

A Way Forward

A Strategic Plan for Outreach at Asbury First

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I. OUR TASK

Asbury First has a heart for outreach. For at least fifty years (with the genesis of the Storehouse), Asbury First has demonstrated a lasting commitment to outreach both on and off our campus. It has accomplished this through congregation-led and -developed ministries as well as strategic partnerships. On our campus, ministries such as the Dining and Caring Center, the Storehouse, RAIHN, and the UR Well clinic make a tangible difference for the people of Rochester. Off campus, ministries such as the Grocery Bag Ministry, School 41, West Ave Youth Café, and Habitat for Humanity make life a little better for the people of Rochester. Beyond our borders, ministries such as Project Chacocente and Miracle Garden remind us that involvement is needed beyond our local community.

These ministries help us to carry out Christ's command to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and heal the sick; we celebrate their successes. However, as we recognize the challenges associated with our current outreach-dedicated spaces as well as the growing poverty within the city of Rochester, we have reached a point when, as a congregation, we need to look carefully and thoughtfully at the long-term viability and effectiveness of these ministries. To that end, our task was to develop a strategic plan for outreach at Asbury First.

II. OUR MISSION

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we cultivate hope and fullness of life.

III. OUR VALUES

Love – All our actions testify to our love for God and for all people.

Community – we welcome a sense of community and partnership with everyone. The safety and wellbeing of our guests and volunteers is important to us.

Sharing – God has bestowed gifts upon us and others; we share these through fellowship, hospitality, and service.

Faith in Christ – As disciples of Jesus Christ, we model our lives on his words and deeds.

Justice – We believe all people are equal, deserving of having their immediate needs met with dignity and their injustices and inequities addressed righteously.

Stewardship – We are called to be good caretakers of ourselves, our resources, and the world God created for us all.

Joy – we share and experience the promised joy of life.

IV. OUR PROCESS

Initially, the Asbury First Outreach Task force agreed on the definitions of terms and reviewed the biblical foundation for our work. We examined the differences between charity, justice and outreach. We agreed that as the greater Rochester community and Asbury First considers the problem of poverty in Rochester, we need to refocus our efforts. We need to:

- move beyond simply giving things to people who have less than us
- seek ways to get at the roots of poverty and create justice
- establish lasting and loving relationships with our guests, inviting them through example or worship to experience God's love and share their own gifts
- dismantle silos that have grown up around our individual outreach ministries

We decided a clear and concise mission statement was needed to signal this change in approach to outreach. But a single statement simple enough so people could remember it would also need some background explanation and a yardstick by which all outreach work must be measured. For that reason, we also developed a set of values to support our mission statement.

After creating these yardsticks and definitions, we examined Asbury First's gifts and stumbling blocks. For example, our gifts include being blessed with a large congregation and many willing volunteers with a variety of valuable skills. On the other hand, our size and can-do attitude sometimes also present a stumbling block by creating and maintaining silos that are at best isolated from each other and at worst working at counter-purposes. We surveyed each outreach ministry to understand ongoing and future needs, as well as catalogue issues that stand in the way of reaching our full potential, or are out of line with our agreed-upon values. Finally, we talked about how we want to proceed in the future regarding existing ministries, new ministries and coordination of all.

Leaders, volunteers, and friends of the outreach ministries were interviewed to get appropriate feedback. If there were significant gaps between how the outreach ministries were performing and the mission statement, we then identified obstacles and challenges that were preventing compatibility with our mission statement and values. (See summaries of these interviews in the appendix.) In some cases suggestions were made for going forward and they have already been implemented.

V. OUR DEFINITIONS

1. **CHARITY** - To define charity, the primary focus is on individuals rather than systems. It tends to meet immediate rather than long term needs and addresses the effects rather than causes of injustice, oppression, and inequality. Charity is an option based on generosity and surplus rather than required, based on rights and equitable sharing of essentials. In other words, charity is optional assistance given to oppressed individuals or groups that focuses on alleviating the immediate results of oppression.
2. **JUSTICE** - Justice focuses on rights of all people, on structures and systems, and on causes of injustice and oppression. Justice works for long term change and is intent on eliminating the root causes of oppression through advocacy, organization, and relationship-building both with

oppressed persons and oppressing persons and organizations. Charitable acts, as the ongoing work of justice unfolds, are often necessary to support people in immediate need. Yet, charity as a final aim of the ministry of the church, is insufficient, potentially harmful, and an incomplete understanding of God's intention for our relationships with one another.

3. **OUTREACH** - The mission of the United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by proclaiming the good news of God's grace and by exemplifying Jesus' command to love God and neighbor, thus seeking the fulfillment of God's reign and realm in the world. The fulfillment of God's reign and realm in the world is the vision Scripture holds before us. Outreach is a primary avenue through which we express the mission of the church in justice-seeking activity and describes a variety of serving ministries, charity and justice work, and advocacy efforts taken by individuals, groups, and organizations.
4. **MINISTRY** - We define a ministry as any group within Asbury First that is attempting to live out the mission of outreach in a formal way.
5. **GUESTS** - We recognize that the people with whom we are in ministry might be called by many names, but, because of our commitment to love and community (as evidenced in our values), we have chosen the name guests. It recognizes them as people worthy of our attention and relationship and to whom we have an obligation to Christian hospitality

VI. OUR DILEMMAS

Early in our work, we identified three dilemmas that we knew needed to address:

Dilemma 1: BALANCING CHARITY AND JUSTICE

"For you always have the poor with you..." – Matthew 12:10

We continue to face some dilemmas in reshaping our outreach programs to seek greater justice. Over the last 50 years, we have become really good at feeding people, at clothing people, and tending to the sick. But we have not addressed the systemic issues that are keeping people hungry, naked and ill. We direct much effort toward those systems – volunteer and otherwise -- that keep these ministries going, but relatively little toward the systems that keep people coming to these ministries.

Overall, outreach ministries of Asbury First need to balance justice and mercy. On the one hand, they need to be flexible enough to address the structural challenges of poverty in a new and creative ways. On the other, we must continue to respond to the immediate needs of the least, the last and the lost.

Efforts to address injustices *are* being made in the Dining and Caring Center with skilled counseling and support services delivered by the director, but at the expense of other required tasks. We note that several other ministries, including RAIHN, Habitat for Humanity, School 41 and West Ave. Kids Café, are already trying to balance mercy and justice. Asbury First offers and should continue to offer its accommodating spaces to

have important community conversations geared toward justice. But the congregation could get more involved in participating in and leading those discussions.

The Outreach Ministry Taskforce is committed to continuing with many of our current ministries of mercy, especially the Dining and Caring Center and the Storehouse. While we believe that there are important changes that need to happen within these ministries and others to make them even more fruitful, we affirm the work that they do on a daily basis to cultivate hope and fullness of life. However the taskforce is also committed to exploring new ministries that begin to address some of the injustices of our community.

Recommendation:

We suggest that Asbury First begin to dedicate significant effort to addressing the root causes of poverty in Rochester and beyond. We imagine this task being carried out within each of the individual outreach ministries, but we also task the outreach committee with a regular assessment of matters of justice within our current outreach ministries and any new initiatives. We also encourage the congregation to continue and expand the use of our campus spaces for important community conversations that work for justice.

Dilemma 2: MAKING SPACES ACCESSIBLE WITHOUT LIMITING MINISTRY

“And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell – and great was its fall!” – Matthew 7:26-27

Two of our flagship ministries– the Storehouse and the Dining and Caring Center – currently operate in spaces that are inadequate. Among the challenges are flooding, HVAC, electrical and air quality issues, but the biggest challenge is that neither is accessible to those with handicapping conditions. Currently they are only accessible by stairs. Not only does this exclude entire populations of guests and volunteers, it is also in direct contradiction to our denominational accessibility imperatives.

So we face another dilemma here: While we’re committed to making sure that all of our ministries are accessible, we don’t want to spend so much doing that so we no longer have the human or financial resources to engage in new ministries of justice and mercy that might arise.

Recommendation:

To preserve human and financial resources to the best of our ability, the task force recommends that the church choose the most cost-effective options between building a new dedicated outreach structure and renovating our existing spaces. We recognize that a new building may be too expensive to allow the freedom to cultivate hope and fullness of life in the way we are called. We also recognize that the costs of renovation might be such that the better use of resources would be placed in a new, free-standing building. We put our trust in the work of the Holy Spirit in this community as we make that determination.

Dilemma 3: FOCUSING ON OR OFF-CAMPUS

“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.” - John 14:3

Fields in need of cultivation for hope and fulfillment are not all on East Avenue. Some of our ministries function very effectively on campus, which is accessible by multiple bus lines. Further, guests have reported feelings of gratitude for being welcomed onto campus. We have seen many guests of the Dining and Caring Center find their way into the worshipping fellowship of Asbury First.

We recognize that if we want to address the pressing needs of this community, we will need to balance our work on campus with our work off-campus so that one does not become the dominant or driving force behind our outreach. We need to press the boundaries of our comfort zone, making it easier for all members of our congregation to help with this work.

Recommendation:

Strengthen relationships with both city churches in areas of need and with our fellow East Avenue houses of worship. We imagine these relationships will need to be strengthened through connections between pastoral and lay leadership as well as opportunities for our congregations to relate.

One possible way this network can reach into the communities of greatest need without diverting too much money to facilities is for the partners to invest in their own “outreach trucks” that would comprise a fleet of vehicles -- a mobile ministry armada – aimed at various outreach needs, from food to tutoring to health checks. The effort must be preceded, of course, by efforts to develop relationships in those communities and determine from their residents what would be most helpful.

VII. OUR STRATEGY

Asbury First has no shortage of ideas for how to help people in our community. Admittedly, our task force wrestled with opposing opinions on whether to adopt any new outreach ministries when our existing ministries have unmet needs. Ultimately, however, given our strategic emphases and particular dilemmas, we decided to recommend some new ministries and new ways of approaching old ministries. We recognize that our community’s problems don’t rest solely on our shoulders and we will reach better solutions if we work together. The following non-binding suggestions are for the Church Council and Outreach Committee to consider for possible adoption.

Recommendations:

- 1. Strategic Partnerships** – We recognize that in order to fully live out our mission, we will need to work with others in our area and beyond who have similar goals and from whom we can learn how to better leverage our resources, human and financial, to make the most difference.

- a. **With other anti-poverty initiatives.** There are several organizations currently working within Rochester in order to address the needs of poverty in our area, the most prominent of which is the city's Anti-Poverty initiative. We recommend exploring ways to set strategic goals that align with other initiatives where ever possible.
 - b. **With faith communities.** We want to increase our work with other faith communities (churches, synagogues, faith-based organizations, etc.) in order to address the challenges Rochester faces. We recommend a conference where other faith-based communities can share best practices with us, inviting places like Cameron Ministries, Bethel Full Gospel Temple, Third Presbyterian, Catholic Charities, and Eastern Service Workers.
 - c. **With faith communities in impoverished neighborhoods:** While not all churches are able to address the needs of the community around them, many of those churches know better the needs of the community. We recommend finding ways to form deeper relationships with churches in impoverished neighborhoods in order to work together to address our community's needs. As a start, we could expand on our existing relationship with West Avenue UMC as it merges with Grace UMC to find new ways to share in each other's gifts. We should continue and hopefully expand upon our relationship with Baber AME (our partner in the Together in Service project) and the dozen or so churches that receive Grocery Bag Ministry allotments.
 - d. **With other agencies and organizations:** We recommend finding ways to not duplicate efforts by leveraging our resources, human and financial, to help aid the work of other agencies and organizations that are in keeping with our mission. We might consider a deeper partnership with Foodlink, for example, allowing us to provide fresher foods and a wider variety to our guests on campus and off. We could explore how we can be better partners with Foodlink and our guests in this way. For instance, we may enlist Foodlink to offer its healthy cooking classes for adults and children on our campus, in 1010 or the kitchen that serves Fellowship Hall. Furthermore, we could partner with new groups, like Greentopia, to learn about how to create internships, and to get guidance in creating our own community garden on campus. They might help us establish internships and more formal volunteering opportunities within our ministries to allow guests to share their own gifts and gain training they may be able to use to gain employment.
2. **Support schools and literacy.** Understanding that education is one of the best ways to get out of poverty, we should strengthen our support in this area. If volunteer support exists, we should work especially in the areas in after-school programs, literacy and attendance (for instance, volunteers adopt a city block, get to know families and see that children are awake, dressed and fed on time to be transported to school.) We should explore partnering with one or two libraries in impoverished neighborhoods (Arnett and Phyllis Wheately, for instance) to support their Raising a Reader program with money and volunteers.
 3. **Flexible Need Response.** In speaking with some of the guests of the Dining and Caring Center, they revealed that while they love coming to the Asbury First campus, there are moments when they could use some help where they are. The only challenge is that they are not usually in the same place. One creative idea we had was to partner with local churches and synagogues to create a fleet of outreach trucks, supported by all, to minister throughout the quadrants of the city of Rochester. We imagined that they could start with monthly visits to a particular area and

then perhaps moving to weekly visits. Staffed by volunteers from all participating organizations and by those in the communities of need, the fleet could provide volunteer, training and work opportunities for community residents. The purpose of the trucks could vary by season, providing in late summer, for example, immunizations, school supplies, school uniforms, haircuts and physicals. Other times of the year they could focus on tutoring, job search assistance, tax assistance, screening for STDs, and something fun, too, from a bounce house to fall pumpkin decorating. Ideas for individual trucks include food, tutoring, clothing, job wagon, shower and laundry facilities, social services, books-and-breakfast, prayer.

VII. OUR WORK AHEAD

As we interviewed the various outreach ministries and brainstormed about new ways to spread mercy and justice, several themes beyond space emerged. Asbury First's ministries need *better coordination* to ensure we are using our resources the best possible way and we're sticking to our declared values. They need to *communicate better* with each other. Many current volunteers have received no particular training for what they are doing. We saw several instances where old procedures that have served well in the past have become outdated or, with dwindling numbers of volunteers available during the day, impossible to continue effectively. And sometimes we're trying to help by doing something that unbeknownst to us actually undermines the fullness of life we seek to share with others.

Recommendations:

- 1. Volunteer Recruitment.** Asbury First should commit to enlist more volunteers and provide opportunities at accessible times (not just during the work day) for volunteers to participate in various outreach ministries. We encourage the pastors, lay leadership, and new member coordinators to highlight volunteering for outreach as a major emphasis of Asbury First and an expectation of membership. We recommend providing regular opportunities for people to "try out" a volunteer role within various outreach ministries. One idea is to turn the Together in Service month into a week where members can try out Asbury First's existing volunteer programs, perhaps doing regular duties or special projects those ministries line up specifically for that week. Finally, we recommend the hiring of a volunteer coordinator responsible for communicating volunteer needs to the congregation, meeting with Sunday school groups, connecting with high school programs that require students to perform community service, and partnering with young adult or young professional programs that seek volunteer opportunities.
- 2. Increased Congregational Education.** Overall, we recognize the need for the congregation to be better informed about the outreach ministries of Asbury First as well as the needs within the city of Rochester and beyond. We recommend increased attention to communication surrounding outreach as well as opportunities for learning. We suggest the outreach committee, in conjunction with the leadership of the church, commit to regular (perhaps quarterly) educational opportunities for the congregation. One possibility would be to hold a regular role-playing exercise known as a "poverty simulation." Several agencies connected to Asbury First conduct these educational exercises. We can continue congregation-wide education by following up with a series of talks or a book series.

3. **Better Volunteer Training.** We strongly suggest that each of the outreach ministries provide regular training for volunteers to the ministries. Each ministry should document the process it uses for volunteer training and the level of training necessary for participating as a volunteer in various capacities. We recommend the creation of volunteer job descriptions for each role within the various ministries. For regular volunteers who interact with the public more than once a month, we suggest regular training in the areas of diversity, poverty, and sensitivity issues. Further, we recommend that we provide regular training in de-escalation and non-violent communication. We could recruit an outside agency to do the training at first, then train our own people (or volunteer coordinator) to be trainers.
4. **Strategic Staffing.** We recommend that the church consider a staffing strategy that will improve our outreach ministries and better equip us to live out our mission. To that end, we make the following recommendations:
 - a. *Volunteer Coordinator:* (see recommendation 1 above)
 - b. *Social Worker:* The challenges that our guests lay at our feet are frequently beyond what volunteers armed solely with a loving spirit can solve. Further, our pastors are ill-equipped to deal with many of the challenges faced by our guests. In order to better meet the needs of our guests, we recommend that Asbury First hire a social worker. This person would move between the various ministries, particularly the Dining and Caring Center and the Storehouse, to help address the immediate needs of guests, aid them in navigating social services, and to unravel some of these challenges our guests face.
 - c. *Outreach Director:* In order to better facilitate communication between ministries, provide budgetary oversight, supervise personnel, and coordinate volunteer training and recruitment, we recommend moving to a single outreach director who would have oversight over all of the outreach ministries at Asbury First. Additionally, an outreach director could be key to growing and maintaining our relationships with city churches.

Additional personnel may be needed in the form of grant writer. While we've identified these personnel needs, actual staffing may vary the combinations of tasks suggested here.

5. **Regular self-assessment.** In addition to an initial self-assessment by each ministry following the adoption of this report in order to ensure that the ministry is living the mission and values set forth here, we also recommend a process of regular evaluation and assessment. In particular, we encourage each ministry to build into its regular function some yearly mechanism by which to measure its continued viability and sustainability as well as goal setting for the year ahead.
6. **Include our guests.** We don't always know what is best for or what is really needed by the people we try to help. Going forward, every outreach ministry should create a means to seek input from the people it serves, conducting surveys at least annually and incorporating results into its practices. It should be required to submit these reports regularly to the outreach committee.
7. **Create volunteer opportunities for guests.** Our guests are a wealth of information and skills, even if they are struggling with challenges that can sometimes mask those gifts. We need to welcome them – not require them – to work alongside us in our outreach ministries. Frequently in our discussions, we debated the value of giving needed things to guests without addressing the poverty cycle. Though not all guests will be able to do this, with our support some will take

advantage of a volunteer shift, internship or apprenticeship in an Asbury First outreach ministry that can build a resume and lead to paid employment elsewhere.

8. **Safety of guests and volunteers.** We recognize that working with populations in crisis can often lead to challenging and even potentially dangerous situations for volunteers and other guests. We encourage each ministry to create safety procedures that are regularly updated, shared with the Outreach Committee, and included in the training of all volunteers. Where feasible and necessary, technology (cameras, emergency call buttons, etc.) should be deployed to support the safety of guests and volunteers.

VIII. OUR CURRENT STATE & STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

The broad recommendations stated in the above report apply to each of our current ministries. In addition to those recommendations, however, we have named below the current state and specific recommendations for each of the outreach ministries of Asbury First.

As we created this report, we recognized that our outreach ministries fell into three main categories:

Initiated Ministries – These are ministries that Asbury First created, continues to manage, and whose budget is under the umbrella of our Annual Operating Plan. (Dining and Caring Center, Storehouse, School 41, and Grocery Bag Ministry)

Partnered Ministries – These are ministries with which Asbury First maintains a strong connection, but the management and oversight are shared with at least one strategic partner. The total budget for the ministry is not included in our Annual Operating Plan, though some portion may be reflected in it. (UR Well Clinic, RAIHN, and Together in Service)

Supported Ministries – These are ministries to which Asbury First has made a commitment of human and, often, financial resources, but whose management and oversight is the responsibility of another organization. The budget for these ministries is not typically reflected in our Annual Operating Plan. (The Oral Gene Roberts Teen Café, Flower City Habitat for Humanity, Project Chacocente, and Miracle Garden)

We have organized our report regarding the state of our current ministries and our strategic recommendations for them into these categories:

1. Initiated Ministries

a. The Dining and Caring Center

Since its inception the Dining & Caring Center (DCC) has worked to build relationships within our community. From emphasizing that visitors are our guests to the dignified way that meals are served, the DCC models the value of justice: all people are equal, deserving of having their immediate needs met with dignity. In

addition to its primary ministry of serving meals, the DCC offers a number of other services including hair care, showers, laundry, a bicycle clinic, and connections to many social services. Guests and volunteers alike report that the DCC is a place of hospitality and community with a warm and welcoming atmosphere, and guests point out the significance of being welcomed onto Asbury First's campus.

The DCC also connects Asbury First with other religious and community organizations in Rochester. Compared to other outreach ministries, the Dining & Caring Center has the largest number of non-Asbury First volunteers, without whom the ministry would not be able to continue.

Recommendations

Many of the recommendations for the Dining & Caring Center parallel the overall recommendations that are being made for outreach at Asbury First. The issues associated with the facility have been known for some time, and accessibility, safety and crowded conditions are primary concerns. These issues should be a top priority.

There is currently a lack of data about DCC guests to inform decisions or future plans (including where guests come from, how they get to the DCC, and their perspective on the quality of services being offered). A well-thought-out and ongoing process for dialoging with guests and recording data about needs and services would help guide the direction of the center in the future.

Volunteers from outside of Asbury First need to be included in volunteer training and continuing education, whether at Asbury First or at their own sites.

We recommend that the social worker aspect of the director's job be separated into a position that would benefit all ministries and leave the director to manage the day-to-day operation of the DCC. While the center does currently provide volunteer and employment opportunities for guests, guests' skills and capabilities should be more fully surveyed and utilized in the operation and management of the center. A vision of a center that is primarily operated, maintained and managed by guests could guide the future direction of the Dining & Caring Center.

b. The Storehouse

Throughout its history, The Storehouse has done a remarkable amount of good, serving 6,000 families each year with just under 90 volunteers. Some 200 agencies throughout the Rochester area rely on The Storehouse by referring clients. This ministry sees more people come through its doors than any other at Asbury First; its outreach to the community – largely supported by the love and creativity of dedicated volunteers – is incredible.

Those who use The Storehouse or recommend clients to it speak very highly of the ministry, and it is one of the only places in Rochester that provides clothing and household goods for free to struggling people. The Storehouse also makes excellent use of its donated resources, offering only the highest quality clothing to shoppers,

mending and cleaning items in need of improvement, and donating items of lower quality to Salvation Army, Lollipop Farm, or other community organizations. Volunteers in The Storehouse work hard to make the best clothing and home goods available to guests and to treat guests with dignity and love.

Recommendations

Many of the recommendations for The Storehouse parallel the overall recommendations that are being made for outreach at Asbury First. The issues associated with the facility have been known for some time, and accessibility, safety, and environmental conditions along with storage limitations are primary concerns. These issues should be a top priority.

While The Storehouse restricts guests' visits to twice a year, there is currently no system in place to keep track of who is visiting and how often. Because of the infrequency of visits, it is challenging for volunteers to build relationships with guests. We recommend that The Storehouse devise intentional ways to get to know guests and receive feedback about the quality of service in order to continue to grow in embodying a high standard of care.

The Storehouse does not currently offer evening hours for volunteers or guests; adding evening hours once or twice a week could provide time for volunteers from different demographics (i.e. those who work during the day) and may be a more convenient time for guests to visit. To capitalize on volunteer hours and be more efficient, The Storehouse needs to be connected by computer to the Internet. Professional coaching may be needed to set up an appropriate appointment-management system and train volunteers to use it.

The Storehouse would benefit from the expertise of a social worker and a grant writer to help secure funds to purchase items underrepresented in donations. These positions could be shared with other Asbury First ministries.

c. School 41

Asbury First provides twenty volunteers to tutor forty students and provide classroom support at Kodak Park School 41. Tutoring is augmented with a community health fair, donated educational materials (especially books), and needed items such as SMART boards, and grocery bags during the holidays. Volunteers build relationships with individual teachers and students and participate in extracurricular activities outside of their regular school day volunteer hours. These relationships also help connect families from the school to other outreach ministries offered by Asbury First.

Recommendations

Volunteers would be better supported by training and clear communication from Asbury First to partner teachers, especially focusing on what teachers can expect

from volunteers. Volunteers might also benefit from participating in training offered by the school district.

d. The Grocery Bag Ministry

The Grocery Bag Ministry distributes approximately 1,000 bags of groceries each year to various organizations (primarily churches) that have demonstrated a need. The relationship between Asbury First and these partner organizations has been developed over decades, and Asbury First relies on these partners to distribute the grocery bags. The ministry is supported at Asbury First by about fifteen volunteers each month, but relies heavily on the efforts of two coordinators.

Recommendations

While we celebrate all that this ministry has done and the good work that it continues to do, we have a concern for its long-term viability given both its reliance on one or two volunteers for coordination and its duplication of other efforts elsewhere in the city. We strongly recommend that the Outreach Committee work closely with the Grocery Bag Ministry to determine its long-term sustainability and, as necessary, adjust its mission to more closely align with the needs of the community.

For example, Foodlink currently does not participate in the Grocery Bag Ministry because it is viewed as a duplication of services. Asbury First should revisit Foodlink's criteria with an eye toward working under its umbrella, as a partnership with this large operation would be very beneficial in sourcing quality food.

Similarly, the relationships with partner churches offer an opportunity for Asbury First to foster a climate of mutual learning and understanding and to work together more effectively on this and other ministries. We would hope to extend these relationships beyond a few key individuals so they will be sustainable in the long term.

2. Partnered Ministries

a. UR Well Clinic

Over its seven-year history, the UR Well Clinic has filled a great need in Rochester by partnering with the University of Rochester to provide basic health care, including physicals, to people without insurance. Care is provided by professionals or doctors-in-training from the University, while support services and hospitality are provided by volunteers. By providing physicals, the clinic helps people to accept jobs, meet college entrance requirements or play on school teams. When people are ill, this care prevents them from being in declining health.

Recommendations

The clinic could use more volunteer support at particular times of the year, especially during the summer when support from students dwindles. We recommend publicizing these volunteer opportunities. Much depends on the current volunteer coordinator of the clinic; we recommend training volunteer back-up to help share the load of responsibility for the ministry.

Much of the space occupied by the clinic is “borrowed,” and a dedicated space would allow room for private counseling, a waiting room, and the opportunity to display more permanent educational materials.

b. Rochester Area Interfaith Hospitality Network (RAIHN)

The Rochester Area Interfaith Hospitality Network (RAIHN) offers shelter to families with children. It rotates locations each week and is housed at Asbury First three weeks each year. Families are provided private rooms and home-cooked meals at Asbury First, as well as opportunities for fellowship and conversation with volunteers. While at Asbury First, many families are connected to the services available through the UR Wellness Clinic and The Storehouse. The RAIHN central office provides additional support services to families with the primary goal of finding them permanent housing. RAIHN embodies many of Asbury First’s values, most especially a strong sense of community and actions that testify to our love for God and for all people.

Recommendations

There is a core group of RAIHN volunteers who share responsibility for the weekly tasks associated with hosting families, but more volunteers would help lighten the load. Volunteers from other faith or community organizations would also be welcome. The use of an additional bedroom has been requested and, if possible, would be helpful for the continued support of this ministry.

c. Together in Service

Together in Service began in 2007 through a partnership between Asbury First and Baber African Methodist Episcopal Church. The vision was for a week of service with members of both congregations working alongside one another. There is general enthusiasm at both congregations for volunteering in these short-term projects, and Together in Service exposes volunteers to agencies and communities that offer the possibility of longer-term relationships.

Recommendations

Together in Service is a unique opportunity for members of two congregations (or more) to participate in Christian fellowship and service together. In practice, however, Together in Service does not tend to foster long-term relationships between the volunteers from Asbury First and Baber. Strategic thinking about building these relationships would help realize the initial vision for the week of

service. We support the decision to focus on a week of service instead of an entire month.

While individuals participate in short-term service, there is not always a clear path to a longer commitment at the end of Together in Service week. We recommend the effort to connect volunteers to longer-term opportunities for service be clarified and strengthened.

3. Supported Ministries

a. The Oral Gene Roberts Teen Café

The Oral Gene Roberts Teen Café has been in operation at West Avenue United Methodist Church for several years, providing prayer, conversation, crafts, activities, and food for inner city youth on Friday evenings. Asbury First is involved one Friday each month. About 30 youth participate in the Café, and Asbury First's team consists of about 8 volunteers and two youth helpers.

Recommendations

The Teen Café is preparing to move to a new location in the near future; additional support from Asbury First throughout this transition (possibly including more volunteers or provision of resources such as furniture and games) is recommended.

Thoughtfully and carefully encouraging more volunteers from Asbury First to participate in this ministry – particularly youth volunteers – would help strengthen relationships and build community across socioeconomic lines and would benefit all involved.

b. Flower City Habitat for Humanity

Since 1989, volunteers from Asbury First have partnered with Habitat for Humanity to build three homes, with a fourth currently under construction. Unlike many of Asbury First's other outreach ministries, this is one for which Asbury First doesn't take primary responsibility; we partner with a number of other churches in the area to create the Harvest Home Coalition. This ministry is supported by a small but dedicated group of volunteers and is a model for what a community partnership can accomplish.

Recommendations

While the number of Habitat for Humanity volunteers from Asbury First is relatively small, the reality is that there are real limits to the number of volunteers that can be effectively utilized on a worksite. We recommend the ministry explore offering opportunities such as the 2015 "Shed Building Blitz," which connected youth and other Asbury First volunteers to Habitat's work on our campus. An easier sign-up system would also make volunteering with Habitat more accessible.

c. Project Chacocente

Project Chacocente began in 2003 at the Managua city dump in Nicaragua, working to transform lives by relocating families from the dump to an agricultural community. Families signed a contract promising to work with the Project to learn skills needed for independence, to govern themselves, and to start small businesses (among other commitments). Each family now owns the house that they built, along with two acres of arable land. The site is now home to a school that serves 152 children, providing access to a bright future through education. Currently at least one Asbury First member maintains a presence on the board of the project.

Recommendations

We celebrate the continued success of this ministry in Nicaragua and the relationships that Asbury First members have fostered there. We recommend continued and further participation by members including regular trips and financial support. We also recommend the leadership of Asbury First to work within the United Methodist connectional system to encourage additional and targeted support of this ministry. Further, we believe the project and our connection to it is aided by the presence of Asbury First members on the board of Project Chacocente and we recommend the continuation of that relationship.

d. Miracle Garden

Miracle Garden was founded in Theethepalayan, Tamil Nadu, India, in 2005 following the tsunami of December 2004. Originally an orphanage, it has expanded to include a school open to children in the village as well as those in residence, a sewing school and a pastor school. The ministry has imparted hope to many children by providing clean water, healthy food, quality education, and a place to call home. Asbury First supports the ministry through financial support, individual members' sponsorship of children, and infrequent trips.

Recommendations

While we recognize the importance of this ministry and honor its successes, we also acknowledge that the current support from Asbury First is minimal. We recommend that the Outreach Committee continue to find ways to keep this ministry in mind as it determines the long-term viability of our allocation of resources to Miracle Garden.

IX. OUR TIMELINE

We anticipate that the recommendations of this report should be assessed and fully implemented within five years of its adoption by church council. In consultation with church leadership, we charge the Outreach Committee to take charge of shepherding, revising, and implementing the recommendations of this report and providing an annual update to the

church council of their progress. Further, we ask them to, in consultation with individual outreach ministries, create a means of assessing the success of these recommendations.

X. OUR CONCLUSION

We hope to create a unified program for addressing poverty in and beyond Rochester with our outreach ministries. We recognize the need to revamp some programs, buttress others and add still others. We need these outreach ministries to work together as they've never done before, breaking down deeply entrenched silos on our campus and creating or strengthening relationships off campus. We are also challenging our congregation to undergo education and training and think of our outreach ministries in brand new ways.

While we have done much work, we have continuing questions remaining:

- What are we missing?
- How is the congregation /community educated about issues of concern/outreach plans?
- What communication strategies are in place/should be in place?
- What will role of advocacy be in outreach plan (i.e.: working for change in local/state/federal government or with practices of agencies/corporations that will make systematic changes?)

These questions will continue to be explored by the outreach committee and the leadership of Asbury First, but they in no way should prevent us from moving forward with the implementation of some of the major strategic emphases of this report. In all of this we seek God's guidance and the blessing of all at Asbury First. We trust that God will be with us as we do our best to cultivate hope and fullness of life.

XI. OUR THANKS

Many, many hours went into compiling this first-ever assessment of Asbury First's outreach ministries and a strategy for improving them. But those hours pale in comparison to the countless volunteer hours that drive Asbury First's many ministries. So our first thanks go to all those people who make outreach at Asbury First run. Special thanks are given to those dozens of people who took time away from the ministries and their personal lives to be interviewed and help inform this report. Thank you, Melody Guadagnino, for your help with scheduling and copying reams of documents for us.

Along the way, we lost some members of our task force due to a variety of reasons. Nevertheless their contributions were heard and helped make this a better report. Thank you Glenn Peck, Andy Dutcher, Larry Gage, Bruce Thompson and Patricia Partridge.

Finally, we wouldn't have known where to start and how to keep going without the instruction and guidance of our consultant, the Rev. Elizabeth Quick. Beth was commuting from Syracuse to help us for months until she was appointed a pastor at First United Methodist Church in Gouverneur in July.

APPENDIX

The Outreach Task Force conducted assessments of existing outreach ministries at Asbury First. These assessments consisted of interviews with representatives from each outreach ministry. The notes from each interview are included in this appendix.

1. Dining & Caring Center
2. The Storehouse
3. School 41
4. Grocery Bag Ministry
5. UR Well Clinic
6. Rochester Area Interfaith Hospitality Network (RAIHN)
7. Together in Service
8. West Avenue Café
9. Habitat for Humanity
10. Project Chacocente
11. Miracle Garden

1. Dining & Caring Center

Interview Date: January 21, 2016

Interviewers: Stephen Cady, Judy Cohen

Interviewees: Cathy Bracht, Gary Brown, Michele Cooley, Andy Dutcher, Phil Gigliotti, Carol Trout

Interview Questions & Responses

1. In a nutshell, what does your program do?
 - Feed the hungry, offer hospitality, hot meals, hope, nurturing, kindness, make people feel important, community building aspect.
 - Referrals to Point in Time: a study being done at Nazareth regarding homeless
 - Hair care: both men and women offered by Cathy Bracht on Sunday afternoons
 - Community bikes: Dan Lill. repair bikes from April to October
 - Showers: Saturday a.m., hygiene items offered
 - Laundry Saturdays and Wednesdays
 - Walk-in ministry: Diane Peace on Wednesday a.m.-come as you are-informal
 - Veterans Affairs: Jeanette Creighton- identify homeless vets
 - Co-operative Extension: talks about nutrition
 - Well Care facilitators: to assist in signing up for health care
 - Housing council: rapid rehousing program
 - Food stamps: Michele facilitates sign up with Dept. of Social Services

2. Look over the outreach mission statement and tell us where your ministry meets the mission statement and where there are gaps.

Most feel DCC lines up with the outreach mission statement.

 - There are guests who have been able to move on and then give back to the DCC
 - There is a feeling of family at the DCC
 - Dignity is promoted (not having a feeling of we-them)
 - Trying to make guests feel equal
 - Non-judgmental

3. How can we create stronger relationships between Asbury First members, volunteers and our guests?
 - Being accepting
 - Open invitation to worship
 - Guests at Asbury First talent show

- Guests have gotten church name tags
 - Communication with the volunteers and church members
4. How can we better integrate what your ministry does with other ministries in the church to prevent having individual “silos” that operate independently?
- Talking to each other
 - A facility that will house both the DCC and The Storehouse
 - Be aware of shared goals
 - Suggestion that each “oasis” (i.e. DCC, Storehouse, UR Well Clinic) get together and talk about shared goals and tasks
 - Cooperation versus competition
 - Pamphlet that combines each individual outreach program into one
5. Is someone else in Rochester or Monroe County doing what you do particularly well? Might there be partnership opportunities?
- St. Joseph’s Hospitality: lunch, housing, tutoring, clothing – may be partnership opportunities
 - Cameron Community Ministries: lunch, clothing
 - Blessed Sacrament: serves dinner
 - Dimitri House
 - Foodlink: expects the dining centers around town to share availability
 - A community garden could be a shared opportunity
6. What help can the church give you (beside space) to enhance your outreach efforts?
- More church volunteers (we have outside volunteers from Atonement Lutheran Church, Temple Beth El, sororities, scout troops)
 - Communication: talk about the DCC (Cathy offered that she talks about the DCC all the time and has had customers that have made significant donations over the years)
 - Help with the Anti-Poverty Initiative in Rochester
7. What would you stop doing in your ministry if you could, and what would you start doing instead?
- Stop feeding and starting teaching people to “fish” so they can provide their own sustenance
 - A discussion about having a presence in the inner city reveals that the people who come to eat at the DCC like the idea of coming to our property and feeling welcome away from their city environment; it enhances their self-esteem to come here

- Better facility
- Emergency housing, residential component
- Van to pick up food at Foodlink
- Shuttle to move people around
- Food cupboard to distribute food and not just provide meals
- Need an extended staff

Recommendations from the Interviewing Team

Since its inception the Dining & Caring Center has worked to build relationships with those less fortunate in our community. From the term “guests”, to the dignified way people are served their meals, the DCC exemplifies the way individuals deserve to be treated. The volunteers, Director and Board deserve credit for creating and maintaining a warm, welcoming atmosphere.

Many of the recommendations for the Dining & Caring Center parallel the overall recommendations that are being made for Outreach at Asbury First.

The issues associated with the facility have been known for some time. Accessibility, safety and crowded conditions are primary concerns. These issues should be a top priority. The body of the report addresses the dilemmas associated with improving the facility: 1. Balancing Mercy and Justice, 2. Making Spaces Accessible without Limiting Ministry, 3. On and/or Off-Campus and provides recommendation on how to proceed.

While there is some anecdotal information about the guests, there is a lack of data from which to base decisions or future plans. There is limited data indicating what guests feel is being done well or what areas need improvement. There is limited data indicating where guests arrive from or how they get to the Center. A well-thought-out, ongoing, formal dialog with guests would provide this important information and help to guide the direction of the center.

The center does provide volunteer opportunities for guest and a limited number of part-time paid positions. These opportunities offer a path out of poverty and/or addiction and should be purposefully expanded. Relationships with nonprofits and social service agencies looking for volunteer and employment opportunities should be strengthened. Guest’s skills and capabilities should be more fully surveyed and utilized in the operation and management of the center. A vision of a center that is primarily operated, maintained and managed by guests could guide the future direction of the Dining & Caring Center.

Breaking down the silos which exist between the various outreach ministries is an important recommendation of the task force. The Dining & Caring Center shares in the responsibility of making this happen. During the interview several good ideas were shared including: 1) building an atmosphere of cooperation vs. competition, 2)

the DCC, Storehouse and Wellness Center getting together and talking about shared goals and a tasks, 3) creating a pamphlet that includes each of the three on campus ministries. The DCC board's decision to make "Dining Among Friends" a fundraising event for all of outreach ministries is an important move in the breaking down of silos. A director for outreach, a shared social worker and/or grant writer are additional examples of initiatives which would further the collaboration between our ministries.

Additionally, we recommend that the social worker aspects of the director's job be separated into a position that would benefit all ministries, leaving the director to manage the feeding operation. That position may be called upon to manage additional food services, such as offering an evening family meal or working with a food truck that could visit places such as a tent city.

Further, this ministry has the largest number of non-Asbury First volunteers. They should be included in continuing education and training for volunteers, whether at Asbury First or at their own sites, such as other churches and synagogues.

2. The Storehouse

Interview Date:

Interviewers: Stephen Cady, Bob Castle, Diana Carter, Katie O'Hern

Interviewees: Judy Cohen, Wendy Cohen, Nancy Davidow

Interview Notes

The Storehouse makes very good use of its resources. There's a standard ("Would I be willing to wear it?") for everything that goes on the floor. If the item doesn't meet the standard, it goes to the Salvation Army, another church that hands out coats and warm sweaters, Lollipop Farm for raggedy towels and blankets. Things are pre-sorted and stored for the basement sale. Zippers are repaired. Suits go to Angeles of Mercy and books may go to Pittsford Library or Red Shelf. Basement sale items are set aside to use for those fundraising events, which raise about \$10,000 a year for The Storehouse. Even with this model of efficiency, though, there is a huge back-up of donations because there are not volunteers or hours to sort through them all in a timely fashion.

Nearly everything comes by donation, either by members of the church or members of the public. Shoppers seek out other items that are needed, men's pants in particular, from garage sales and used goods stores.

Partnerships are formed with Roc City Bottoms for diapers and Pirate Toy Fund for toys. As a result, The Storehouse has added new diapers – 12 in newborn and 12 in size 1 to newborn layettes that it provides to new mothers. It gets truckloads of toys from the Pirate Fund. They still need to buy or recruit needed items such as blankets, sheets, towels, pots, pans, dishes and silverware.

A big concern is for safety of the guests and of the volunteers. Volunteers feel they're trapped in a space where they can't reach safety if necessary and report that an emergency button has been dismantled. Visitors may be inebriated or high or just really angry about things going on in their lives.

On the other hand, people often arrive looking down in the mouth and they leave uplifted and optimistic. Workers try to pick up on people who seem withdrawn and show them care. People come maybe two times a year but The Storehouse really has no way of tracking whether they actually come more and no idea whether agencies who make the appointments are keeping track (our interviews suggest the agencies aren't tracking.) Volunteers try to remind guests to think about getting another appointment to come back when the seasons change so they can get more useful clothing.

Some 200 agencies rely on The Storehouse. The Cameron Ministries has a similar program, but much smaller, and a fee is charged to participate. No one is doing the same thing as The Storehouse to this extent.

Clerks are joyful, board members say.

The limit of twice a year visits is because The Storehouse doesn't have enough clothes or volunteers to handle more. The rule was established before everyone currently serving came on. Four or five people are given appointments for every half-hour slot. There are usually a couple of no-shows. Even if they could sort everything they're given and had more space to display it, they wouldn't have the number of volunteers they'd need to handle more people than they do now. The number of volunteers (89) is down by about 11 from recent years.

Board members feel The Storehouse will never be computerized because there are no hours to do data entry.

Guests always have issues, but it's hard to get to know them enough to know if they can handle being volunteers. Rochester Works can get paid workers to help out. But with volunteers, it can be hard to require things, such as what to wear, how to behave with volunteers. The guests sometimes ask about the church and they're invited to attend.

How can the program work together better with other programs at the church? Would be great to have meetings regularly with the dining center, wellness center, RAIHN and interact, share problems and solutions. Had a problem with the dining center, but it's been resolved.

Will look at what they spend and get back to us. It's about \$50,000, which comes from donations, basically, and then sometimes additional money from the outreach budget. In the cold months, get more money for blankets. Make about \$10,000 from sales.

What would they give up? Cut way back on women's clothing and concentrate on men's and children's. Often have to go out and buy men's clothing so there's a selection.

What do they need? Someone to help with grants. Someone to take care of volunteers a little bit. Need help bringing in stuff. Need help with cleaning, and need steps to be taken to make them feel safe.

Currently they get so much women's clothing that they don't keep anything from season to season. No place to store it all. Often the young women who come won't accept the clothing anyway, thinking it's too conservative, too dressy, and too "old-ladyish" in style to wear. Similarly, men and women reject the type of underwear Storehouse volunteers buy, so they've stopped offering it.

We also interviewed two guests and two agencies that refer people to The Storehouse. The guests were quite appreciative of the way they were treated at The

Storehouse and the services it offers. (We may add more detail here.) Similarly, the agency workers had great praise for The Storehouse, too.

Tiffany Love, of Strong Ties, did note that it is difficult to reach The Storehouse by phone (and currently impossible by email) even during its posted hours, when volunteers may be off helping guests instead of answering the phone. She would prefer being able to use email to contact The Storehouse. Guests report to her that the selection at The Storehouse is better than any other location they've visited.

Marie Robinson at Anthony Jordan health Center said she sends the same people there up to four times a year, but she altered that statement after we noted that the rules are only twice a year. She said clients are usually quite happy with what they're able to get at The Storehouse, but young women sometimes say they couldn't find any suitable clothing for themselves. The amount of time guests have to wait for an appointment – sometimes one or two months out – is difficult and may contribute to their missing the appointment, she said. As there is no Storehouse sign on East Avenue and the entrance to The Storehouse is a little hidden, some guests have reported to her that they had trouble finding it or they missed their appointment altogether because they couldn't find it at all. She feels the appointment letter is a good requirement because it provides proof that someone has an appointment.

Interview Date: January 27, 2016

Interviewer: Bob Castle

Interviewees: Guests at The Storehouse

On Wednesday January 27, 2016, I spent the morning at The Storehouse. I conducted three interviews and had a chance to observe the operation. The "interviews" were very casual and could be better describes as a conversation. I tried to respect the guests limited time and didn't ask them to stay when they were ready to shop or leave.

1. I interviewed a gentleman referred by the Dining and Caring Center. He recognized me from the DCC. He had used The Storehouse several times before. He was shopping for himself. He came by bus to the DCC and walked over to The Storehouse. He was very appreciative of both The Storehouse and DCC. "God bless you all and thank you for all you do". I asked him what he does really well and he said he is a retired painter. We had a wonderful conversation about painting and I discussed the possibility of painting the DCC kitchen. "You can count me in."
2. I interviewed a woman who was referred by Catholic Family Services. It was her first time at The Storehouse. She was getting clothes for herself and two young children. Her brother had driven her to the appointment and

transportation wasn't a problem. I asked her what she was good at, hesitated and said "cooking". Because of limited time we didn't pursue this further. As she walked around, she said everything was great and the shopping helper was helpful.

3. I talked with a gentleman who was a "Service Navigator" for a woman referred by Catholic Family Services. He was employed by CFS to transport clients to various services. He also does counseling and group work. He shared with me some of his background. He had a very difficult past. He had lived at East House and used The Storehouse at that time. "This is a wonderful place." He was a very faithful individual. He has been clean for four years. He now has custody of his teenage daughter. We talked about the difficulties in raising a teenage daughter.

Other observations:

- There was a helpful supportive atmosphere during the time I was there. One of the guests from the DCC came in with a confrontational attitude. "Don't treat me like a child". The situation was quickly defused with a kind word and a helpful smile.
- The receptionist was busy making appointments. They were booked until mid-March, but they tried to accommodate emergency situations.
- By mid-morning they had only served two guests. By closing time they had served 11 guests.
- Approximately 50% of appointments are not met. There is no follow up with the agency or individuals.

Recommendations from the Interviewing Team

The Storehouse has done and continues to do an amazing, even miraculous, amount of good. Creative minds have found ways to collect, display, store and move along useful items, and find homes for those that can't be used at The Storehouse. It is probably our greenest ministry. About 6,000 families a year are helped by just under 90 volunteers. There is great concern about continuing at this level because of the limitations of space, safety procedures and volunteer hours. Some changes might make The Storehouse better able to overcome those challenges. People who use The Storehouse and recommend clients to it speak very highly of this ministry, identifying it as one of the only places that provides this kind of help – clothing and household goods for free to struggling people. The Storehouse meets nearly all of our outreach values, but it faces a challenge in terms of developing relationships with the guests; until recently guests were prohibited from volunteering there, and guests are still limited to two shopping visits a year, during which it is hard to forge relationships.

This is our biggest outreach program in terms of people helped and it is a miracle and a tribute to love that our members have kept this ministry thriving for 50 years

so far. However, the church needs to provide additional support and The Storehouse needs to change in some ways for it to continue to thrive and more fully meet the values of outreach that focus on partnership with our guests. We have a sense that board members and volunteers are facing day-to-day challenges so intensely that they never get a chance to look at the larger picture of what The Storehouse could be.

A key obstacle is the need for more volunteers. Currently the hours that The Storehouse operates are not accessible to people who work or go to school during the day. The Storehouse is open Saturday mornings, but that is the busiest time of the week for people with kids. Adding evening hours once or twice a week, could provide time for volunteers with different demographics (younger, working people) to join the volunteer pool. It may also add a more convenient time for guests to get there. More hours would allow for more appointments and for the masses of donated items to be sorted in a more timely fashion.

Some problems have been known for a long time, such as space and safety issues, and addressing these issues should be the first priority. Fear for safety of the volunteers after dark – when staff on the campus is typically lighter or not available at all – is the main reason The Storehouse is not open then. We must look into ways to provide a more secure environment.

A grant-writer and social worker would be helpful and can be shared with other Asbury First programs.

Storehouse volunteers have a great sense of charity but not always accommodation. During our interviews, we heard several instances when guests' preferences were dismissed as unreasonable or unattainable for a variety of reasons. A regular conversation with guests, perhaps by polling them, may yield some suggestions on how to meet the unmet needs. This ministry sees more people than any other at Asbury First. A standard of care for guests could provide a model for other ministries.

Policies should be reviewed for efficacy. A men's clothing drive, for instance, might be more useful than the Christmas toy drive, since other sources of toys are plentiful. A similar clothing drive for young women's clothing might also be useful. Regular polling of referring agencies would be useful, too.

To capitalize on volunteer hours and be more efficient, The Storehouse needs to be connected by computer to the Internet. Professional coaching might be needed to set up an appropriate appointment-management system and train volunteers to use it.

3. School 41

Interview Date:

Interviewers: Robyn Gage, Patricia Partridge

Interviewee: Nancy Davidow

Interview Questions & Responses

1. In a nutshell, what does your program do?

The Tutoring program provides 20 volunteers to tutor 40 students in Math and Reading at School 41, which is across from Kodak on West Ridge Road. In a nutshell, the tutors encourage and feed children's minds.

2. Look over the outreach mission statement and tell us where your ministry meets the mission statement and where there are gaps.

The volunteers give love and hope. The tutors feel that the children are "our kids". They augment the tutoring with providing clothing when needed, an end of the year field trip (The Country Museum and Strong Museum), three smart boards, educational materials (especially books) and grocery bags (20 at Christmas).

Extracurricular activities that the volunteers assist are "Theater on the Ridge" student choral presentation, a fall community activity and parent night. And John Smalt brings his therapy dog. The volunteers model Faith in Christ and try to be Christ-like with the children. They achieve justice by recognizing the dignity in "our kids". They provide and receive joy from each other.

3. How can we create stronger relationships between Asbury First members, volunteers and our guests?

We can communicate more with the parents, provide more books (Pittsford PTSA), scholarship money for camp, and vacation bible school, always thank and pray for them, collect school supplies for them in the fall, get more volunteers, retirees, through Together in Ministry and the Bulletin and Visitor.

4. How can we better integrate what your ministry does with other ministries in the church to prevent having individual "silos" that operate independently?

Brochures are provided at the school office about The Storehouse. This could be expanded to include the Dining and Caring Center, UR Well and RAIHN.

Many other organizations, especially churches provide tutoring in the schools.

5. Is someone else in Rochester or Monroe County doing what you do particularly well? Might there be partnership opportunities?

Ricky Frasier is the Rochester Central School Districts volunteer coordinator and there are orientation and ongoing get-togethers for the school coordinators.

6. What help can the church give you (beside space) to enhance your outreach efforts?

We're all set.

7. What would you stop doing in your ministry if you could, and what would you start doing instead?

Better train the teachers as to what to expect from a volunteer. This is left up to the school to do at this time.

4. Grocery Bag Ministry

Interview Date: January 28, 2016

Interviewers: Bob Castle, Judy Cohen

Interviewees: Joe Cygan, Bill Lisi

Interview Questions & Responses

1. In a nutshell, what does your program do?

The Grocery Bag Ministry distributes approximately 1000 bags of groceries per year. They are distributed on the third Saturday of the month to various organizations that have demonstrated a need. Attached you will find a list of the current recipients and the number of bags they receive and when. Because there are only 75 bags distributed each month and there are currently eleven locations receiving food bags everyone doesn't get bags every month.

Some of the locations are able to pick up at the church but others need to have delivery. The items in the bags are typically pasta, sauce, tuna, soup, veggies, canned ham (purchased by a member of the church), bread, which is delivered on Saturday morning when the bags are being assembled and a dozen eggs, which are picked up on Thursdays.

Before the bags can be assembled someone (Joe usually) checks the inventory in the storage room at the church and then shops for whatever is missing. The Boy Scouts Council holds a drive once a year and donates canned food.

Foodlink does not participate in this program because they feel it is a duplication of services.

2. Look over the outreach mission statement and tell us where your ministry meets the mission statement and where there are gaps.

They do not have a Mission Statement. In reviewing ours, their comment was that they feel comfortable that they are in agreement with ours. I specifically asked about safety issues and they told us that they are mostly concerned about injuring themselves when they are making the deliveries. At some of the locations people come out and help them bring the bags in. But not everywhere is helpful or even appreciative.

3. How can we create stronger relationships between Asbury First members, volunteers and our guests?

Currently they have approximately 13-15 volunteers per month. They probably have a total of 20 different volunteers but not all show up every time. Basically it is a two-man show with Bill and Joe. Currently some Asbury First people help at the West Ave. Methodist Church every other Friday. They help with activities. They have a relationship with them but our church itself doesn't.

Grace Methodist Church came to visit the church.

We need to be able to provide more bags each month. There are so many people waiting for food that there is often a line. They have to sign up with their church leader and then hope there are enough bags for them. Bill told us that the people are so grateful to get the food and he feels terrible if there are more people than bags.

4. How can we better integrate what your ministry does with other ministries in the church to prevent having individual "silos" that operate independently?

Bill felt that there needs to be more interaction between the church leadership and the Grocery Bag Ministry.

They need more volunteers always and he feels we need a Volunteer Coordinator. He suggested that questionnaires be handed out to the church members to see who is volunteering and who isn't.

5. Is someone else in Rochester or Monroe County doing what you do particularly well? Might there be partnership opportunities?

No. No one else does it.

(Note from interviewer: While there may be no other Grocery Bag Ministry servicing these particular group of churches, there are numerous churches and other organizations collecting and distributing food throughout the city. Foodlink is a large operation that does an outstanding job of providing food to pantries and food kitchens throughout the greater Rochester area. We need to revisit Foodlink's criteria for providing food to agencies with an eye toward working under its umbrella. Without Foodlink's support, it is very difficult to find cost effective sources for quality food.)

6. What help can the church give you (beside space) to enhance your outreach efforts?
 - We need more storage for our food.
 - Could get more food if we had refrigeration.

- Have enough money to give out more bags.
7. What would you stop doing in your ministry if you could, and what would you start doing instead?

Bill would like to develop a Food Shelf at the church that operates like The Storehouse. Open all week and distribute by appointment.

He mentioned a PBS program that came to Rochester and did a study of the number of women who lose their babies before birth and in the first year. He would like to be able to help that population.

Interview Date: February 4, 2016

Interviewer: Bob Castle

Interviewee: Edna Craven (Antioch Missionary Baptist Church, 304 Joseph Avenue)

I met Edna at her home on Alphonse St. to discuss Antioch's partnership with the Asbury First Grocery Bag Ministry. The following is a summary of the answers Edna gave me to the question I asked and my reflections following the meeting.

1. Tell me about how the Grocery Bag Ministry is working in your Church.

Antioch receives 45 grocery bags four times a year. Edna picks up the grocery bags at Asbury First. She has turned over her other Food & Clothing Ministry duties, but she wants to continue to pick up at AFUMC. Grocery Bags are picked up on Saturday and passed out to senior citizen church members on Sunday.

Edna had nothing but kind words to say about the GBM and Bill Lisi. She gave me a copy of letter sent by Antioch MBC thanking Bill Lisi and the Asbury First church family for their generous donation of food, referrals for furniture and clothing.

"Your ministry is a Blessing."

"The people are so nice when we pack grocery bags or pick them together."

2. Are there any changes to this ministry that you would recommend?

None.

3. How could Asbury First and your church work together better in this ministry?

This is already happening. When there is a need for clothing, furniture or other household items Edna calls up Bill and he sees what he can do.

4. Tell me about other outreach ministries in your church.

AMBC has a food and Clothing ministry (started in 1995 as a bread ministry). Clothing and Furniture are passed out on Tuesday. There are no restrictions or ID required. They do write down names and keep track of who is using the services. There is a food cupboard on Wednesday (food from various grocery stores). Lunch served one day a week (food from Foodlink). Edna provided me with the Mission Statement and description of the ministry.

5. What other outreach opportunities would you see for our churches working together?

Edna recommended I contact the Rev. Cherry to discuss the possibilities. Rev. Schaffer and Rev. Cherry had met previously.

Interviewer's Reflections:

- It was inspirational to meet Edna Craven and discuss outreach and the Grocery Bag Ministry.
- You clearly had a sense that she has built a close relationship with Bill Lisi.
- Edna has lived in her home for decades. She raised her family in this house. She takes great pride in her home and this is where she wants to stay.
- The Grocery Bag Ministry offers AFUMC an opportunity to partner with inner-city churches that are engaged in their community. These relationships could be strengthened.

Additional Information from Grocery Bag Ministry

Once per month the Asbury First Grocery Bag Ministry puts together a total of 85 bags of Groceries. Ten of these bags are distributed to refugees from Afghanistan and Iraq. For some months the bags of groceries go to a single church. Other months groups of two or more churches receive the bags. The schedule of monthly distributions follows:

Month 1. West Avenue Methodist Church receives 75 bags. This church is on the corner of West Avenue and Main Street.

Month 2. Power House Church at 48 Clifton Street receives 75 bags. Fannie Reeves is the contact person.

Month 3. St Mathews Missionary Church at 6th Street receives 30 bags. Antioch Missionary Baptist Church receives 45 bags. Antioch is located at 304 Joseph Avenue.

Month 4. Arc of Jesus (506 Jay Street) receives 30 bags. Assembly of God (220 Child Street) receives 35 bags. Miracle Outreach Church (672 Emerson Street) receives 10 bags.

Month 5. Zion Hill (250 Samuel McCree Way) receives 75 bags

Month 6. Baber AME Church (550 Meigs Street) receives 30 bags. Antioch Missionary Baptist Church receives 45 bags. Note: recently the St Mathews Missionary Baptist Church closed and we reduced our Outreach to 45 bags for that month.

Each Grocery bag contains:

- 1 can of ham (3 pounds)
- 2 cans of soup
- 2 cans of vegetables
- 2 cans of tuna fish
- 1 dozen eggs
- 1 loaf of bread
- 1 can of fruit
- 1 jar of peanut butter
- 1 jar of pasta sauce
- 1 box of pasta
- 1 box of macaroni & cheese mix
- 1 package of cookies
- 1 bag of snacks (pretzels or other)

The approximate value of each bag is \$14, excluding the ham. The total cost with the ham is \$22.

5. UR Well Clinic

Interview Date:

Interviewers: Diana Carter, Robyn Gage

Interviewee: Ida Hickman

Interview Notes

For some time, the organization of the program at this end was Ida's job alone. She continues to do staffing, arranging for nurses and greeter. After operating for a while as a stand-alone program, UR Well became a member of the Outreach Committee. Then Ida called together several people to be on the overseeing committee, including Bruce Thompson, chair, and Carolyn Hamil.

Much of what the clinic treats are things like high blood pressure, diabetes, flu, physicals for jobs and school. Some long-time clinics have stopped doing physicals, so that's a big need now. If people have some insurance, or need follow-up, Asbury First refers them to the sliding scale services at St. Joe's or Highland Medical. Those places also refer people to Asbury First.

In 2015, the clinic served 339 patients, provided 249 physicals, treated 69 people for medical issues and 21 people were seen for dermatology issues.

There is a companion organization at the medical school that has undergone a learning curve. The pre-med students provide a meal and the first-year students help with assessments. When they're not in school, though, the clinic needs help with providing meals (hours are during dinner hours.)

The clinic also provides some basic wellness screening services, such as taking blood pressures, to the congregation on Sundays.

In terms of expenses, UR provides most of the equipment and materials. Memorial gifts have provided things such as BP meter, stethoscope and scale. They now have six laptops to help with intake and complete the reports required of the physicians by state health laws. A member provides a meal monthly.

In terms of meeting our values, fullness of life is a big one. By providing physicals, people are able to accept jobs, meet college entrance requirements or play on school teams. When people are ill, this care prevents them from being in declining health.

People often ask about the church and Ida welcomes them to come. She has seen some people visit services. Some people come back for service and some return with donations to help out.

Ida tells a story about how one young woman who didn't speak much English need a physical to try for a job as a baker in a hotel. Sandra Holloway interviewed her and took her to a friend at the convention center, where she got work.

The church could help out by providing more visiting volunteers, who could act as greeters or keep people occupied while the wait. First Tuesday is always the busiest. Now they limit to 12 appointments a night so people aren't waiting until 11 p.m. to be seen. When they first opened, people were coming for the wrong reasons – drug seeking and a meal.

The clinic sees RAIHN guests. Ida would like to have more youth participating. There are often young people waiting with families who could use company. Youth could play games or share a meal.

Ida has heard concerns from church members about bringing homeless people with germs into the church.

The program has partnered with some other programs, but some have dwindled, such as a request for Roberts Wesleyan students to shadow. RN students have done educational programs, such as on how dental hygiene can affect health. She is trying to recruit a pharmacy partner who can do patient education on how to keep up with medication.

Quite a bit of the program is in "borrowed" spaces in the church and there aren't always enough spaces to provide private counseling, for instance, on how to get enrolled in the NYS Health Insurance provider. The waiting room now is the same room where the meal is served. If the clinic had dedicated space, they could hang up educational materials and leave them from week to week instead of either having to remove them at the end of each session, or just not hanging them up at all.

6. Rochester Area Interfaith Hospitality Network (RAIHN)

Interview Date:

Interviewers: Rick Kuempel, Patricia Partridge

Interviewee: Chris Lee

Interview Questions & Responses

1. In a nutshell, what does your program do?

RAIHN offers shelter to families with children (or soon to be born). It is the only one in the Rochester area that allows families intact. (Except possibly Bethany), where men can remain together with the women and their children. They are able to do this in NY State because each church or synagogue stay is considered temporary.

RAIHN serves about 30 families a year, about 100 individuals. Asbury First RAIHN receives \$400.00 per visit from the Stewardship budget through Outreach. This money covers groceries for lunches and breakfast. The guests pack a lunch to take with them. It also covers bedding, towels and toys.

2. Look over the outreach mission statement and tell us where your ministry meets the mission statement and where there are gaps.

RAIHN is love in action. Asbury First RAIHN meets all values: Love, Community, Sharing, Faith in Christ, Justice, Stewardship and Joy. RAIHN meets people where they are. Volunteers also benefit from the values. RAIHN is faith based, but not solely Christian. Asbury First faith in Christ is in the living of it but sometimes, if okayed by the families present, a prayer may be said. Volunteers are not afraid to talk about faith if the guests bring it up but the volunteers don't push it. Volunteers listen if people want to talk about their lives, but refrain from asking questions or giving advice, unless asked by the guest.

3. How can we create stronger relationships between Asbury First members, volunteers and our guests?

The coordinators send out emails about 6 weeks ahead of a rotation to volunteers and also updates during the visit. The coordinators also do some of the weekly tasks. There is a core group of RAIHN volunteers that do multiple things now and it would be helpful to add more volunteers. We can have a table in the entry area near the gathering space to attract more Asbury First members to volunteer. There may be opportunity to involve the Youth Group or some of the Adult Sunday morning groups such as the Doublers. Another way to create stronger relationships would be to make

connections between Asbury First members and members of other churches/synagogues.

4. How can we better integrate what your ministry does with other ministries in the church to prevent having individual “silos” that operate independently?

We already do that well, for example, making UR Well Clinic and The Storehouse available to RAIHN guests. To improve, more information, written or verbal, could be added to the Sunday welcoming of the guests. RAIHN also uses the Asbury First parking lot for the fundraiser Car City. The food bag delivery could be incorporated when the family does find their own home. We could also provide a shed for each family.

5. Is someone else in Rochester or Monroe County doing what you do particularly well? Might there be partnership opportunities?

Probably not.

6. What help can the church give you (beside space) to enhance your outreach efforts?

There could be more information in the bulletin and Visitor. Even though the sentence states ‘except space’ it turns out that another room would help. RAIHN is allowed five families but can have only four, which means that in the weeks leading up to Asbury First they can only have four families at churches or synagogues that would normally be able to house five families.

7. What would you stop doing in your ministry if you could, and what would you start doing instead?

RAIHN central office prescribes certain guidelines so that the families have consistency when they travel from place to place. The coordinators meet every other month with Jen from the RAIHN central office at Third Presbyterian Church annex. We could start using china plates, etc. instead of paper products. Paper and plastic are costly and unsustainable. (And also not that hospitable or homelike).

The volunteers provide healthy meals but it would be nice to have fast food occasionally, as this is what some of the families miss. There may be a switch to using regular mattress instead of air mattresses, but there would need to be a place for storing the mattresses between rotations.

7. Together in Service

Interview Date: February 8, 2016

Interviewer: Bruch Thompson

Interviewee: Barbara Eltinge

Interview Notes

Together in Ministry started around 2007 when Rev. Mark Ralls of Asbury First and Rev. Marlowe Washington of Baber envisioned a week of service with both congregations volunteering and working together. Initial projects included working at the YWCA, Genesis House (Salvation Army), St Joseph's health clinic, and Hope House.

Later volunteers cooked at Ronald McDonald House but they eventually stopped going there as other people did it instead.

The initial idea was to have people get accustomed to volunteering. Eventually the week of service changed to a month of service, and other projects, such as building and painting and planting projects were offered.

Barbara Eltinge gave some specific examples of changes in the program (i.e. In 2014 the 50 Plus Class made hygiene kits for the YWCA but when they took them there the YWCA staff stated that they preferred food for the women in their programs. Since this would have been food for only a few days, the committee felt that Food Link and other food pantries could fulfill this function better.)

There was also a project to improve the concrete steps at Baber. It took some time to get this accomplished and there is a group called the Sons of Allen at Baber that is similar to the Monday Morning Crew at Asbury First. It is hoped these two groups can work together in the future for projects on both campuses.

Other areas of cooperation between Asbury First and Baber include providing meals for RAIHN. Friday night dinners are done by Baber, and Asbury First does dinners other nights. She notes that recurring commitment; however, the volunteers generally do not meet with each other.

Flexibility needs to be part of the service projects, such as when painting projects need to be changed due to weather. Having many types of service projects allows people with different talents to participate.

Suggestions for improvement:

- We need more volunteers
- We need to have more visibility (marketing) to encourage participation

- We need to develop more long -term commitment (for example: volunteers at school 41 develop long- term relationships by going weekly to meet with children.)
- We need to do more planning together and over a longer period of time.
- There is an opportunity to form more long- term relationships with Baber, but that will involve more people going back and forth between our churches more regularly. Generally there is no meeting of the committee during the winter months after the service projects are done in the fall, and planning may not start until the summer.

8. West Avenue Café

Interview Date: January 23, 2016

Interviewer: Patricia Partridge, John Smalt

Interviewee: Carolyn Hamil

Interview Questions & Responses

1. In a nutshell, what does your program do?

The Oral Gene Roberts Teen Café has been in operation for several years. In 2006 over 15 youth were killed in the City of Rochester. As a result the café was started with the name of one of the youth (Oral Gene Roberts) who was killed.

A team from Asbury First is involved one Friday evening per month helping inner city youth. They provide prayer, discussion circles, craft activities, food, and special holiday activities, along with social events off campus. An emphasis is made on talking about problems they face with an eye to graduating from high school.

There are about 30 youth involved each week. Ages of the youth range from 6-19. There are 6-8 adult volunteers from Asbury First and two youth helpers.

2. Look over the outreach mission statement and tell us where your ministry meets the mission statement and where there are gaps.

The future of the café is unsure at this time as the church (West Avenue UMC) will be closing and moving to combine with another church (Grace UMC.) For volunteers there is a need for sensitivity training as the life in the inner city can be very different than many of the volunteers from the suburbs. Additional help with preparation of meals would lessen the demand on the volunteers who come.

3. How can we create stronger relationships between Asbury First members, volunteers and our guests?

Somehow the youth of Asbury First could help more. A couple of the youth do already. It would be too much to have many youth at once as the teens might not warm up and feel overwhelmed. It might be helpful to groups at Asbury First to be asked the question how could they help?

4. How can we better integrate what your ministry does with other ministries in the church to prevent having individual “silos” that operate independently?

When the teen café moves there will be an adjustment time for the youth at the café. They may need furniture, games, toys, etc. This would be a great time to build more awareness as well as get others involved in helping in some way.

5. Is someone else in Rochester or Monroe County doing what you do particularly well? Might there be partnership opportunities?

No.

6. What help can the church give you (beside space) to enhance your outreach efforts?

Help with preparation of meals. Perhaps forming another team of adults to go and supervise on an additional Friday night.

9. Habitat for Humanity

Interview Date: March 2016

Interviewer: Gary Brown

Interviewee: Rick Kuempel

Interview Notes

Since 1989, when Asbury First members first became involved in the Habitat for Humanity program, three homes have been constructed and a fourth is being built. Presently there is a small, but dedicated group of Asbury First volunteers, committed to supporting this effort. Unlike many of Asbury First's outreach ministries, Asbury First does not take direct responsibility for this outreach - rather it partners with other churches in the area to create the Harvest Home Coalition.

There are several reasons put forth for the reduced number of Asbury First members being involved. For one thing, the present house being built has been plagued by delays making scheduling difficult and it appears the winter construction schedule has not been conducive to recruiting volunteers. Also, if a person does want to volunteer, they have to do it by going to the Habitat website and follow instructions - a clearly cumbersome process.

Perhaps such things as the "shed building blitz" which occurred last summer, a summer construction schedule, an easier sign up system, or attempting to integrate other church groups (such as the garden committee) might result in more Asbury First people volunteering at Habitat.

Another issue that exists is the financial commitment made by Asbury First for the construction of the homes. This money comes from Outreach Committee funds and from fund raising projects. The question of whether or not to commit those funds to an outreach that is supported by a small percentage of the Asbury First community needs to be reviewed.

Going forward, the reality of the Habitat outreach is that the number of volunteers is not a problem. Habitat only has a limited number of construction supervisors and there is a limit to the number of volunteers that can be effectively utilized. The alternative to being a "construction volunteer" would be to become involved in the Family Partnership program recently created by Habitat. The goal of this program is to train volunteers how to teach new and perspective homeowners many life skills. Volunteers would be trained in such skills as home maintenance, finances, safety, and insurance. This program is just in its infancy but would provide many opportunities for Asbury First members to reach out to the Habitat homeowners.

Clearly the mission statement of Habitat for Humanity that states "Seeking to put God's love into action, Habitat for Humanity brings people together to build homes, communities, and hope" is very much in line with the mission statement of the

outreach taskforce. This organization is very well established in our community and is one that provides wonderful opportunities for Asbury First members. As a viable outreach for Asbury First, the focus needs to reflect what the needs are for Habitat. Right now, that need is in the area of teaching life skills to the new and perspective homeowners that habitat serves.

In general, Habitat for Humanity is one of the many local organizations that is effectively serving a crucial need in our community and provides a wonderful partnership opportunity for our members. This partnering model is a concept that provides almost unlimited outreach opportunities. The challenge is to produce a directory of outreach organizations describing what they do and how to get involved in the work that they do.

10. Project Chacocente

Interview Date: January 22, 2016
 Interviewers: Carolyn Hamil, John Smalt
 Interviewee: Robyn Gage

Interview Questions & Responses

1. In a nutshell, what does your program do?

Asbury First has been involved in the program of helping the people of the dump transition to a new life. There have been yearly mission teams going to help the people learn to become more independent. Adult teams and youth groups have been involved building homes, school, solving problems, and will help in building their first church this year.

2. Look over the outreach mission statement and tell us where your ministry meets the mission statement and where there are gaps.

There are some major cultural differences between their life and life in the US. The government of Nicaragua is a dictatorship. Although they have some help for the poor, it is very controlled. In rural areas there is little or no help for the poor. For those people there are no nearby public schools and medical help is limited.

3. How can we create stronger relationships between Asbury First members, volunteers and our guests?

There are some people at Asbury First who sponsor children in the Project Chacocente School. It would be helpful to have more do that. Also, there may be other ways groups might want to get involved, Sunday School Groups, youth, teens. Pen pals, Skyping, and sharing pictures via internet might be ways to connect better.

4. How can we better integrate what your ministry does with other ministries in the church to prevent having individual “silos” that operate independently?

Members of Asbury First need to see that this outreach ministry is one of two of Asbury First’s international outreach ministries that we have members of Asbury First involved in. This is different from international mission work in the past. Each group at Asbury First could be asked if they wanted to be involved and how that could happen. (Some examples) Prayer group: specific prayers from the people in Chacocente, Carvers of Hope: Carve crosses for kids in schools.

5. Is someone else in Rochester or Monroe County doing what you do particularly well? Might there be partnership opportunities?

No. Rochester and Monroe County currently do not have teams going to help.

6. What help can the church give you (beside space) to enhance your outreach efforts?

This year there will be a mission team from Asbury First going down in June. It would be great to get enough help from Asbury First volunteers to build their first church. More sponsorships for children would help school.

7. What would you stop doing in your ministry if you could, and what would you start doing instead?

There need to be more literacy classes for older adults and classes that teach English. The Project needs some reorganization of the staff.

8. Additional Information

Nicaragua is the second poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, after Haiti. About 80% of the people live in poverty, and more than half of those are extremely poor – meaning they don't know if they'll eat today. The country has long been plagued by natural disasters, corrupt politicians, and rampant illiteracy.

The Managua city dump was quite literally home to about 175 families. They spent their days looking for food to eat, and recyclable materials they could sell. The families lived in and around the smoldering garbage in shacks consisting of corrugated tin, cardboard and black plastic.

Project Chacocente began in January 2003, working to completely transform lives by relocating families from the dump to an agricultural community about an hour from Managua. The families signed a 5-year contract promising to work with us, learning the skills they needed to be independent: to read and write, to build a home, to farm, to solve problems, to govern themselves, to be more knowledgeable parents, and to start small businesses. Each family now owns the house that they built, along with two acres of arable land.

Recognizing that education is the key to overcoming poverty, the Chacocente Christian School was founded on-site in 2005. It gives families at Project Chacocente and its surrounding area an alternative to the abysmal public education system offered in Nicaragua. The school presently serves 152 children, and has grown to house classes for preschool through high school.

It teaches a broad range of subjects, giving students opportunities that prepare them for successful futures.

There are 160 students at the school and 22 people employed at the school. Each year some money is given from Asbury First to support this ministry. The money varies each year depending on the specific projects and support requests. Additional money is raised each year from chocolate sales and sales of dresses.

11. Miracle Garden

Interview Date: January 2016

Interviewer: Carolyn Hamil

Interviewee: Elizabeth Church

Interview Questions & Responses

1. In a nutshell, what does your program do?

Miracle Garden was founded in January-February 2005, after the tsunami of December 26, 2004. Originally it was only an orphanage; now it also has a school open to both the village and orphanage children. The number of students varies between 40 and 100 children. The school and orphanage are Christian based in a highly conservative Hindu state. The school and orphanage are located in the village of Theethepalayan, Tamil Nadu, India.

2. Look over the outreach mission statement and tell us where your ministry meets the mission statement and where there are gaps.

Miracle Garden has imparted hope to many children by giving them clean water, healthy food, good education with Christian values, and a roof over their heads. All of this has added to their fullness of life.

In the ten years Miracle Garden has existed, it has rescued over 280 children who were victims of the tsunami. They now are welcoming children who are victims of domestic violence, physical disabilities, and substance abuse. Their vision is "Changing the future of orphaned children through education, nutrition, and the Gospel". Miracle Garden has expanded their mission to the village by starting a tailoring school for women. John and Michelle Pandian, Directors of the Program, have also added a greenhouse to provide fresh vegetables for the children. At present, Miracle Garden employs 16 Hindu-people as teachers, aides, and drivers. They are looking to appoint a chaplain.

3. How can we create stronger relationships between Asbury First members, volunteers and our guests?

The families of Larry and Robyn Gage and Richard and Elizabeth Church have visited and contributed with both monies and labor. Some members of Asbury First sponsor Children at Miracle Garden. Financial support from Asbury First is derived from fundraisers and Outreach budget. There has always been full accountability of the funds given.

4. What help can the church give you (beside space) to enhance your outreach efforts?

Asbury First United Methodist Church can be of more assistance to this worthy ministry by giving more advocacy opportunities, steadier financial support and assistance to Elizabeth Church in writing grants.