



Photo by Sondra Morris

The Blessings We Receive

*Center for Lay Ministries Impacts First Christian Church
By the Rev David Brown*

As I began conversations with First Christian Church a few years ago about serving on their ministry staff, I was very interested in the level of community outreach that the congregation engaged. For me, expressing our faith in Jesus through compassion and justice are central theological issues. We are known, as Jesus says, by the fruit we bear. (Matthew 7:16) If I were to serve these folks at FCC as a pastor, what kind of situation would I be coming into? One with a lot of teaching work to do? Or one with a lot of celebrating for their already-formed faith?

They make my “job” easy, actually. This congregation has been around about as long as Jeffersonville itself, so it has had a long time to be shaped well by the Holy Spirit! People here are serving in countless and wonderful ways. (FCC used to be one of the “downtown churches”.)

Truthfully, however, without the opportunities for serving that we find at the Center for Lay Ministries, we may not be growing in our faith and expressing it so well. CLM blesses us each and every day by giving us opportunities to encounter the living Christ in the places where he so often chooses to be—among the needs of people. (Matthew 25)

Volunteers from FCC join with volunteers from other really wonderful local churches to staff the center. I run into these folks at the front desk and in the food area. They tell me how much they are blessed to serve there.

Because of the joy we have found in serving at CLM, people at FCC have organized to collect needed food products every Sunday. Each month we advertise a different food item and bring in as much as we can. Last November we collected peanut butter. To keep it fresh in our minds, we sang the old “peanut...peanut butter...and JELLY!” song every week instead of the traditional Doxology.

We have folks serving on the board at CLM and at Bliss House. So, they often arrange meeting space here at the church. And whenever there are efforts at funding this great community ministry, we try to do all we can to advertise and participate.

Importantly, too, a line-item in our annual ministry budget is dedicated to the Center. I have to confirm what our CLM volunteers keep saying: the increases in our faith by encountering Christ through the ministries of the Center are incredible! And the folks who are most engaged in it seem to be the ones who are most at peace in life.

Funny. Jesus said something about that, too. People who act on his word are like wise builders who choose rock as their house foundation. When the storms come, those houses withstand it. (Matthew 7)

May you all be blessed in your service to CLM, to Jeffersonville, and beyond.

Give not Give Up

A letter from Deacon John Thompson to the churches of Clark County invited them to participate in Give Don't Give up a program encouraging people to give non-perishable food to the Thelma Mathews pantry program to feed our hungry neighbors. Several congregations made this a special priority during Lent including St Augustine's, Sacred Heart, St Paul's and Faith Lutheran.

Downtown Churches Lenten Series Support

The annual Jeffersonville Downtown Churches Lenten Service and Lunch Series was held at Bethel AME Church this year. The Rev Sheiler Stokes, pastor presented the Center for Lay Ministries with a check for \$300. This represented the proceeds from the lunches following the noon time Lenten services.

This Lenten tradition goes back almost 90 years. In recent years the proceeds for the lunches have been designated to support the work of CLM which the downtown churches were instrumental in originally creating and continue to support.



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Education and Food Pantry

By Phyllis Croce

Last November we began our public education outreach efforts with a talk by social worker Carolyn King on “**The Face of Poverty.**” We learned that people carry the hidden rules of the class in which they were raised. If one was raised in the middle class for two generations or more, one's decision-making incorporates three things: work, achievement, and material security. One of the first questions asked in a middle-class setting is “What do you do?” However, after two generations or more in poverty the three things governing decisions are relationships, entertainment, and survival, because you have only one real possession, and that's people. In wealth, the three deciding factors are social, financial, and political connections-- for two reasons-- connections keep one safe, and help to attain more financial stability and power. The hidden rule about money is that one never discusses money. Investments, yes. Money, no.

When a hidden rule is broken, the offender often gets “the look.” For our clients, getting “the look” has the effect of breaking the relationship. It is next to impossible to build a relationship across class lines with someone who breaks hidden rules. Schools and businesses operate from middle-class norms and use the hidden rules of the middle class, so many of our clients are at a disadvantage, and need our support as professionals.

A Place at the Table: In January, CLM showed this film at the Jeffersonville Township Library to start and continue a community discussion about poverty and food in America. There are strong connections between poverty, poor nutrition, obesity and the inability for children to concentrate in school. This is an especially egregious situation when we know that between the ages of birth and 5 years of age, a child's brain develops at a faster rate than at any other time in their life. This film discusses how what might be considered a small decrease in SNAP funding affects those living below national poverty levels. (CLM has 2 copies of “A Place at the Table” available for loan with or without a speaker from the Education and Food Pantry Committee. As a donor to CLM, please consider borrowing a copy of this important film.)

Client Cooking Classes: “Cooking Matters” is a program is sponsored by Dare to Care and teaches clients how to evaluate nutritional value of foods along with a hands-on cooking class taught by a local chef. The program ends with a shopping day. Clients vote on which grocery store to visit with the chef and nutritionist and a \$10 gift card for purchasing food guided by what they have prepared in their hands-on class. Last March, at the Dare to Care Client Appreciation Dinner, CLM received the Bobby Ellis Award that came with an unexpected \$500 cash award. Many thanks are given to Deb Henderson, *volunteer extraordinaire* for organizing the “Cooking Matters” classes at CLM.

Homeless: Our most recent presentation in the series (April 23, at 4 p.m., at the Jeffersonville Township Library) was Barbara Anderson. Barbara, a local advocate for the homeless and the Director of Haven House. Her talk “Homeless in our Region: A Comprehensive Look at Poverty in Southern Indiana” discussed myths and facts about the Homeless.

A Note from Greg

.Dear Friend of CLM,

First, I would like to start this article with a huge THANK YOU to all our donors who are keeping our pantry shelves full.... especially the last half of 2013. We had to purchase very little food which was mostly meat. Your support is continuing in 2014. Dare to Care provides approximately 80% of our needs. Many of you stepped up in response to our plea for food during the fall and donated to CLM.



We have many objectives for 2014. There is a need to expand our parking lot and to make it safe. Our Bliss Houses are in need of some necessary repairs and capital improvements. It is imperative that we position ourselves for the future in order to continue the ministries that we initiated more than 40 years ago.

Again, thank you for your support. Please feel free to stop by our pantry anytime to visit....and bring a sack of groceries.

Sincerely,

Greg

Interim Executive Director

Thank You Meijers Jeffersonville!

The Center for Lay Ministries is most grateful to the Jeffersonville Meijer's store for their triple match of dollars donated through the Simply Give campaign.

This level of support is significant and indicates a growing partnership with Meijers. We thank them for all they do in the community and especially for the Center for Lay Ministries.

From the Chair...by Virginia Klemens,

Stewardship is usually a theme for the fall, the season of harvest and Thanksgiving. For the Center for Lay Ministries, stewardship is an underlying theme for our work and commitment all year long. We depend on our staff, our volunteers, our churches and our corporate and individual donors to dedicate their time, talent and financial resources year round.

We have so many examples of good stewards in our CLM family. The Board of CLM meets regularly to review programs and finances to assure that we are fulfilling our mission in the community. Committees are organized to support the physical and program needs of our clients. The annual Bliss fund-raiser is an example of the support received from private and corporate donors to support women in recovery. Our food pantry volunteers dedicate countless hours to serving clients needing food and assistance in Clark County. The *Neighborhood Night Out* has involved all of our neighborhood associations in support of our food pantry. Our churches continue to hold food drives and include CLM in their annual budgets to insure that our programs can continue. Women of the churches support the women of the Bliss House with special events and grant opportunities.

But we still need to appeal to you for your commitment of time, talent and financial resources. We hope to identify major corporate donors who will commit annually to supporting our ministry. We need people with expertise in maintenance and finance and accounting to maintain our property and manage and grow our finances. We need young adults to bring their physical energy and technology skills to our Thelma Mathews Social Service programs. We need farmers and community partners to provide fresh produce to our food pantry clients. We need employers who will hire Bliss residents as they work toward recovery and meeting their financial obligations. WE NEED YOU!

The purpose of the Center for Lay Ministries is to provide services to vulnerable populations in the local community with compassion, dignity and respect. Call 282-0063 to offer your donation of time, talent or financial resources or to invite Greg Henderzahn, Julie Schwerer or Virginia Klemens to make a presentation to your community organization or church on behalf of CLM, the food pantry and the women of the Bliss House.

Thank you for your good stewardship!

Blissful Gratitude

The Center for Lay Ministries is a special organization. Our campus sits quietly in the middle of a residential part of Jeffersonville emanating love and service. It is not by chance that we receive blessings from our community on a regular basis because if we did not, we might not be as effective as we are. As Director of the Center for Lay Ministries' Bliss House, Bliss Too and the Alumnae Association, I see God's love in action all of the time. I am very much aware of how fortunate we are, so I have decided to spotlight our major donors who consistently support us.

The Jeffersonville Township Trustee, Dale Popp has always been a contributor to the success of the Center for Lay Ministries/ Bliss House. Our other generous donors include: Clark County Sheriff, Danny Rodden; The Hazel T. Bales Foundation; The Horseshoe Foundation of Floyd County; The Harrison County Community Foundation; The Rebecca Thomas Foundation; The Zonta Club of Louisville; the UPS Foundation and The Southern Indiana Community Foundation. Our friends at all of these wonderful organizations contribute to the lives of women and make a difference in our community by supporting our programs designed to assist women in recovery from alcohol and other drugs.

Bravo to this group who have done so much to make our successes possible!

Julie Schwerer
Bliss House Director

Your donations make it possible for The Center for Lay Ministries to address unmet needs of the people of Clark County with respect and compassion. You can make a donation through our website at www.centerforlayministries.org or send it to 213 E Maple St, Jeffersonville, IN 47130



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