



Lutheran Social Services of Illinois

NEWS RELEASE

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St. James Lutheran Offers Special Lenten Program Focusing on Neighborhood Poverty Beginning Feb. 28

One out of every six children in the United States is living in poverty. Families with children are the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. homeless population. St. James Lutheran Church, at 7400 W. Foster Avenue in Chicago, is planning a Lenten program that focuses on neighborhood poverty and what people in the community can do to help.

Beginning February 28, St. James Lutheran Church will conduct a five-week study program called “Just Neighbors” that allows participants to walk in the shoes of neighbors who are trapped in poverty – and explore what can be done to help them.

The Rev. Sue Schneider is the new pastor of St. James Lutheran Church as of last October and is hoping to use the program to rewrite the church’s mission statement. “When I answered the call [to be pastor at St. James], the congregation said it was interested in how it could be [more of] a presence in our neighborhood, to explore what it means to be Christians in the world and not just in the sanctuary,” she says. “As a former teacher, I think the curriculum is good,” she adds.

Pr. Schneider sees the program as part of a vision-setting process. “Our church is celebrating 60 years this year, and wants to take stock [of its presence in] our neighborhood,” she says. She hopes that the “Just Neighbors” program “will lead us into something bigger. I don’t know what we will do at the end of the program; it’s up to the congregation,” she adds.

“Just Neighbors” will start Wednesday, Feb. 28, and run through March 28. The program will begin with a free soup dinner at 6 p.m. Exploration of the program will start at 7 p.m., which will conclude with a prayer.

The resources for “Just Neighbors” come from Family Promise, whose Interfaith Hospitality Network serves 17,000 homeless people each year. Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI) is

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collaborating with St. James and another area church to develop resources for the program, which may eventually be made available to other interested churches.

“This is an excellent program that creates awareness about poverty,” says Jennifer DeLeon, associate director of LSSI’s Office of Church and Government Relations. “It helps people to learn about and understand the causes of poverty, and then asks the question of ‘What am I going to do to help?’”

For more information on the program at St. James Lutheran Church, call 773/631-7666, or go to its Web site at www.StJamesonFoster.org.

Founded in 1867, Lutheran Social Services of Illinois is a statewide, not-for-profit social service agency of the three Illinois synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. For more information, visit www.LSSI.org or call 847/635-4600.

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