

Chicago Metropolitan Association
Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ
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OFF THE PEWS: FAITH IN ACTION
2018 End of Year Appeal

Greetings of God's grace and peace!

Off the Pews: Faith in Action is grounded in the Church tradition and strengthened by a deep faith in God. Off the Pews (OTP) provides a broad spectrum of opportunities and experiences that can transform the lives of people of all ages, inside and outside of the church. We are in search of ways to create and sustain the beloved community by joining with others. The community of today is besieged by violence that causes hopelessness. The underlying and under addressed issues relating to violence are: poverty, racism, under-treated mental and physical health problems. Therefore, we offer an opportunity to be a part of a village engaged in the work of bringing hope, healing and love so as to transform today's communities into the beloved community. We offer you the opportunity to share your gifts of time, talent, and money with us.

OTP continues to play a significant role by engaging in intergenerational activities that call for remembering and, where reasonable, replicating the time when the faith community was the center of the village. When all were welcomed, nurtured, and affirmed in a wholesome atmosphere. A time when we both embraced and acknowledged our diversity. A time when we recognized that we are our brothers and sisters' keepers because our survival demanded that of us.

We have seen and continue to see the long-lasting effects the issues of marginalization, oppression, poverty, and violence play out in the development of our young through their suffering as they seek ways to discover their sense of somebodyness. We can rectify that with a comforting word as well as the sacramental bread of life which has been woven into the programmatic focus of this call to action. The village helps us to educate and nurture as we embrace and satisfy the hunger for all to know what it is like to be accepted unconditionally. We too face great challenges, as we take the leap of faith, when the greater good is threatened by our actions or lack thereof.

Therefore, because of our transformative vision/mission we are able to offer free programs that create opportunities for all within the geographical boundaries of the Chicago Metropolitan Association to:

- Create entrepreneurial ventures,
- Participate in financial and digital literacy classes,
- Advocate, reflect, and participate in ways to reduce food scarcity in urban areas, and
- Provide sacred space (camp) for young people to gather for rest, relaxation, fellowship, and fun.

We have heard these words from Ecclesiastes, "there is nothing new under the sun." Some of us do not remember a time long ago and repeat the mistakes of a by gone era. Some of us do remember a time in the not so distant past. Come, let us share our learnings and experiences with the next generations in order to bring the village full circle and decrease the difference among us.

For more information, on our programs, how to get involved, and give, visit our website: www.offthepews.org. I encourage you to give generously.

Gratefully,



Reverend Dr. Vertie Powers

Associate Conference Minister

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