ministry to fighting HIV/AIDS. Much progress has been made. What challenges most concern you?

**BF:** The beauty of it is that we have medications that can virtually render the disease chronic and manageable. We are at that place. Chronic and manageable is what we want until we get a cure. But that doesn’t cure the other things that exacerbate HIV. It doesn’t cure shame. It doesn’t cure guilt. It doesn’t cure stigma. People are still horribly stigmatized, and people are still afraid and in denial because of how people respond to you. It’s very sad.

For more than 30 years I been involved in this fight. The biggest enemy we have in bringing an end to the virus is stigma. It was the same with cholera in the 1800s. People said the Irish were wicked people. The disease proliferated in Irish ghettos and people believed it was the will of God and a curse from God because people were wicked. Then people found out it was just about clean water. It didn’t have to do with wickedness. We could end HIV in our lifetime; it could go the way of polio and diphtheria, but we can’t change it as long as we have this stigma associated with it.

**JN:** Religion contributes to this problem, doesn’t it?

**BF:** Yes, through poor theology around retribution and anger. It’s like God as an angry, alcoholic father who just comes home and beats everybody. It is a god who is very sensitive and angry and full of retribution. Fear-based religion is a tool and it has worked for years and years.

**JN:** Do you see much hope for change in this regard?

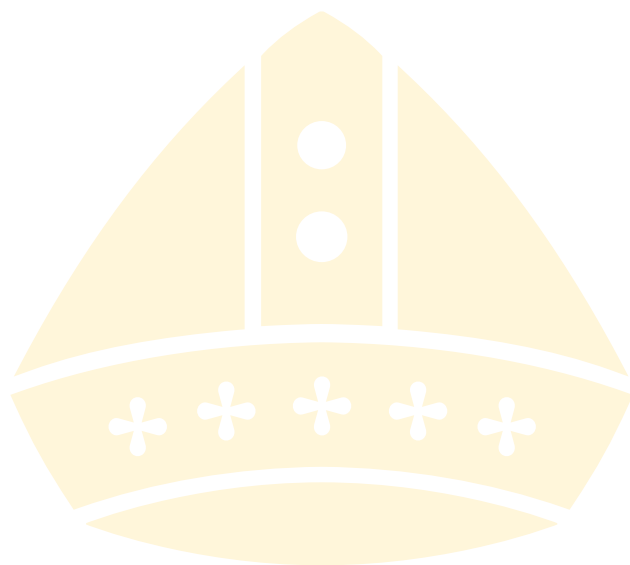
**BF:** Thank God for millennials. They have a voice and are raising some hell, and leaning toward relational spirituality. There is something very powerful in reformation mode. As a practitioner of faith, I am excited about it.

For one thing, they are not as church-ed as we were, so they are not properly indoctrinated. But they are spiritual and filled with love, not all of them, but a lot of them. They are not fear-based. They are not afraid of God and they are not afraid of us. These kids are from a completely different place. They don’t have these strictures. They have found a way to the divine without that. It is the definition of liberation theology when a group of people decide that their understanding of God may be different than the dominant narrative, but it is just as good and just as important. They are a liberation movement. ✠



*Donors Andrea Billhardt, a member of Grace Episcopal Church in the Loop, top, and Ravin and Maureen Jesuthasan, members of St. Paul & the Redeemer, give generously to the Bishop's Appeal because they appreciate the diocesan team.*





# NOT JUST THE BISHOP

## ∞ Appeal Sustains a Sharp Staff ∞

BY LU STANTON LEÓN

**A**ndrea Billhardt, a member of Grace Episcopal Church in the Loop, has witnessed again and again the work made possible by the Bishop's Appeal, the annual fundraising initiative that last year took in almost \$100,000.

"The Bishop's Appeal has been especially important to us recently because we just finished a search and found a wonderful new rector, and the bishop's office was very, very helpful during the search process," Billhardt says, mentioning their recently arrived priest, the Rev. Amity Carrubba. "They really laid out a plan for us on how to do everything. They screened candidates and gave us a good list of people. It went smoother than we could have hoped."

Billhardt says she appreciates how the diocese communicates what other parishes are doing "so we don't have to reinvent the wheel," and she loves the programs sponsored by the bishop's office. She has taken some, including Fierce Conversations, and plans to take more. She recognizes the importance of the appeal to the mission of individual churches and how the appeal helps fund the "beautiful office building that houses the Nicholas Center, which provides classes that are available to everybody in

our diocese."

Billhardt adds, "I just personally like the bishop. He gives all the parishes guidance when they want it, but he rules with an easy touch. He's gracious, he's brilliant, he's very pastoral. People really like him. He's paying attention to the important stuff."

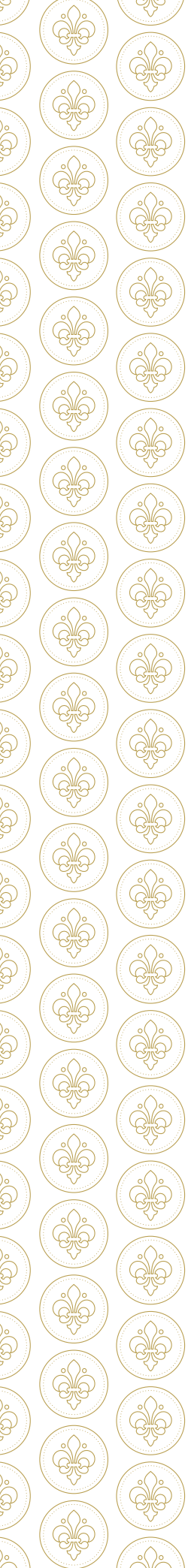
Most of the programs supported by the Bishop's Appeal are directed by the bishop's staff, a fact not lost on Billhardt, who notes that she has "always been impressed with their brilliance and their ability to help."

Shay Craig, the diocese's associate for resource development, says the staff is "the connective tissue of our diocese."

"The Bishop's Appeal provides core funding and support for all that the bishop's staff does," she says. "And it enables us to provide resources to congregations and programs such as Crosswalk to Work, a summer internship program for Chicago youth, and the College for Congregational Development, a comprehensive training program for clergy and laity."

Lead donors Ravin and Maureen Jesuthasan, members of St. Paul & the Redeemer, say the quality of the staff is no accident.

"Bishop Lee chooses such great representation," says Maureen, a vestry member at St. Paul & the Redeemer and a senior



“I just personally like the bishop. He gives all the parishes guidance when they want it, but he rules with an easy touch. He’s gracious, he’s brilliant, he’s very pastoral. People really like him. He’s paying attention to the important stuff.”

information technology strategist at Virtustream, an EMC Federation Cloud service company.

“It’s not a mistake that all of these talented people work for the diocese. He is a phenomenal leader who attracts phenomenal leaders of the future.

“We definitely want to support that. Who wouldn’t? The Bishop’s Appeal basically allows these leaders to do the job they want to do. At the same time, we’re helping those who are less fortunate. I see this as a never-ending cycle that benefits everybody.”

Craig appreciates that description.

“The people who give generously to the Bishop’s Appeal are people who get it, who have seen how the bishop has a vision of a community of churches working together,” she says. “They have seen how it works. They understand that every church thrives when that vision thrives. Bishop Lee spends a lot of time fostering stronger leaders across the diocese. Transformational leadership: ultimately, that is what the Bishop’s Appeal funds.”

Ravin Jesuthasan, managing director of Willis Towers Watson, says he appreciates the diocese’s outreach beyond the Chicago area and its support of the parishes within.

“We at St. Paul & the Redeemer do a lot of work with Haiti,” he says. “That sort of outreach is important. Equally important are some of the things the diocese is doing with the youth in the city, like Camp Chicago. I think the church is in a unique position of exercising its leadership role in helping us transform communities. The Bishop’s Appeal offers us an opportunity to go well beyond our day-to-day reach as an individual parish. I see what we accomplish in our parish, and I see what the bishop is accomplishing. I see a cross-fertilization of ideas, the parish working in concert with the diocese.”

St. Paul & the Redeemer is so important to the

Jesuthasans that Ravin included the parish in the dedication of a book he co-authored in 2015. In “Lead the Work: Navigating a World Beyond Employment,” he wrote: “...To my colleagues at Towers Watson and the members of St. Paul & the Redeemer Church in Chicago who continually inspire me with their random acts of kindness and love.”

Asked about the dedication, Ravin says, “I am continually inspired and amazed by the people I interact with, the love and the skills that they bring. I often sit in amazement at church and marvel at the talent around me.”

In part, their great love for their home parish makes the Jesuthasans even more committed to supporting the Bishop’s Appeal.

“We are just so grateful for the welcoming home of St. Paul & the Redeemer,” Maureen says. “I’ve never experienced a warmer or more inviting parish than I have found there. When you are treated with kindness and you feel that kind of comfort, you want to make sure that the good works of the diocese continue to thrive so that other people might find this wonderful sense of solace that we have found.

“It is something that we want to make sure continues for us and our kids and for everybody else who may come after us, who may find the church next week or five years from now.”

To support the Bishop’s Appeal, visit [episcopalchicago.org/bishops-appeal](http://episcopalchicago.org/bishops-appeal), call Shay Craig at (312) 751.3576 or email her at [scraig@episcopalchicago.org](mailto:scraig@episcopalchicago.org). ✝



# Giving Every Kid a Shot



MIKE S. ZAFIROVSKI

“Being involved has required an ‘all in’ mindset... But at the core of my commitment and investment in AUSL is my conviction that every kid deserves a shot at a great education.”

If you haven’t heard of the Academy for Urban School Leadership (AUSL), their work and impact is worth a closer look. Founded 15 years ago by Mike and Pat Koldyke, today AUSL manages 31 Chicago Public Schools (CPS) that serve 18,000 students, many of whom are taught by the more than 950 graduates of AUSL’s Chicago Teacher Residency Program. These schools, all of which were formerly failing, are the “toughest of the tough,” given to AUSL by CPS to manage and transform.

To change the educational trajectory of students, AUSL executes a rigorous model grounded in four core values: believing that all students deserve a quality education; holding high expectations with urgent focus on continuous improvement; hiring and growing the best talent; and fostering a collaborative culture. The impact has been impressive: gains in student achievement surpass peers, and the accolades continue to accumulate. Just one example: Solorio Academy was recently featured in Chicago Magazine as one of the top 20 public high schools in the city, thanks to Principal Victor Iturralde and his team, who work to provide both a rigorous education and surrounding supports and extracurricular enhancements. Ninety-six percent of the students are low-income, yet their average ACT score is almost four points higher than would be expected of a school with similar student, teacher and community composition.

I became involved in AUSL six years ago and serve as vice chair of the board. As I often tell my wife, Robin, the work is “not for the faint of heart,” yet my contribution is small compared to the teachers and principals on the frontlines of AUSL every day. Being involved has required an “all in” mindset of the three Ts: time, talent, and treasure. But at the core of my commitment and investment in AUSL is my conviction that every kid deserves a shot at a great education, grounded in two interconnected beliefs: that “education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world” (Nelson Mandela); and that

“to whom much has been given, much will be required” (Luke 12:48).

That Bible verse’s connection to my work at AUSL is not accidental. For Robin and me, our faith as Episcopalians, anchored at the Church of the Holy Spirit in Lake Forest, has both shaped and deepened our desire to give back to those who need it most, and we strive to instill that same mindset in our three sons, Matt, Kirk and Todd. Ten years ago we formed the Zafirovski Family Foundation, focused on education, healthcare, poverty and economic development; four areas that allow us to support opportunity for those not as fortunate. From other boards where I am active, to Robin serving as the president of the Founders’ Board at the Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago, to our sons’ involvement in other nonprofits—we believe that a sense of gratitude and spirit of responsibility are integral parts of our faith and relationship with God.

At a recent funeral service for our friend DJ Patenaude, whom we lost far too soon at age 53, the homilist remembered one of DJ’s favorite prayers. It reads in part, “take time to do charity, it is a God-given privilege ... for it is in the giving, that we are given.” So my title for this column, “Giving every kid a shot,” conveys that two-part meaning of “giving” as captured in DJ’s prayer and rooted deeply in my faith.

My own favorite quote, which I look at on my dresser each morning, was spoken by Nkoski Johnson in South Africa, coincidentally the same year AUSL was founded: “Do all you can, with what you have, in the time you have, in the place you are.” ✚

*Mike Zafirovski is vice chair of the board of directors of AUSL, founder of The Zaf Group, a private equity advisory and investment firm, an executive advisor for The Blackstone Group, and a board member of Boeing and Stericycle. He was previously CEO and president of Nortel, Motorola and five GE businesses. He, Robin, and their family are long-time parishioners of the Church of the Holy Spirit in Lake Forest.*

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