

SsAM's Community Outreach Pathway

January 11, 2012

Community outreach is certainly an area of strength in our parish. The committee meets regularly and is co-chaired by Alice Smith and Sylvia Banks. Approximately twelve members are active participants on the committee.

In our opinion the outreach component of SsAM is a critical direct link to the community we strive to serve. It allows us to fulfill the mission of our parish through service to many who are less fortunate. Outreach also is a tremendous resource for introducing our church to the community at large. As such, it can serve as a recruiting and marketing tool. Although this is only a secondary benefit of the work the committee does, it should be noted as an important benefit.

The Outreach Committee is an umbrella group. Its primary function is to administer the AIM fund. The AIM fund is created by a collection held twice each month during church services on Sundays. The fund is then used to make contributions on behalf of the parish. Examples of these contributions are the scholarship program for college students, support for the Food Bank, Limen House and Avondah Dance program at Baylor prison. Requests for funding often come from various sources in the community. The committee then considers each request and renders a decision. The current balance in the AIM fund is approximately \$14,000.

Much of the committee's business is conducted via email or telephone contact. Typically, there are two to three formal business meetings held annually. All parishioners are invited and encouraged to participate on the committee. Most of the areas of interest for the committee and church are generated by ideas and concerns expressed and developed by members of the committee.

Supporting SsAM's college students is one of the ongoing initiatives of the committee. The Reverend Lloyd S. Casson Scholarship Program is entering its tenth year. Currently, there are 9 students at various universities receiving the \$500 annual stipend.

Last year's budget and this year's request were \$27,000. For 2011 the funding was provided through a one-time special bequest to SsAM (\$65,000). This year the funding will come directly from the church budget. A breakdown of the request is as follows:

- Friendship House \$10,000
- Delaware Futures \$ 5,000
- St. Michael's School \$5,000
- Sojourners Place \$3,000
- Faith Center \$4,000

Other special projects have included Angel Tree, Prestige Academy, Undee Sunday, Code Purple and Support for Sudan.

Angel Tree is our annual Christmas support program for needy families with children of incarcerated parents. This year SsAM was able to donate 5 gifts each for 12 children. In addition, 3 gift cards were given to each caregiver. The committee distributed the gifts along with a personal letter to the imprisoned parents from Alice Smith during the week of December 11. It should be noted that Angel Tree does not take direct requests from incarcerated parents. Angel Tree works within the prison system to identify parents who want to participate and passes this information on to local churches.

Prestige Academy is a local public charter school for young men, grades 5 through 8. A presentation was made in October to our church by Jack Perry, founder and president. As a result of his presentation and efforts by Mary Ann Edwards, approximately 20 volunteers were identified, many of whom have gone for a school tour and meeting. A \$1000 grant was recently awarded to the school by the Outreach Committee for books to be used in their DEAR project (Drop Everything and Read).

Although there is no formal succession plan in place, Alice has detailed notes and information for whomever succeeds her. With what she has on file, anyone should be able to “hit the ground running.”

The Drum Circle and the Urban Promise are two other significant community outreach initiatives currently in place at SsAM. Both of these are relatively new and fall outside the scope of the Outreach Committee.

The Drum Circle is under the direction of Jonathan Whitney. The group is comprised of 10 regular drummers plus usually one additional guest each week. Rehearsals are geared not only to music, but also include group fellowship and support for any life issues that might arise within the group. The Drum Circle performs regularly at our church services, as well as hosting outside engagements. Their budget request for 2012 is \$4000. The money will be used for 32 rehearsals/group gatherings and 8 church performances in the current year.

Urban Promise is a non-profit agency in the city of Wilmington serving approximately 300 families and nearly 500 at-risk youth. Their mission is a commitment to the development of the next generation of urban Christian leaders. Rob Prestowitz is the Executive Director. Urban Promise has 6 after school camps for 125 children, grades 1 to 8. They also have 6 free summer camps, one of which was held this past summer at SsAM. Their summer camps serve approximately 350 children. A job training program also employs 35 at-risk teens year round.

The middle school program at our church is known as Camp Truth. It serves 6 children Monday through Thursday each week from 3 until 6 pm. As an after school program, the emphasis is placed on homework completion, social skills development and the introduction of Bible lessons to young children. Weekly activities also include cooking

lessons and techniques to improve reading skills. A meal is provided daily to each participant. The director of Camp Truth is Deborah Holcombe. Urban Promise pays the rent for the space it uses at SsAM. There is no out-of-pocket expense to the church for this program. There also exists an opportunity for additional volunteers, possibly a way for our parish to become even more involved.

In summary, there are many rich activities and services for the community at SsAM. Community outreach should always remain the lifeblood of our church. It speaks to our mission and our commitment to serve others through Christ. There is always a need for more to be done, especially at this time when so many of our neighbors and friends are suffering. We should continue to encourage our parishioners to become a part of the Outreach Committee and to find additional ways and ideas that hopefully will improve the plight of the community at large.