



Appleton Episcopal Ministries *Celebrating the Dignity of All God's People*

2023 Annual Report Nov 2022 - Oct 2023

Appleton's mission is *Sharing God's love by partnering with parishes in the Middle Georgia Convocation to promote the health, education, safety and well-being of children and families.* As a ministry of the Diocese of Atlanta, we leverage financial resources, in-kind contributions, and volunteer efforts to support a wide variety of community ministries serving God's people as his hands and feet here on Earth. **Appleton Episcopal Ministries receives no funds through the Diocesan budget, so we depend on everyone in the Diocese of Atlanta to help make possible all of Appleton's work.** The Annual Diocesan Thanksgiving Offering now directed in Canon 24 has taken place since 1880 and is pivotal to Appleton's ability to operate. We combine this Annual Offering with convocational pledges from the parishes in Middle GA, distributions from the Appleton Endowment, and private donations to help make possible all of Appleton's work. With generous support from many committed donors, Appleton is able to leverage financial resources, in-kind contributions, and volunteer efforts to fund all of our work.

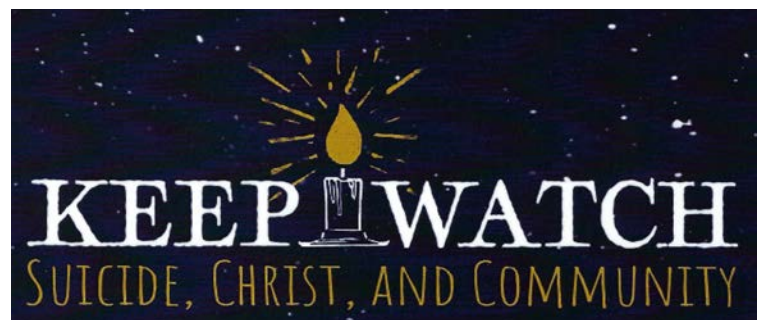
We approach community ministry in a unique manner. We don't just support individual parish ministries. We also coordinate efforts between parishes in middle Georgia to identify and coordinate resources and create cooperative networks throughout the convocation. Those parishes include: All Angels, Eatonton; St. Stephen's, Milledgeville; Christ Church, Macon; St. Paul, Macon; St. Francis, Macon; All Saints, Warner Robins; St. Christopher, Perry; St. Andrew's, Fort Valley; St. Luke's, Fort Valley; and St. Mary's, Montezuma. For these efforts, The Episcopal Church has designated Appleton as a Mission Enterprise Zone.

Programs currently funded or administered by Appleton include two Path To Shine programs in Macon - one at St. Francis serving students at Lewis Elementary and another at St. Paul's serving students at Ingram-Pye. We donated books for community distribution to Book 'Em and to the Brookdale Warming Center. We also provide funding for the St. Francis Arts Center for enrichment activities for young people. We support inclusive Episcopal Campus Ministry programs in Macon and Milledgeville. Appleton's van provides weekly transportation for two Path to Shine programs as well as event transportation for campus ministries and EYC groups.



Students in the St. Francis Path to Shine Program

This spring we hosted the Diocese's first convocational-wide Keep/Watch suicide prevention training program and will launch our new team to parishes later this fall. Team members learned how to observe, to listen, and to act to help teens, young adults, veterans, seniors, members of the LGBTQ+ community, those with chronic illnesses, and anyone else who needs support in a time of crisis.



This past summer, we again presented our Appleton Free To Read® summer literacy program for rising 1st-3rd graders in Bibb County. We expanded our service area to include students from nine elementary schools. To accommodate other new programming in the Parish House at St. Paul's Church, we reduced our footprint this year to serve 30 students, providing our children a safe place for creative learning, positive mentoring, and restored resiliency at no charge to families. Our six-week program prevents summer learning slide and enables

students to maintain or even exceed their pre-program instructional reading levels. We



reinforce reading and math literacy with daily enrichments in art, science, African dance, and gardening. The 2023 theme was *Seeing Me – Seeing You*, and we explored the science of sight. Our books look like our children and address self-esteem, respect for peers, managing emotions, and exploring cultures around the world. We learned about musicians, artists, writers, photographers, scientists, and civil rights figures. This year we added a reading specialist trained in multi-sensory, individualized instruction to expand our reading curriculum and a Candler seminarian who embedded herself within our classes to help children address trauma and anxiety and to promote conflict resolution and positive mental health.

We learned about how our brain and our eyes work together to help us see using a room-sized camera obscura, we studied 3-D imaging, we took pictures of one another and our surrounding neighborhood with Polaroid cameras. We even had everyone's eyesight assessed by a local optometrist. We visited the



public library, the Museum of Aviation, the splash pad, and Dickey Farms for homemade peach ice cream. We had a live reptile show with Jason Clark of Southeastern Reptile Rescue and a visit from cast members from Nutcracker Ballet of Middle GA. Our children received nutritious meals and snacks, and they took home 27 books for their personal libraries. They even created and decorated care packages for unhoused people served by Daybreak in Macon.





Each summer before our program begins, teachers and senior staff complete a training in delivering lesson plans, classroom management, positive behavioral reinforcement, trauma sensitivity, and racial reconciliation. I want to recognize our superior staff: Sarah Grace Mayfield, who served as our Program Coordinator and our art teacher; Assistant Program Director Gail Ford, a retired master teacher; Curriculum Director Corley Peth, Reading



Specialist Anay Williamson; Counselor/Chaplain Ruth Halstead; Teachers Madison Earls, Meagan Walker, Zainab Shaik, JoJo Lindo, and Tyc'lyn Gilbert; Program Assistants Christian Sevens, Addison Henry and Mary Evans; Enrichment Teachers Philip Groce, Pilar Wilder, and the staff and volunteers at St. Francis Arts Center. Our teachers were either college students or recent college graduates hailing from Mercer University, Valdosta State University, the University of North Georgia, Wesleyan College, and the University of West Georgia.

In addition to generous support from parishes in the Middle GA Convocation and parishes within the Diocese of Atlanta,, we have been blessed with landmark gifts from the Ranny Moulton Family, the Macon Violence Prevention Fund of the Community Foundation of Central GA; the Griffith Family Foundation, and the How Can We Serve Foundation; from Chris and Laurie Minette, the Christ Church Community Services Fund, the St. Paul's Episcopal Church Outreach Fund, the St. Veronica's Guild of St. Philip's Cathedral, several Daughters of the King Chapters, Lizzie Chapel

Baptist Church, Grace Circle of Mulberry Methodist Church, the USDA Summer Food Service Program, and many individual donors, as well as the use of facilities at St. Paul's Episcopal Church and its Canterbury House for program space and non-resident staff housing.

Beginning in 2022 and continuing in 2023, with support from the Moulton Family, Appleton is working to help food scarcity with students and families in the Ingram-Pye Elementary School neighborhood. We have now developed an environmental sustainability curriculum that includes gardening, recycling, and nutrition; we've completed a new design to revitalize and expand a community garden site on campus; and we've donated time and materials to help distribute fresh fruits and vegetables to students and families who live in a food desert even before the garden produces any crops.



Food is packed in zip lock bags for transport to the school

Packages are delivered to the schools for placement in backpacks

Appleton provides supports to food pantries at All Saints in Warner Robins and St. Luke's in Fort Valley, as well as food distribution at Fort Valley's Grace House with St. Andrews. We also give money to the Weekend Lunch Program at Christ Church in Macon.

In partnership with All Angels in Eatonton, we continue to support Backpack Buddies, a weekend food program that serves 120 students every week at Putnam Elementary and Putnam Middle School. At the beginning of 2023, the program served 72 children weekly, but by growing partnerships with Putnam Christian Outreach, other churches in Eatonton, and local corporate donors, the program has expanded to meet increased demand.



With 2022-23 grant support from the Roanridge Trust, a foundation administered by The Episcopal Church, Appleton is working to revitalize and reenergize aging congregations in the southern part of our convocation through innovation and experimentation, thus stabilizing and expanding much-needed community service ministries provided by our most rural parishes to children and families. We are examining different models across



Bishop Robert Wright celebrated with members of St. Luke's and St. Andrew's on November 27, 2022

The Episcopal Church for small parishes to share parttime clergy, to lift up lay parishioners to better serve their congregations in numerous areas of ministry, to identify new ways to grow membership, and to reimagine long-established roles in our communities. As part of this work, St. Luke's parishioner Martha Bright and I completed the two-year College for Congregational Development and are bringing back many of the skills we learned to share with the parishes in Fort Valley and beyond.

A pivotal element of the Roanridge project is to promote racial understanding and reconciliation in rural communities. As part of this, we are working to develop closer ties between two parishes in Fort Valley that stand just over a mile apart geographically – historically white St. Andrew’s and historically black St. Luke’s. The longtime part-time priest at St. Luke’s, the Rev. Brian Davy, retired on December 31, 2022, and St. Luke’s has soldiered on with resilience and a commitment to discern God’s new call to them. Along with several supply priests, St. Andrew’s part-time priest, the Rev. Harriette Simmons-Ballard, has assisted this parish by celebrating monthly Eucharist. The Fort Valley parishes have participated together in a series of Lenten studies and dinners and joint services at Easter and Pentecost. While these two parishes have no current plans to merge or to close, they are working to forge new relationships and new friendships as they learn more about one another’s parish cultures and commitments to community ministry.

Appleton recently secured a grant for St. Luke’s from the Diocese’s Ministry Innovations Task Force to re-establish a dormant Episcopal Campus Ministry program serving Fort Valley State University. The parish had operated an active Canterbury Club at the church for decades, but the pandemic and other forces rendered this ministry inactive. This grant offers St. Luke’s and the Diocese of Atlanta the opportunity to engage in a “new thing” – a fresh approach to college ministry on the school campus where students live and study rather than always expecting young adults to walk across the street to the church itself. Appleton will support this grant with technical assistance and use of the Appleton van for transporting students to and from campus ministry activities.

There is a deep and rich historical link between Fort Valley State University and the church campus of St. Luke’s. Beginning in 1913, the American Church Institute for Negroes (ACIN), the arm of The Episcopal Church that helped to establish and fund schools to serve blacks in southern states during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, began investing in what was then known as Fort Valley Normal School. From 1919 to 1939, Fort Valley’s Board of Trustees was controlled by The Diocese of Atlanta, with additional participation by the Diocese of Georgia as the Great Depression set in. In 1939, the Diocese of Atlanta transferred ownership of Fort Valley to the University System of Georgia as a State College, ending 20 years of active Episcopalian church administration, funding, and spiritual nourishment for central Georgia’s HBCU. That same year, ACIN commissioned construction across the street from the college campus of a new College Center with support from northern donors. The property featured a chapel, a community activities building, and a rectory – all facilities meant to strengthen and continue the long-standing relationship between the Episcopal Church and this HBCU. After the new College Center opened in 1940, both a priest and a social worker offered hospitality, community advocacy, and Episcopal worship services to Fort Valley State students, faculty and staff members, and children and families from the surrounding neighborhood. A 1946 brochure described programs offered by the Center as everything “from homiletics to horticulture.” In 1958, the center officially became recognized as St. Luke’s and by the mid 1960s, became a mission church of the Diocese of Atlanta. It is the last surviving historically black congregation in middle GA in the Diocese of Atlanta.



Sadly, Appleton lost a great friend this past summer. We mourn the passing of Dr. Michael Webb, who twice served as Chairman of the Appleton Board of Governors. Representing St. Paul’s Church, Michael was a calm and visionary leader with a delightfully wry sense of humor. He loved children and always treated them with dignity and affection. He frequently served as a Read Aloud guest at our summer literacy program, donning a Dr. Seuss hat to read beloved books to very amused young scholars. Michael earned both an EdD and a PhD from the University of GA, and he worked as a teacher and administrator in three middle GA counties before assuming his position as Professor of History at Middle Georgia State University. I miss his friendship and his wise counsel every day.

On September 22nd, clergy and lay members of the Middle GA Convocation celebrated the Appleton deaconesses in our annual service commemorating these first saints of the Diocese of Atlanta (designated as such at Annual Council 2017). As part of the liturgy in our historic cemetery plot in Rose Hill, we blessed the graves of five Appleton deaconesses, a teacher, and four Church Home residents. The Reverends Ben Wells and Bonnie Underwood served as officiants for the service.



Commemorating the Appleton Deaconesses and blessing the graves of Sister Margaret, Sister Katherine, Sister Sarah, Sister Katie and Sister Sophi

Members of General Convention's Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music (SCLM) have requested that Appleton submit an updated resolution requesting commemoration of Sister Sophi and her companion deaconesses for a separate Calendar Day recognition in *Lesser Feasts and Fasts*. We prepared and submitted this resolution to the Calendar Subcommittee during their work session in October. The subcommittee accepted the resolution as submitted and will include it along with other Calendar Day submissions to the full SCLM for consideration at General Convention in Louisville, Kentucky this coming summer.

In 2023, Appleton entered its 153rd year of service to children and families in Middle Georgia. As we go forward together into 2024, we have confidence that God will continue to bless us with abundance. With God's grace and your generosity, we look forward to another year of rich and productive service. Thanks be to God!

Respectfully submitted,

Julie C. Groce, Missioner
Appleton Episcopal Ministries
missioner@appletonepiscopal.org