



FOCUS Churches of Albany 2003 Annual Report

Rev. Debra Jameson, Community Minister
275 State Street
Albany, NY 12210

518-465-5161

Email: FOCUSchurches@juno.com

Web: www.timesunion.com/communities/focus/

FOCUS 2003 Annual Report

Since 1967 the FOCUS Churches of Albany have joined together as God's servant people in programs of community service and common worship. Celebrating our diversity—working together in unity.

Emmanuel Baptist Church

275 State Street

(518) 465-5161

Sunday Worship 10:00 am

First Presbyterian Church

362 State Street

(518) 449-7332

Sunday Worship 8:30 and 10:45 am

Israel African Methodist Episcopal Church

381 Hamilton Street

(518) 463-8779

Sunday Worship 11:00 am

**Metropolitan Community Church
Of the Hudson Valley**

275 State Street

(518) 785-7941

Sunday Worship 1 pm

Trinity United Methodist Church

235 Lark Street

(518) 463-1293

Sunday Worship 10:00 am

Westminster Presbyterian Church

262 State Street

(518) 436-8544

Sunday Worship 10:15 am

In these pages you will find a summary of our common ministries over the course of 2003. You will read about concrete actions, sobering statistics and challenging numbers...as well as a hint of the unseen, a glimpse of something God is doing among us, sometimes in spite of us, many times through us - immeasurable yet profound, crucial acts of mercy and justice that make us participants in the unfolding of God's reign –

- Building unity among our congregations
- Making connections with the poor and marginalized in our neighborhoods
- Feeding the hungry
- Planting seeds of hope
- Advocating for human rights
- Bringing God's light in places of darkness and despair

FOCUS Executive Council

President's Annual Report

February 1, 2004

The year 2003 was a year of great change for the FOCUS Churches of Albany. The Executive Council (FEC) received results of the financial audit completed in late fall of 2002. The FEC approved the list of recommendations and began the work of implementation. Some of these recommendations required the Council to look at options of how to make our financial reporting more efficient. We have converted our financial records to a computerized accounting system with the help of Alan Tedrow from Westminster Presbyterian Church (WPC).

Job descriptions for the newly named positions of comptroller and treasurer were clarified, re-written and approved by the Council. New procedures for financial record keeping were developed and our organizational guidelines updated according to the changes in job descriptions and procedures. Many thanks to Lois Wilson (WPC), without whose work on these tasks, would have taken much longer.

The purpose of these actions was to prepare FOCUS in applying for 501c3 status, which will enable FOCUS to broaden its sources of income. If you review the Community Minister's report, you will see the general increase in the numbers of guests we serve. With church budgets becoming more difficult to balance, church apportionments, which fund our FOCUS staff (the feeding programs) and our Community Minister, are increasingly more challenging to commit each year, so increasing them in the near future will not be likely.

In late spring the Executive Council was challenged by Trinity United Methodist Church (TUMC), our FOCUS Interfaith Food Pantry home for more than 20 years, to seriously look at the actual in-kind costs of services, etc. in doing FOCUS ministry and to include these costs in our budgeting process. In relation to this, TUMC requested reimbursement for their in-kind costs for use of space and utilities. In response, the FEC appointed a task force to generate a standard formula for determining in-kind costs and ultimately to submit to the Executive Council a formula to be used by each FOCUS church for determining their in-kind costs. Nancy Burton (WPC) headed up this task force with members of several FOCUS churches. Thanks to all for accomplishing this task quickly in light of the summer months and surgical recovery time for one member. Your work was much appreciated.

A FOCUS Interfaith Food Pantry (IFP) task force was appointed to determine the future direction of the IFP, as the Executive Council felt that it wasn't financially feasible to meet TUMC's monetary requests. In light of this, requests went out to the remaining five FOCUS churches about potential temporary space for the IFP. Eventually Emmanuel Baptist Church (EBC) offered to house the Food Pantry temporarily over the next 14 months. The move of the IFP occurred in early November on a cold, rainy and wet snowy day. The volunteers worked long and hard under extremely awful conditions. Our thanks to all of you!! Dedication of the new food pantry space took place following our Fall FOCUS Service on November 23rd at EBC. In early 2004, another task force will begin meeting to look at permanent space for our Pantry.

Throughout this intense 4-5 month period of meetings and decision-making, all our other FOCUS programs continued.

As we begin 2004, the Executive Council is looking for anyone with the expertise and experience in grant writing and representatives from each FOCUS church to work on the Food Pantry Space Task Force. We will also be holding fundraisers to raise \$20,000 for our feeding programs and encourage everyone's participation. Each gift, no matter how large or small is greatly appreciated.

In closing I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank Stacy Wilburn (TUMC), former treasurer of FOCUS, for over 10 years of dedicated service to the Executive Council. Also the Reverend Gary Harris, Interim Pastor EBC, for his presence and friendship during his time here with us and sharing in our FOCUS ministry together. His calming demeanor will be missed – God's Peace to you Gary wherever you go.

And to our Community Minister the Reverend Deb Jameson. Her commitment to ministering “to the least of these my brothers” is truly amazing. Working along side of Deb in this ministry has personally opened my eyes, heart and mind to the injustices we as a society, inflict upon each other.

I signed up to help serve breakfast on Thursday mornings and enjoy the opportunity to **serve** our guests. I also worked a Saturday at the Food Pantry. I kept my promise from last year of getting involved in the hands-on ministry of FOCUS!

Will you?

Thank you for the opportunity to serve FOCUS and the faith you have shown in allowing me to serve as your President.

Susan J. Haney
President, FOCUS Executive Council
Member representative FP

FOCUS Executive Council

Emmanuel Baptist (EBC) - Rev. Gary Harris, Bill Sanderson, Janet Franklin, Nancy Horan
First Presbyterian (FP) - Sue Haney, Irving Smith
Israel African Methodist Episcopal (IAME) - Rev. John Justice, Dr. Elmer Green, Donna Mackey-Walker
Metropolitan Community Church of the Hudson Valley (MCCHV) - Revs. Jill Farnham and Karha Us, Will McMorris
Trinity United Methodist (TUMC) - Rev. Maurice Drown, Jim Kalas, Stacy Wilburn, Richard Moneymaker
Westminster Presbyterian (WPC) - Rev. Jim Reisner, Marianne Rings, Allan Tedrow

The FEC met 9 times during 2003. The FOCUS Clergy took time out together this spring and enjoyed a day and half retreat.

FOCUS at Worship

Communal worship continues to be a foundational value for our congregations. In 2003 FOCUS churches came together for 6 worship services:

- Winter worship at TUMC, Joint Choir, Rev. John Justice IAME preaching
- Easter Dawn in Capital Park, Rev. Jane Lang, Capital Area Baptist Association, preaching
- Summer Worship at WP (July), FP (August), MCCHV (September)
- Fall Worship at EBC, Joint Choir, Rev. Ken Sehested, Co-pastor, Circle of Mercy, guest speaker

Community Minister's Report

2003 has been a transitional and transformational year for FOCUS. As we pursue a new structural identity (501c3 status) how will it impact our common ministry and identity? Our FOCUS Executive Council has worked hard and prayerfully over the year to discern God's leading in our experimental – and exciting ministry. FOCUS has begun to come to terms with 20+ year old feeding programs – understanding that they are not the temporary stop-gap projects they started out as so long ago. The sobering reality of our days show that there is an increase in food insecurity and hunger among our low-income neighbors, and, our food pantry and soup kitchen (breakfast) have become necessary and long term (permanent) programs. Even as we continue to work for, and long for, that day when we can put ourselves “out of business”, FOCUS is striving to put itself in a position that will sustain our growing feeding programs and at the same time free up resources that allow FOCUS to stretch into areas of unmet need where together our congregations can do what we cannot do alone.

Volunteers from our congregations and the greater community continue to be the backbone of our ministry. Without the dedication and commitment of 150+ people who provide gifts to our programs and projects FOCUS would be an empty shell. This year we welcomed a new relationship with the Siena School of Social Work and our student intern Joe Wait. Joe is working with us and SENSES, combining direct service and advocacy experiences.

Along side of the oversight of all FOCUS programs and projects my time is spent interacting with the poor and marginalized families in our neighborhoods - on our church steps, at our feeding programs, in the shelters and motels, at the Department of Social Services, in the courts and jails, on the streets and with those who come knocking at our church doors. The needs are many and multi-layered. By building relationships with our neighbors, FOCUS continues to respond with listening ears that seek to be merciful and just, by making referrals to appropriate agencies and resources, providing vouchers, spiritual direction and counseling. A discretionary fund (financed by individual donors from our churches) provides the Community Minister resources to intervene in crisis such as: evictions, utility shut offs, funeral arrangements, transportation, household and clothing needs and prescriptions.

I represented FOCUS on the Board of Directors for CREO (Capital Region Ecumenical Organization, the NYS Faith and Hunger Network Steering Committee, as Chair of the Program & Action Commission, CA Council of Churches, Steering Committee for the Overflow Emergency Shelter, and sat on the Grant Review Committee, Regional Food Bank of NENY. I was honored and deeply touched by the petition nomination that came forth from many of you in our churches to be chosen as this year's recipient of the Capital Area Council of Churches James and Pearl Campbell Peace and Justice Award. I am grateful for the privilege of being your Community Minister - and for the community, relationships, justice and mercy we are building together.

FOCUS is a unique on-going experiment among God's people. I am reminded of this from time to time when I am in an ecumenical setting and describe to people who we are and what we do in FOCUS. Many times the response is “Incredible - how do you do it? All those different traditions and theologies and styles worshipping together and committing to common ministry. WOW – how exciting.”

We have been gifted with this ministry. My prayer and hope is that we renew our commitment to each other and our neighbors - building bridges between our congregations and bridges to those who are outside our doors, worshipping together, sharing in educational ventures, feeding the hungry, working for justice - and doing this boldly, confident in the excitement, consolation and power of God at work in our midst.

Faithfully, Your Community Minister

Rev. Debra Jameson

Educational Pursuits and Special Projects

Advent Devotional

FOCUS published an Advent devotional guide “FOCUS-ing In the Dark” Advent meditations written by members of the FOCUS congregations.

“FOCUS on Schools” Supply Drive

For a third year, under the coordination of the FOCUS Churches of Albany, many low-income children, over 150 from our neighborhoods and greater region, began the school year outfitted with ample and necessary supplies. We were also able to collect enough supplies to stock five local schools so they could distribute school supplies as needed during the year.

In conjunction with this project we were pleased to welcome the new Superintendent of Albany City Schools, Mr. Michael Johnson, to a FOCUS worship service where we offered encouragement and support to him in his challenging position.

Your involvement made the difference—whether you collected supplies, signed families up, put packets together, or provided financial support. Over the course of June-August more than 30 people participated in some phase of the project, with 11 faith communities involved in the collection of supplies and contributions.

Volunteers:

EBC: Edith and Ian Leet, Lucy Wong, Rev. Gary Harris, Barbara Lahut, Nancy Horan and Robin Bray

FP: Linda Stevens, Sue Haney, Rev. Joe Shook, Fran Kamp, Kate Birdsall and Bill Storrs

IAME: Rev. John Justice, Jody Holmes

MCCHV: Rev. Karha Us, Rev. Jill Farnham

TUMC: Nancy Benedict, Rev. Mick Drown

WP: Mary Jean Tedrow, Lynne McKee, Margaret Mayer, Lois Wilson, Cissy Quinn, Nancy Sokil, Rev. Jim Reisner, Peg Hanlon, and Glenda Bennett.

FUUSA: Jane Allen, Lois Thomson, Rev. Sam Trumbore and Abby Sugarman.

NCPC: Pauline Jacobus, Rev. Lois Wolff and Gwyn Ramage.

SAE Lisa Walker, Joe Wait, Siena intern.

Project Love

FOCUS Congregations contributed funds (over \$3,000) to cover the scholarship expenses (\$245 per child) for 15 children to attend this seven-week day camp for children ages 7-13. Most of the children who apply are from our church neighborhoods. Many of the children first stop in to eat breakfast at the FOCUS Kid’s Breakfast before heading to the Albany Boy’s and Girl’s Club for a morning of tutored educational opportunities (math and reading skills, computer, arts and craft projects...) under the guidance of trained staff and volunteers from our churches and the greater community. The afternoons are filled with supervised recreational opportunities such as swimming in Lincoln Park Pool, basketball, jump rope, trips to Thatcher Park, the NYS Museum and other local points of interests.

Addressing Public Policy

FOCUS organized/co-hosted one press conference over the course of 2003. Joining with the Hunger Action Network of NYS we brought attention to the increased usage (up 25% over last year) of soup kitchens and food pantries. FOCUS participated (and hosted over 250 people at EBC) in a statewide lobby day for economic justice. FOCUS cosponsored the 4th annual Faith and Hunger Network Regional Conference at the Brandywine Methodist Church, Schenectady, held in February. FOCUS continues to work collaboratively with the greater interfaith community and human service agencies in the fight against the dehumanization of the poor

among us. Working with the Council of Churches and the Homeless Action Committee, FOCUS is intricately involved in the operation of the Emergency Overflow Shelter at First Lutheran Church.

FOCUS Care Team

Combining the gifts and interests of members of our congregations, a new AIDS team has been created. With much conviction and experience coming from the former First Presbyterian team, the new FOCUS team is comprised of members from 4 different churches (FP, MCCHV, TUMC and FUUSA). This team meets regularly with a person/family living with AIDS and offers support, resources, activities and great care.

FOCUS Feeding Programs

FOCUS Interfaith Food Pantry

Sponsoring Congregations:

Congregation Beth Emeth - CBE

First Unitarian Universalist Society of Albany - FUUSA

New Covenant Presbyterian - NCPC

Saint Andrew's Episcopal - SAE

EBC

FP

IAME

MCCHV

TUMC

WP

Each of the member congregations assigns a liaison to serve on the Food Pantry Advisory Committee. The Committee meets once each month and provides the FOCUS Executive Council with guidance and advice to help them in shaping Pantry policies.

Pantry Advisory Council Members: FUUSA: Jane Allen, Lois Thomson FP: Tillie Collier, Elizabeth Naismith TUMC: Doris O'Bryan, Rev. Maurice Drown EBC: Janet Franklin, Patricia Hunziker CBE: Jerry Nackenson IAME: Grace Green NCPC: Pauline Jacobus WP: John Sieloff, Mary Jean Tedrow SAE: Lisa Walker MCCHV: Rev. Karha' Us

Pantry Staff:

Deb Catozzi, Administrator; Peg Hanlon, Food Coordinator; Clinton Crump, Food Handler; Joe Wait, Siena Intern.

Pantry Operations: The Food Pantry served 693 different households a total of 80,779 meals in 2003. 968 of those served were children, 56 were over 60 years old and 1109 were adults. 280 of the families served were new to the program. The pantry was open 103 days and served an average of 63 individuals (20 households) each service day. The average number of annual visits each family makes to the pantry is 3.

Pantry services are limited to families living within the prescribed boundaries in the Center Square, Park South, and Capital Hill sections of downtown Albany. All families residing outside of that service area are given referrals to the pantry that serves their neighborhood.

Guests are asked to seek help from the pantry no more than once each month. They are given a four-day supply of food plus personal care items.

In addition to meeting our guests' emergency food needs, we make every effort to help them with linkages to other needed community services and resources. The pantry hosts representatives from a variety of community organizations who table during pantry operations to familiarize guests with their services. They offer information on such topics as food stamps, nutrition education, job openings, education opportunities, housing, legal assistance, gardening and medical services. Resource materials are available.

The pantry has also been the host site for several FOCUS projects such as literacy project, school supply distribution and the seed and seedling distribution.

We also try and keep guests abreast of important legislative issues that will impact them such as Welfare reform, efforts to increase the minimum wage or welfare grant level, food stamp program changes, job development efforts etc.

Volunteers: Our conservative estimate is that more than sixty individuals contributed over 2,500 hours of time during 2003. The program would cease to function without the benefit of their support. On each day that the pantry was open an average of 8 people volunteered, doing guest interviews and intakes, packing food orders, unloading deliveries and stocking the shelves. We received over 235 food deliveries during 2003, the lions share of which were picked up by volunteers.

The Food Pantry also benefits from in-kind services received from member congregations including, the space at TUMC where the pantry was housed. The pantry operation was moved from TUMC to its temporary home at EBC in November of 2003. The move was very smooth thanks to the efforts of our hard working and dedicated volunteers. Several of the church secretaries also provide administrative support in the way of phone messaging, guest referrals and filling emergency food requests.

Food Pantry Volunteers:

Greater Community: Aimee Allaud, John Bosko, James Burch, Carl Case, Richard Catozzi, Jimmy Fink, Steve Gielbeda, Katrina Graham, Wayne Jackson, Jimmy Morales, Shirley Mosher, Raylene Ransom, Francine Silbermann, Linda Sorenson, Erhard Ulbrich, Day'vid Weatherly, Bill Willey, Jimmy Yannis, Albany County ARC, Smith Center;

CBE: Rita Abrams, Jerry & Yvette Nackenson, Bert Weinberg;

EBC: Laura Barelski, John and Robin Bray, Warren Burton, Sally Cole, Audrey Ford, Janet Franklin, Bessie Gibson, Ken Graham, Robert & Karen Green, Judy Henningson, Gail Hill, Nancy Horan, Patricia Hunziker, Carole Keith, Sam Koonce, Edith Leet, David Malone, Marilyn Malone, Kathy Moore, Edie Simpson. Dwight Smith;

FP: Paul Bascom, Cheryl Collier, Tillie Collier, Roger Green, Ray Henrikson, Fran Kamp, Stephanie Kite, Pam Landers, Jim Miller, Elizabeth Naismith, Rachel Smith, Sue, Peter & Jeffrey Sneeringer;

FUUSA: Jane & George Allen, Ann Brandon, Therese Broderick, Carl & Joan Ekengren, Emily & Jay Gallagher, David Munro, Peggy Slocum, Lois Thomson;

MCCHV: Jill Farnham, Lisa, Karha' Us;

NCPC: Art & Jane Ferguson, Pauline Jacobus, Jim Lind, Gwyn Ramage, Paula Thompson, Lois Wolff;

SAE: Lisa Walker and Mary White;

TUMC: Doris O'Bryan, Cissy Quinn, Al Spencer;

WP: Norman Andrews, Glenda Bennett, Martha Blackman, John Bossung, Hal Budka, Sally & Art Buell, Sidney Kent, Bill and Margie Mayer, Doris McKee, Peter & Lynne McKee, Tom McPheeters, Marianne Rings, Michael Shrader, John Seiloff, Mary Jean & Allan Tedrow, Lois Thompson, Hank Williams and Lois Wilson.

Breakfast Program

The FOCUS Breakfast Program completed its 19th season this spring. It was open November thru April 15, Tuesday - Thursday each week. The breakfast was able to remain open on holidays and through snowstorms! On the average 96 people were served a hot meal and take-away bag lunch per morning, totaling 11,998 meals. The 2 hour breakfast time continues to be a sanctuary space for our guests who not only need food but need a safe, hospitable space where they can come out of the cold to sleep, build community, read the want-ads, seek spiritual counsel and a myriad of resources. We continue to work collaboratively with many outside human service agencies who visit various mornings (Whitney Young CHEER program, Veterans Outreach Services, Guildcare, HEAP...).

The heart and soul of this soup kitchen is the commitment of our volunteers (over 30 are needed on a weekly basis). Volunteers gave over 2,600 hours of service. FOCUS Staff (Peg Hanlon and Jim Fink) ensure that the food inventory, pickups, deliveries, hauling, ordering, and cleanup get done. In May a volunteer recognition luncheon was hosted by the FOCUS Executive Council and was held at FP. We continue to be grateful to the Westminster Presbyterian congregation (and Sexton Glenda Bennett) for their graciousness in sharing physical space for this vital ministry.

2003 Breakfast Program Volunteers:

Greater Community: Reszin Adams, Aimee Alluad, Deb Catozzi, Laura Miller, Bill Green, Dawn Secor, Val Schultz, Shorty Jamison, Carl Case, Bill Willey, Wendy VanOrden, Linda from Guildcare, Dean Hartley, Clinton Crump, Jim Yannis, Joe Wait, Edward "Brick" Washington

EBC: Anthony Askew, Pat Campbell, Andrea Gaylord, Gail Hill, Marilyn Malone, Edie Simpson, Kathy Moore, Bev Norwood, Laura Barelski, Nancy Horan, Rev. Gary Harris

FP: Sue Haney, Fran Kamp, Kate Birdsall, Elizabeth Naismith

MCCHV: Rev. Jill Farnham, Rev. Karha Us

TUMC: Alan Spencer

WPC: Norm Andrews, Martha Blackman, Frank Houde, Joan Lewis, Rev. David McMillan, Tom McPheeters, Marianne Rings, Eve Ryan, Michael Shrader, Chester Burch, Allan & Mary Jean Tedrow, Pete Seagle, Rich Staples, Rev. Jim Reisner and Cissy Quinn

Christ Community - Randy & Kathy Goldberg

St. Patrick's Roman Catholic - Friar Greg Spuhler, Yvonne Fleming

Friends Society - Elizabeth Pearson

Visitors:

Capital Area Baptist Association

FOCUS Clergy

Albany Peace Activists

Emma Willard Students

Sienna School of Social Work

Budget for this program is presented under Financial Statements

Kids Summer Breakfast

We continue to believe this project is important, and in faith, trust that the funding and people power will come out of our congregational resources. You made this ministry possible. We are grateful for your participation and for putting your faith into action. FOCUS continues to forge new and renewed relationships with community partners such as the Boys and Girls Club. The Kid's Summer Breakfast ran from July 7 thru August 22. Under the coordination of Peg Hanlon, FOCUS provided 818 nutritious and scrumptious breakfasts (averaging 24 kids per morning) to children who otherwise would not have access to these meals.

Volunteers:

IAME: Ann Greenlee, Nancy Haizlip, Deedee Haizlip, Louise Danzy, Elmer Green and Rev. John Justice.

TUMC: Shirley Bristol, Jason Scott

EBC: Audrey Ford, Edie Simpson, Rev. Gary Harris, Dwight Smith

WP: Lois Wilson, Cissy Quinn, Steve Gielbeda, Deb Catozzi

Boys and Girls Club: Kion Williams and the Project Love Staff

Our thanks also to the Israel AME Church Family and Pastor John Justice for providing hospitable space and in-kind services that are so essential for any food program.

Extra Helpings

FOCUS continues to operate a community food-buying club open to the public. Extra Helpings purchases bulk quantities of food items at a discount price for monthly disbursement. On average 35-40 families purchase each month. FOCUS staff Deb Catozzi runs this program with volunteers who deliver, assemble and distribute the groceries. In March 2003 the Extra Helpings site was moved from the Albany Boys and Girls Club to its new location at FP.

Volunteers:

Greater Community; Irene Econome, Clinton Crump, Carl Case, Connie Suarez;

EBC: Bob Green, Sam Koonce;

FP: Paul Bascom Linda Stevens, Fran Kamp, Peter Thomas, Roger Green, Violet Keleshian, Elizabeth Naismith,

Harvest for the Community Garden

Located at the State Office Campus in Albany, this one-acre garden was planted, nurtured and harvested by volunteers and guests from pantries participating in the greater coalition Food Pantries for the Capital District, Hunger Action Network of NYS and the Office of general Services. FOCUS provided oversight to the groups and volunteers that worked throughout the summer. Close to 2,000 lbs. of produce was harvested this summer with much of it going directly to guests at the FOCUS Interfaith Food Pantry. Some of our FOCUS members participated in "Grow An Extra Row" and contributed fresh produce to the pantry. Thanks especially to Bob Green EBC for bushels of home grown tomatoes and cabbage.

FOCUS Website

Many thanks to Roger Green FP who with great energy and perseverance has maintained our website for the last 3 years. If you haven't been there recently check it out.

www.timesunion.com/communities/focus/

Host to Urban Mission Trips

In conjunction with EBC, FOCUS hosted and provided ministry opportunities to two wonderful groups over the summer. The first group (of 20 young seminarians) was from South Africa and spent time with us working in our feeding programs. The second group (of 15 teenagers) visited from Dayton Baptist Church, Ohio. The young people experienced urban ministry as they participated in our feeding programs, walked the neighborhoods and slept in the shelter.

