

112th Convention of the Episcopal Church in Utah

Report of the Pastoral Mission and Ministry of Healing at St. Mark's Tower, St. Mark's Millcreek and in the Uintah Basin

Serving the Underserved, Following Jesus in answering the Call to Care for all God's Children

As we are called to rethink the separation of Church and Health, the Body of Christ comes into clear view as we look into the ministry provided at St. Mark's Tower and St. Mark's Millcreek. We are also reminded that this ministry is one way that we are not only called to disrupt homelessness, but also to reflect and follow Christ's command to "serve the least of these". "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." (Matt. 25:40) As we follow Jesus into the margins of society and minister to those 'down the street', we recognize how difficult it is to determine where we find that margin.

As the life and ministry of these two communities continues to grow, we are able to address the needs of shelter, homelessness, those impoverished by hunger and thirst and spirit, those who have no place to call home, those who know God and seek a deeper understanding of God, those who may be lost and are seeking a life of dignity and grace.

I am blessed to provide pastoral and spiritual soul care to these two communities of approximately 150 residents, along with their family and friends. Coming with no agenda but Love, I encounter those in need as I offer pastoral care and soul care, we offer times of prayer and individual blessings, those who need my ears to listen and my heart to be open, book groups and shared readings where meaning and purpose are stirred in shared stories of healing and reconciliation, Gospel studies to open the interpretation, significance and reflection of sacred text to their everyday lives, table fellowship at morning breakfast or evening meals, hospitality to those who come to be with us, and the creation of a sacred space where all may worship and find peace as they read books, prayers, reflections from a diversity of faith of those who live in these communities. These gatherings are opportunities where residents may find and restore their basic human values with grace and spirituality in the practical meaning in their everyday lives.

These communities are becoming deeper spiritual communities of sanctuary where residents, family and friends seek and find many aspects of strength and sanctity from God's merciful Love.

Along with the activities above, residents are able to find a personal life of gratitude, love and praise as they come to celebrate a 'eucharistic' morality based on communal thanksgiving, and appreciation of a new life as known in Jesus. They live together, they seek together, they share meals with one another, they reach out to others in need, they support one another, they listen to one another, they find healing, they find reconciliation, they even reach out to those outside their community, they find safe harbor, they find Love. They learn to live independently as they are aging in place. They find a homewhere wholistic care is available.

This year St. Nick visited us and brought us a deeper understanding of our holiday celebrations. We shared a meal and worshiped on Christmas Eve with our traditional Lessons and Carols Service. 70 attended!!! We have a Mitten Tree during the Christmas season, where residents find the gifts of warmth and care through donated winter accessories. 130 Fruit Baskets are donated to each resident at Christmas. We have Epiphany house blessings. We offer Ash Wednesday Services. A group has asked for

weekly Holy Communion services. We have memorials to remember those with whom we lived and see no longer. We shared in Souper Bowl of Caring and raised more than \$1000!!! The residents have asked that they in turn donate some of these funds to needed Veterans. We invite groups such as Camp Tuttle for Soup, Serve and Sing fellowship. We Bless the Animals living with the residents in honor of St. Francis. We have Lunch and Learn to hear from various faith leaders to deepen our understanding of our diverse faith and cultural community. Our relationship with St. Mark's Hospital continues to address health concerns through a monthly physician visit and health fairs. A donated taxi service from the Diocese provides needed access to health care.

Just as our Diocese celebrates 150 years, this ministry carries on the years of traditions of early Christians who started the idea of hospitality, early hospitals, places of provide care and comfort to those in need, welcomed weary travelers and sheltered and fed the poor.

Through the support of the Diocese, Danville Development, and individuals at large, we are able to continue this ministry of serving those in need. As part of our outreach ministry, we also provide support with the healthcare needs and concerns with those in the Uintah Basin. We are the Jesus Movement.

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev. Susan Toone, RN
Episcopal Community Services, Inc.