Dear friends in Christ,

It took some time to figure out how we were going to manage after COVID-19 hit. Our newsletter was one of the COVID casualties. We have been using emails, phone calls, the website (http://oursaviourplacerville.org) and the Friday e-blast as our primary communication sources. It is time to get the regular newsletter up and running again.

As for now, we will continue to meet in church on Sunday mornings at 8 am and 10:30, as well as live-streaming the 10:30 service to the church Facebook page. That could change at any moment if the county has to shut down due to increased COVID cases. I thought this would be a good time to do weekly interviews on ZOOM as a way to get to know each other better. The first podcast/interview was with Hudson Mathews. He was originally going to speak to us during a Sunday Forum about his experience of being part of a play called “The Laramie Project” that was performed at El Dorado High School last year. It is a much more serious topic than other plays that have been performed at the high school. It addresses issues that all people face in one way or another; bullying and violence, through the lens of the murder of Matthew Shepard. Matthew was an openly gay student who attended the University of Wyoming. In 1998 he was killed by two young men in the small town of Laramie, Wyoming. The interview with Hudson can be found here at this website: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PVRJFB2iHaM&t=709s

My hope is to schedule weekly interviews with members of the church and post them to the Facebook page, as well as send them out via e-mail.

While I am on vacation Pastor Christine will be taking care of the Sunday services, as well as helping with any pastoral concerns. She can be contacted at: (530) 621-2297 or by email at christineleightaylor@gmail.com. Tom Weikert, Leta Parks, and Pastor Christine will be taking turns preaching and officiating Morning Prayer.

If you have other concerns please contact Becky Leighton, our senior warden. She can be reached at leightonbecky@gmail.com or 530-721-5130. If we have to close down and have online services only Pastor Christine will let Lee Weikert and Becky Leighton know. Lee will send out the information in an e-blast, and Becky will start the phone tree so people will also receive a phone call.

I will be praying for you during my vacation.

Blessings,

Rev Deb
Values and Descriptions

Our core values remind us what matters most at Our Saviour.
Our values keep us focused on achieving our purpose.
They direct major leadership decisions, as well as the daily work of our ministries.
They shape what we do – and who we are – together as disciples of Christ.

**Authentic:** We are a community of the Spirit of God.

**Rooted:** We are rooted in Holy Scripture, history, traditions, sacraments and worship.

**Christ-centered:** We strive to encounter and emulate Jesus Christ.

**Inviting:** We seek out and invite all to this holy work.

**Welcoming:** We welcome all whom God has created, extending hospitality and compassion to them.

**Relevant:** We engage the world in which we live with the love of Christ.

**Serving:** We share the love of Christ through our service with others in our parish, neighborhoods, and the world.

Purpose Statement

*Our purpose explains why we (the Church of Our Saviour) exists:*

To proclaim the presence and love of God through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit who transform and give meaning to our lives.

Vision

*Our vision answers "What will Our Saviour look like when/if we are successful at achieving your purpose?"*

Church of Our Saviour is a vibrant Episcopal parish known for ongoing spiritual formation and engagement with our community and the world.
A report from Pastor Christine

The Warren Dunning Memorial Social Justice Grant: Year 3

Project Title: Creating El Dorado Veteran Services (EDVR) – A Permanent Stand Down

Sponsor: Episcopal Church of Our Saviour

P.O. Box 447, Placerville, CA 95667

530-622-2441, oursaviourplacerville.org

Project Coordinator: The Rev. Dr. Christine Leigh-Taylor

leighta@mcn.org; 916-704-8698(M) 530-621-2297 (H)

Accomplishments: El Dorado Veteran Resources (EDVR) began as the brainchild of a small group of people who had long been concerned with veteran well-being. EDVR became a program of Military Family Support Group (MFSG), a local 501(c)(3) established in 2005, because it could provide an umbrella for applying for grants and accounting for expenditures without building a new infrastructure. El Dorado County provided EDVR a rent-free office with internet and phone in the Veterans Memorial Building in Placerville, with our office adjacent to the county Department of Veteran Affairs. Our ongoing collaboration with this county office has been unprecedented in California! We refer clients to the Veterans’ Affairs Office to verify veteran status, if they do not have a card or document, and they refer clients back to us for emergency assistance.

We opened EDVR on Veterans’ Day (Nov. 11) 2017. Ever since, it has been staffed entirely by unpaid volunteers – some of them veterans themselves, most of them veteran family members. By spring 2018 we had developed a mutual arrangement with another local non-profit, Only Kindness (OK), to provide us with computers and a database with which to track client services, as well as a monthly stipend for data entry into their own systems. OK had a large three-year contract with the county to provide mental health
outreach to veterans, so we became their intake function and they had funds to pay for bigger ticket items that contribute to veterans’ safety and health – all related to mental wellness. As word spread, we had a steady increase in veteran clients. Meanwhile, we were developing intake forms and systems as fast as possible with an all-volunteer base.

Community partnerships: Everything we do is in partnership with some group. Here are a few: one veterans’ service organization provides $2500/year for bus passes; another gives $400 for food/gas gift cards; the county Veterans Commission provided $5,000/year (now increased to $8,000/year) from the Transient Occupancy Tax to cover basic MFSG operating expenses, such as insurance, flyers and office supplies. We have also received commendations from the county Board of Supervisors. Obviously, the local community leadership recognizes our impact and wants to support our work. A local auto dealer (Thompsons’) donated a late model van, and painted EDVR logos on the exterior; this van is used heavily as the backbone of our transportation team that drives veterans to medical appointments around and beyond the county. It costs a lot of money to insure, maintain and gas up the van. Some of that funding has come from a women’s golf tournament put on for two years at a local course. We received an $8,000 grant from the Women’s Fund of El Dorado Community Foundation in 2018, and in spring 2020 received another $8,000 grant from them, plus an emergency grant of $4,100, also from the Women’s Fund, for pandemic-related services. In summer of 2019 we mutually changed our intake relationship with OK, by referring clients to their own office. This made it a lot simpler for our office volunteers.

We also work with the El Dorado Sheriff’s Office Homeless Outreach Team (we help with furnishings when a homeless veteran is ready to settle down), and The Lighted Candle (a local non-profit focused on homelessness).

Over the two-and-a-half years of EDVR’s existence all the founders (about six of us) are still actively involved. We have added others, and some have had to move on. In particular, our transportation coordinator recently had to resign, so we are looking actively for someone – or two – to manage this vital activity. In the interim, another key member of Church of Our Saviour (David Zelinsky, involved in veteran ministry for nearly ten years and a service officer at the local American Legion) has stepped up to coordinate rides. Fortunately, due to the pandemic shut-down, demand for rides to medical appointments has dwindled – except for one veteran who needs three-times-a-week dialysis (we are getting him there and home on two of the days). But this need will pick up again. By end of May 2020 our team had provided 560 rides, for a total of 36,071 miles and 1568 hours since inception of EDVR. This represents the contributions of some 16 volunteer drivers!

Services provided outside the congregation: ALL services have been provided outside the congregation. However, my fellow congregant, David Zelinsky, who is also a founding member of this effort, and I do include this work in sermons (he is a lay preacher). We also have a small group of parishioners who approve his requests for reimbursement, because he has other small grants that are run through the church.
Congregational support:

I found it very reassuring that one Sunday last fall the Vestry decided to do a special outreach request at both services, with the proceeds to be divided half to veterans’ ministry and half to the rector’s discretionary fund. This drive was initiated by congregational leaders. The total amount collected was $2,100, and half of it was delivered as a check to El Dorado Veteran Resources. They were amazed!

Numbers served: In 2019 alone we served 750 unduplicated veterans! Services included food from our on-site food pantry (with frozen meals prepared by a veteran who is a chef, plus canned goods), clothes, bus passes, rides to medical appointments, firewood deliveries, appliances and furniture, help with utility bills, rent and rental deposits, emergency motel stays, referrals to other agencies and much more! Key to all our services is listening with respect. We have had only a few “challenging” clients, and we sometimes need to tell them that they have exhausted their use of our services.

Volunteers involved: Almost too many to count. My list of currently active volunteers numbers 17.

Lay leadership development: We are a very egalitarian organization, so anyone who has an idea for an improvement is welcomed. This happens often. MFSG has services, such as the frozen entrees, that are the product of a team that cooks with our veteran chef. One of our founders is a building manager of the Veterans Memorial Building, so there is constant interaction with other veteran groups. The new Co-Chair of EDVR is a staff veteran outreach professional at the Citrus Heights Vet Center, and he is co-leading the next county Stand Down next September. (Unfortunately, because of the continuing pandemic, the Stand Down has been postponed to the following year.) I knew him from my involvement with Four Paws To Freedom (another ECS recipient), of which I was the incorporator in 2014. I am the other Co-chair (I did not want to be the chair, after the founding chair resigned, because I am not a veteran – I AM a veteran spouse, sister and mother).

These are not members of or worshippers at Church of Our Saviour, but this ministry is highlighted frequently in our sermons, prayers and reports. We can do an even better job of this communication in the future.

One story: Gov. Newsom declared a shelter-in-place order in mid-March 2020. We shut our EDVR office in compliance. None of us knew how long this self-quarantining was likely to last. But after a month, some of our EDVR leaders decided that people were still in need, and gathered a bunch of us to offer a free food give-away to veterans every Wednesday. In the first four weeks of this impromptu program we served 75 veterans and family members with 2,580 pounds of food! Attached is a PDF of an article in the Placerville Mountain Democrat (unfortunately, it’s a picture of me, but I was there every week, for the 9 weeks of the activity). We got some regulars who relied on fresh supplies each week, plus we usually had some newcomers. All the volunteers wore masks. Two of us did the intake at tables outside: we asked to see veteran ID, then asked our clients to fill out a short (“returning client”) or slightly longer (“application for assistance”) form, so we could track how and who we served, and then their food order form, on which we asked how many persons were in their household. Then we gave the order form to one of our baggers working inside. Typically, we had five or six people inside packing up the food according to the client’s wishes. Then the bagger would bring the bags or boxes (!) of food outside and help the client load up. While waiting, we chatted out front with the clients; some of them struck up
conversations on their own. On the last day of our food give-away (June 30), we served 13 individual veterans who indicated they had 31 people in their combined households. The highest number of individuals we served in one day was 18, and they were feeding households of 47 persons. I talked with the veterans to ask how this activity was helping them. Most said it was a big financial help, because food has become more expensive during the pandemic. One young woman – a spouse of an active-duty person – is going to college, and the food helps her get by. One man in his 70's told me that his wife is so concerned about the pandemic that the only places she will allow (!) him to go are to the chiropractor's office and our weekly food give-away. One man would come an hour early to help us unload the van with the fresh supplies, because he was big and strong and the boxes were heavy. He loaded them onto rolling carts (we never let the veteran clients come inside). We encouraged their social distancing as they waited outside, often on very hot days (we put chairs out under awnings). Of course, all the veterans appreciated our interest in their situations.

Post Script: As of July, we are gradually reopening the EDVR office with limited hours and the few volunteers who are comfortable being there. We had given all our food-give-away clients a sheet of new hours on the last day of that program. So, on the first day of our EDVR opening, our regular unloading helper was there right on the dot. (I happened to be there that day, because I brought safety supplies.) Of course, I knew his name – and many others’ – by that time. He came for more food. He, and so many others, appreciated being called by name.

Final Expenses: We are incredibly grateful for the three-years of grant awards: the ECS grant was our very first funding, and it helped us attract more community funding. Every penny of the $3,000 final year grant was spent on food or supplies, such as gas, that were given directly to veterans. We used other sources for insurance, motel stays, rent deposits and other expenses.

Another post-script: We have learned a lot over these three years. We started out giving $25 food and gift cards to just about any veteran who came in expressing need. We would state that we would give these out only once in 30 days. But we soon learned that some of our clients would come in every 31 days to collect a new gift card. We also heard that these gift cards could be traded for drugs. It didn’t take us too long to stop this give-away program and become more discriminating – although that entails making judgments. Lately, we have been relying more on our on-site food pantry, frozen meals, clothing, sleeping bags, firewood, appliances, and, of course, transportation to crucial appointments. Our walk-in office is open three days a week for limited hours, but we still get plenty of clients. The need has not diminished during the pandemic, and it probably won’t even if we have a successful vaccine. There are always people in need, and, fortunately, we hope there are compassionate souls to help them.

THANK YOU, ECS!
Church of Our Saviour Statement on Gun Violence

You may remember that last year we gathered over four weeks to discuss gun violence. Members of the group varied in their opinions and yet wanted to come together to find common ground. After several iterations and input from those who attended the sessions we have come up with a statement. The statement reads:

“We are a small church in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada in Northern California. Our membership consists of those who identify as Republicans, Democrats, Tea Party, State of Jefferson proponents, pacifists, and concealed carry gun carriers among others. We are all followers of Jesus Christ and gather each Sunday for worship together. We kneel side by side and shoulder to shoulder as we receive Holy Communion. We are all opposed to gun violence, so some of us gathered together to study this issue that divides our country.

We believe that we cannot solve this matter unless we talk to others with opposing views in a way that respects the dignity of each person. With that in mind, we engaged in a four week discussion on Politics, Religion and Guns. The following is a summary of our work together.

We are deeply grieved by the amount of violence, especially gun violence, in entertainment such as movies and video games. This kind of entertainment often gives the impression that, 1) gun use to solve problems is normal, 2) gun use to protect oneself is easy (good guys rarely miss), 3) gun possession and use is highly desirable or exciting. We need to be discerning about the kinds of entertainment that we expose ourselves and our families to. We need to process all entertainment regarding its direct and indirect messages about life and values, especially values that relate to gun ownership and use. We need to bring every idea under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

We affirm God’s command, “Do not murder.” We affirm the teaching of our Lord Jesus that the intent of this command goes deeper than just the act of killing another human being or oneself. That teaching relates also to words or other behavior that harm or may even destroy others. It includes the hate, anger, prejudice, jealousy and despair in the human heart that fuel speech and other behaviors that harm and destroy. Because we affirm this, we seek to purge our hearts of malice and fill them instead with love. We believe this command and its implications are foundational to an authentic respect for the right of other human beings to life.

We affirm that God wants to be our security and refuge. Guns can be a false security or even an “idol” that people trust in instead of trusting in God. It must be understood that possession of guns does not necessarily make people safe and in many cases may actually endanger the owner, the family of the owner and others (See Ecclesiastes 10:8-9). Though it is recognized that gun owners are responsible for their weapons there are still accidents that harm or kill people every year.

Threats to our security are real but the fear we experience must be brought to God who is the ultimate source of security and antidote to fear. It is too easy to ‘lean unto our own understanding’ (See Proverbs 3:5-6), making gun ownership our security instead of trusting God. There are other ways to build security and respond to threats as we trust God and he directs us.
Whoever digs a pit may fall into it;
    whoever breaks through a wall may be bitten by a snake.

Whoever quarries stones may be injured by them;
    whoever splits logs may be endangered by them. Ecclesiastes 10:8-9.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not to your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will direct your paths. Proverbs 3:5-6.

Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. Psalm 20:7.

[Woe to Those Who Rely on Egypt] Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses, who trust in the multitude of their chariots and in the great strength of their horsemen, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel, or seek help from the Lord. Isaiah 31:1.

We acknowledge there can be restrictions placed on gun owners that still uphold the Second Amendment. For example, we support universal background checks, assault weapons bans, handgun purchaser licensing, and restrictions on gun ownership by domestic abusers.”

**A work in progress**

We will have a more complete newsletter in September with birthdays, anniversaries, a calendar and the ministry schedule. Until then, watch the Facebook page for worship and interviews.
Episcopal Church of Our Saviour
P.O. Box 447
2979 Coloma Street
Placerville, CA 95667-0447

TIME DATE MATERIAL. PLEASE EXPEDITE