

Justice & Joy (J&J) Ministries

March 7, 2024

Reports & Decisions

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Barbara Vasquenza-Winsted – Northwestern Ct Community College Food Pantry

We ended 2023 and started 2024 with lots of good news. My "All I Want for Christmas " campaign was overwhelmingly successful. Donations of food and diapers overflowed not only the trunk of my car but all the seating as well. Professor Todd Bryda had never seen such a huge donation from a single donator. Lots of pictures were taken and put in the campus newsletter. Charlotte Hungerford Hospital in Torrington has now come on board and will be donating all of their diaper needs; this allows us to focus entirely on food. I added snack donations to our list of needs; there are lots of hungry teenagers to feed, especially during exam time. Very well received by students. Professor Bryda has offered to come to SUMC to speak with J & J and Susanna's Circle at a future date. This could be done on ZOOM or in person after school has recessed for the summer. He continues to praise SUMC in his reports to the state of CT.

** Mary Ann Martin, a new volunteer with experience in food insecurity, has come forward; she is interested in helping with deliveries to Winsted. Ellen Gilbert also helps Barbara with deliveries.

**Barbara will create an event planned for next October to educate SUM and the entire community on College Campus Food Insecurity. She will need help with this project, which will include panelists from college food pantry managers and nutrition and food insecurity experts.

**\$300 in holiday funds were distributed to NCCC.

Sue & Mike Sames-Welcoming Project (refugees), South Park Inn, & Kenya Project

Brand new thing! Food Justice

SUM will host the 2nd Annual Conference on Disability and Agriculture on May 18. It will include participants from all over the Northeast. Deb, Mike, and Sue participated in an 8-week-long program on food justice issues. We had the good fortune to meet Dr. Ivette Ruiz, who runs Healing by Growing farms here in CT. She's leading the conference and was looking for a location. Simsbury is great because we have farms. Ivette will visit on the morning of Feb 24.

(She has a lot of experience with disaster recovery, too.) SUM will be the gathering point for the community as we talk about these issues - we will come away with plans for helping in our area. Mike and I will be working with Deacon Deb on this, and we will need help from others - we're just getting started! More to come! This is an exciting community-building event.

Refugee Resettlement (Welcoming Project)

The Welcoming Project will be the featured nonprofit at the community dinner hosted by First Church on 3/15. Please feel free to join us.

Tip for others: QR codes can be set up for flow-through accounts.

**Prayers and Squares have been in conversation with Sue Sames about gifting six quilts to the newest refugee family SUM is co-sponsoring. Karen Matheson has checked that we have six finished quilts (or nearly finished) made by our group. We want to present them to our church to let our congregation know of some of the things this group does and our way of welcoming this family to CT.

**Mike and Sue drove the long roundtrip to JFK to pick up the new refugee family. They were greeted by the family we most recently settled. It was heartwarming to see the two families interact.

South Park Inn – “Oh, wow! You’re that church!”

The residents love SUM and the meals we provide. Chef Candy requested baked goods to help them celebrate Valentine's Day. Thanks, Barbara, for the cupcakes. Our sister-in-law is providing cookies.

Needs:

- More details on the funding and expenses to help ensure this stays healthy. There were no contributions for South Park in December. I've shared some ideas with Jen A, the new Finance chair.

- Drivers and servers.

Note: SPI receives a good portion of its funding from the Veterans Administration to provide programs for veterans.

**The Messenger will feature an article on South Park with a link to an engaging video produced by the organization.

**Mary Ann Martin, a new volunteer with experience in food insecurity, has come forward; she is interested in helping with South Park deliveries. Deacon Deb met her at Simsbury Celebrates.

**\$600 in holiday funds were distributed to South Park Inn.

Kenya Boarding School Students

Reported at Feb Church Council

Offer from Hospitality: Please feel free to use the tables to highlight your project or add to the calendar. We are pretty informal with this. If you have something you'd like to publicize or a box for donations - feel free to put it out. We can move name tags back to the piano to make room.

Save the date of February 29 - Leap Day.

We are thinking of a potluck. We have been through so much in the last four years! Let's set aside time for reflection, sharing what happened in the last four years. The pandemic shut down everything. Recognition of how hard that was, so much loss, and so much grew out of that.

Debbie Dunn-Pollinator Garden & Environment

Last October, I attended the United Methodist Earthkeepers Training at the UMC church in Hartford. It was a great experience. You will hear more about that training soon. My project for the training involves education about a new pest, the Spotted Lanternfly, which will show up in our area, possibly as soon as this summer. Simsbury Pollinator Pathways (SPP) is once again having talks on various pollinator gardening topics. Dates are Tuesdays - 3/12, 3/26, and 4/9 at First Church and then two on Thursdays at SUM - 4/25 and 5/9. More details and topics to come soon. Earth Day is Monday, April 22nd, this year. I'm not sure what we will do - ideas are welcome.

Melissa Fearrington-Covenant to Care for Children Covenant to Care for Children (CCC)

January clothing request to help CREC Head Start - LLI families (and a few SUM families) donated gently used 3T-5T clothing, which will be used as extra changes of clothes at the centers (most children do not have enough clothing to leave or provide a spare in case of spills/accidents etc.) We currently have no funds available to respond to special requests (pack-n-plays and car seats are examples of items often needed by CCC)

**\$1,000 in holiday funds were distributed to CCC.

Jan Baker-Days for Girls

Days for Girls (D4G) Report

The February D4G workshop was highlighted with a Chinese New Year meal created by Don Baker's culinary skills. It was colorful, tasty, and fun. February began with a huge distribution in Moheto, Kenya, by Pastor Ken and his educators. This was a much-needed return to Moheto since we had not distributed the kits there in over five years due to COVID and other factors. The girls and boys received health and human development education. The girls were delighted to receive kits. 575 kits were distributed to girls, women, and the clinic. Two boxes full of kit components are on the way via Diane and Dick Carlson, who are dropping them off at the collection point in Pittsburgh to be distributed where needed around the world. Thank you, Diane & Dick. We are so thankful to the loyal D4G workforce who show up, sew together, take work home, and more. Your dedication is appreciated.

Sandy Lipscomb-liaison to Friendly Visitors

Recently, two more congregation members have reached out to become members of the Friendly Visitors mission. Cathy Marco gave a heartfelt eulogy at Melinda Lazor's celebration of life. She also wrote a touching piece in the Messenger about the power of reaching out to "someone who is in need of companionship." The members of the committee continue to

report positive interactions with their companions. Both parties feel the bonds of friendship and love.

**Pastor Gene & Deacon Deb will offer Eucharistic Minister training to all FV and any others who wish to participate on Monday, April 1st at 2:15 in the Annex.

Dorothy K-K-liaison to Susanna Circle

The Susanna's don't meet in January but had a very successful Methodist Munch production and Super-Sunday sale, raising \$755 for Interval House and distributing a few yummy bags of Munch to our hard-working SUM staff. We are grateful the snowstorm held off until the Munch event was completed. As many of you have seen from their bulletins, Interval House has expanded its programs and services, so the funds are much appreciated and well-deployed. There are a number of speaker possibilities for the coming months; the Susanna's keep energized and active.

Libby Easton-May-liaison to For All Ages

After two attempts, the Unite by Light Luminary event was canceled due to weather. SUM placed 200 luminaries around the church on Christmas Eve using some of the unused Unite by Light luminaries. It was beautiful! I will attend a Connecting CT Conversation event on 2/28 at St. Joseph's University. For All Ages is holding these sessions to urge discussions and education concerning loneliness. All ages are welcome, and the session will include a panel discussion by aging experts and discussions between all meeting participants.

**Four (4) people from SUM will participate in the For All Ages "Simsbury Social Connections" project, which entails three sessions—two educational and one brainstorming. Leesa Plude, Janet Stodd, Tom Lipscomb, and Sandy Lipscomb will represent SUM along with Deacon Deb. By sending four volunteers, SUM qualifies as a community partner for this project, and our logo will appear in all communications.

Susan Samuel-Veteran care

At this time, there are no active programs for Veteran Care.

Jen Zeronsa-Meal Packing

The next meal packing event is Apr 27th, which will be Jen Z's last; we are looking for a new coordinator - please spread the word! We've received requests for 100 cases of product from local food banks and have funding for about 65 (\$2,700 still to be raised).

**We are making a communications push to make up the shortfall in raw materials that will otherwise prevent food pantries that asked for a distribution from this event from receiving it.

**\$1,500 in holiday funds were distributed to meal-packing.

Cassandra Broadus-Garcia - Disaster Recovery

Volunteers in Mission has several important events already planned for 2024! They include but likely will not be limited to:

Feb. 25th – VIM Fund-Raising Brunch after all three services

J & J Committee members are invited to volunteer to help with food donations, set-up of Wesley Hall on Saturday, and/or cooking and clean-up on Sunday. To sign up, log onto <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0949A5AA2FA3FFC07-47710502-vimfundraising#!> Thank you!

April 20th – BASIC Early Response Team (ERT) Training

Location: Newtown UMC-Rauner Hall, 92 Church Hill Rd., Sandy Hook, CT

Co-Sponsored by Simsbury UMC and Newtown UMC

UMCOR-Certified Trainer: Rev. Mel Kawakami

Date: Saturday, April 20th, 9:00am – 5:00pm (8:45am coffee fellowship)

Fee: \$20.00 (Covers lunch and training materials)

Learn the best practices for being part of a disaster Early Response Team (ERT). ERTs provide a caring Christian presence in the aftermath of a disaster. In this training, you will learn how to assist survivors of natural disasters, offering both helping hands and hope to those in need. You will learn about the stages of disaster, safety procedures for on-site work, and early response techniques, including tarping, debris removal, cleaning out flooded homes, and more. Upon successful completion of the training and after fulfilling a background check, you will be eligible to apply for a 3-year ERT badge. Applicants must be 18 years or older. To register, log onto <https://www.nyac.com/eventdetail/basic-ert-certification-training-42024-18255948>. Carpooling from SUMC to Newtown will be available.

Summer 2024 - United Methodist Economic Ministries (UMEM), Salem, Maine. August 11-17th

Youth Director, Erin Ott, and Cassandra Broadus-Garcia are working collaboratively to plan a special Summer 2024 service ministry for all ages. Opportunities will include thrift store and food pantry volunteer work as well as renovation and light construction work. Team members may include families who wish to serve together and individuals who have various talents they can contribute! Hold the dates and look for more information to come! For further information on any of these programs, please feel free to contact Cassandra Broadus-Garcia at disaster-response@sumct.org.

Karen Matheson-Quilts Beyond Borders

Quilts Beyond Borders continues to thrive! Nationally, we broke our record of quilt deliveries to underserved people worldwide, with a total of 4,658 quilts delivered in 2023. The Northeast team contributed 853 of that total, the largest of any of the regions. SUM's Prayers and Squares team contributed a significant number of that total. Finally able to see the floor again in the former "Upper Room" above the church offices, our massive move across campus from the Annex is now complete. We are putting the final touches on our beautiful, sunny new space, hanging quilts, and organizing our piles of fabric and equipment as we get back into our creative rhythm, joyfully serving this significant outreach.

Eileen Brogan-Diversity & Inclusion and Interfaith liaison

After the very successful LGBTQ+ events in the fall, Jenny and Jeff Euting invited attendees to their home to meet and share information, friendship and support. As the facilitator of the Adult Spiritual Growth ministry, I am attending these with the hope that I will glean another opportunity for an educational program in the future.

**Deacon Deb shared that a small burst team is working on a Welcoming Statement for SUM that will clearly state our values and beliefs behind the statement “All Our Welcome”—to worship, lead, and participate in all aspects of SUM. See the project description below this report.

Decision

As noted throughout this report, the J&J team decided to distribute SUM holiday funds in the following manner:

\$1,000 to the Covenant of Care for Children (CCC).

\$1,500 to the Meal-Packing event.

\$600 to South Park Inn.

\$300 to the Northwestern Ct Community College Food Pantry.