Episcopal Diocese of Chicago – Committee on Hunger - Report to Diocesan Convention 2021

In 2021, many of our congregations continued to serve the hungry in creative and modified ways during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. Many people have continued to need assistance due to reduced income or unemployment. Thank you to all who faithfully fed your neighbors in Christ’s name during this challenging year!

The diocesan Hunger Committee serves as a resource for congregational and regional feeding programs, education on hunger issues, and advocacy efforts on behalf of those with food insecurity. The list of diocesan anti-hunger ministries on the committee’s page of the diocesan website <https://www.episcopalchicago.org/at-work-in-the-world/hunger/> is based on the diocesan asset map that congregations are encouraged to update at least annually. The page also has links to food banks, resources for community gardens, advocacy organization, resources for hunger on college campuses, and hunger and relief organizations.

Representatives from the Hunger Committee help to organize the Chicago CROP Hunger Walk and promote other hunger walks throughout our diocese. The committee is one of the recipients of the 25% local portion of Chicago CROP Walk funds and distributes them to Chicago Episcopal congregation-based soup kitchens, food pantries, and other feeding programs that apply for its small grants each year. In spring 2021, the Hunger Committee distributed $2,123.27 from the 2020 Chicago CROP Hunger Walk to six hunger ministries affiliated with Chicago congregations: Care for Friends at Church of Our Savior, Ravenswood Community Services at All Saints, St. Chrysostom’s, St. James Cathedral, St. Paul & Redeemer, and St. Thomas. Congregations which participated in or supported the walk received a greater share of funds.

In September, the committee awarded $2,400, mostly from our diocesan budget, to twelve hunger programs in our diocese: St. Edward & Christ, Joliet; St. Mark’s, Glen Ellyn; Calvary, Lombard; Sandwich Board at Trinity, Aurora; St. Mark’s, Evanston; St. Thomas, Chicago; St. Martin’s, Des Plaines; St. John, Lockport; St. James Cathedral; St. Paul’s, Warsaw; St. Nicholas, Elk Grove Village; and St. Chrysostom’s, Chicago.

The Hunger Committee encourages education and advocacy about hunger issues. It is the conduit for the diocese’s membership in Bread for the World, a national ecumenical hunger advocacy organization, and the Illinois Hunger Coalition, which organizes state level advocacy and helps families or individuals apply for food assistance and find feeding programs in their communities.

In June 2021, the Hunger Committee hosted a Zoom presentation by Mr. Zach Schmidt of Bread for the World to introduce diocesan congregations to the organization and its Offering of Letters, though which congregation members write to their Senators and Representatives in Congress to advocate for policies that reduce food insecurity. A link to the webinar recording is on the committee’s diocesan web page.

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev. Gary Cox, convener