

Lamplight

A Newsletter of the US Disaster Program



"Be dressed, ready for service and keep your lamps burning." — LUKE 12:35

Issue #29 | May 2015

A Note from The Team

Hi, All!

We are delighted to announce that the US Disaster program staff is growing!

On April 13th, Sara Lowery joined the US Disaster Program as our new Program Associate. She comes to us from the Episcopal Service Corps in Massachusetts, prior to which she served in Hong Kong through the Young Adult Service Corps. She is originally from Alabama and graduated from Sewanee: The University of the South with a B.A. in International and Global Studies. During her undergraduate career, she volunteered with Episcopal Relief & Development, raising money for *NetsforLife*® and working with the Engagement team.

As the team continues to flourish, we look forward to deepening our relationships with all of you.

In Peace,
Katie, Lura, Sara, Dane and Ethan

Episcopal Asset Map: Aerial Tours of the Episcopal Church

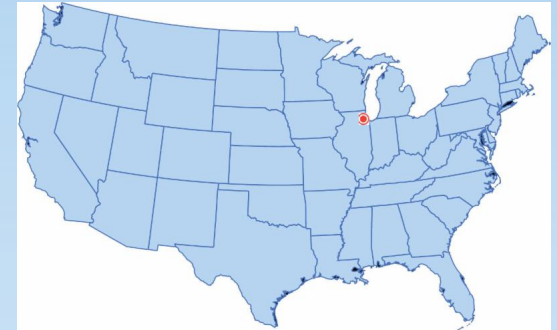
By Ethan Lowery, originally published on Episcopal Relief & Development's Blog

My name is Ethan Lowery and I have a confession.

I am an extrovert. And a church nerd.

So imagine how exciting it is for me to take folks on an aerial tour of The Episcopal Church across the 50 states, through the Episcopal Asset Map!

To clarify, this is a virtual aerial tour, through an amazing online portal built in partnership between Episcopal Relief & Development and the Domestic and Foreign Missionary



Join "Ready to Serve":

[Sign up here](#) to offer your services to your vulnerable neighbors after a disaster.

Volunteer Opportunities:

Episcopal Dioceses of Easton, New Jersey and New York

Find volunteer opportunities and registration information for Hurricane Sandy-impacted areas at relief.episcopalny.org.

Episcopal Diocese of Bethlehem

Volunteer opportunities include indoor and outdoor repair of flood-damaged homes in the Diocese of Bethlehem, PA. Contact [The Rev. John Major](#) for information on how to sign up.

Episcopal Relief & Development-supported Projects:

Disaster Response:

Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts

After record snowfall caused significant disruptions to work and transit, the Diocese of Massachusetts is scaling up food pantries and

Society. Through this searchable map, which features Episcopal churches, schools and other ministry bases, it's possible to witness how people are doing church and engaging in God's work in a bevy of different contexts!

As the west coast organizing intern for the map (basically all dioceses west of the Mississippi River), my role is to invite diocesan leaders to participate and share this resource with folks in their Episcopal Church networks. Anyone who's done regional organizing in the church knows that most of the 'activity' of my work entails emails and phone calls, but this is all in service of engaging church leaders from all over the midwest, southwest, northwest, and west coast and inviting them to share their vision with me of how the Asset Map could serve the specific needs of their communities.

Because the map's information is largely user-generated (beyond the initial pins, which we sourced from the Red Book, diocesan sites and regional contacts), we need as many hands on this project as we can get! I've talked to diocesan disaster coordinators, communications directors, Jubilee officers and a multitude of canons (to the ordinary, for finance, for administration, missionary, you name it) and it feels really remarkable that a tool like the Asset Map could serve so many different ministerial vocations.

I remember one meeting with the mission and outreach team of the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, while I was home for Christmas. In visioning how the Asset Map could assist their ministry, an early draft of our national map came up. It turns out that a large portion of their mission work is international, extending beyond the borders of their own diocese. The potential to keyword-search nationally for churches with relationships in South Sudan was so exciting to them - and something I never could have anticipated!

To help better understand the scope and breadth of this project, imagine a scenario that someone in an Episcopal church might find themselves in:

Paul is trying to be more environmentally conscious. Every day it seems he reads something new about climate change. He feels strongly that the church, his church, can help provide a meaningful response, but he's not sure where to start. He'd like to find out more about how other churches are engaging on this issue, maybe develop a new ministry for his own community. This is a big issue, and he'd like to cast the net widely to see what ideas are out there. Is there a tool that can help him do this research more effectively?

Rhetorical question! It's the Asset Map, of course. Paul could pull up his diocesan map or even the national map and search keywords he's specifically interested in ('solar' or 'renewable energy') or comb through the 'community garden' or 'advocacy' tags.

This is just one of many examples of how the map can be useful, and that's really where I see the particular value of the Asset Map. The map is not meant to be any particular thing to any particular diocese; there's no required role that it's meant

providing support to homeless residents.

Episcopal Diocese of Olympia

The Diocese of Olympia is working to provide temporary shelter and to replace essential possessions such as tents, tarps and sleeping bags of homeless residents after flooding in January.

Episcopal Diocese of Northwest Pennsylvania

Frigid temperatures caused a water main to burst in Bradford, PA. The Diocese of Northwest Pennsylvania developed a program to help provide economic assistance to individuals who suffered lost wages and to defray the costs of plumbing repairs.

Disaster Recovery:

Episcopal Diocese of Colorado

The Diocese of Colorado is working to help people recover following flooding that swept the state's Front Range in the fall of 2013.

Episcopal Church in Connecticut

The Diocese of Connecticut is supporting Ben's Lighthouse, a ministry of Trinity Episcopal Church in Newtown, which is working to promote the long-term health of the community's children, youth and families and to nurture a culture of non-violence and caring.

Episcopal Diocese of Easton

The Diocese of Easton is hosting volunteer groups to repair homes damaged by Hurricane Sandy and construct new ones where existing homes cannot be repaired.

Episcopal Dioceses of New Jersey

The Diocese of New Jersey is working with churches statewide to identify those falling through the cracks, and creating parish-based programs to meet needs following Hurricane Sandy.

Episcopal Diocese of New York

The Diocese of New York is working with volunteers and young people from Episcopal Service Corps to rebuild homes on Staten Island following Hurricane Sandy.

Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma

The Diocese of Oklahoma is working with congregations and long-term recovery groups around the state to meet the needs of vulnerable people

to fill. The asset map isn't a program, it's a platform and a resource and a tool, populated and utilized locally, at the institutional and diocesan levels. It's something being offered freely - and for free - to The Episcopal Church (rolling out first in the 50 US states, with potential for expansion in 2015-16) and we hope it can be useful to people serving in many different roles.

Read more about Ethan's work with the Asset Map [here!](#)

Church with Garden and Food Pantry Seeks Same

By Nathan Davis, Originally published on *Vestry Papers*, The ECF Vital Practices

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

(1 Corinthians, 12:4-7)

After months of sub-freezing temperatures and weeks of hopeful anticipation, spring seems to have finally sprung here in Chicago. Having grown up in North Carolina, I'm more than ready for warmer weather... and the opportunity to get back into our church's garden.

I first came to St. Clement's Episcopal Church - with its food pantry and then dormant garden - in February 2012. My wife had just taken a position at the community health center in Harvey, a troubled suburban city just across the southern boarder of Chicago. We moved to be closer to her work.

Moving also meant that we needed to find a new church home. We were drawn to St. Clement's, located a few blocks from the community health center, in part by her patients' stories of the pantry at the "red door church." That door has been raised to icon status among our neighbors. Like many of our sister churches, St. Clement's has a mounting attendance deficit, with average Sunday attendance hovering around fifteen. And, also like many of our sister churches, St. Clement's is steadfastly, stubbornly, extending the hand of Christ's Kingdom to our neighbors who are hurting. Despite our small numbers on Sunday morning, the "red door pantry" provides food to well over 100 neighborhood families every week.

Mary Lou's community garden

In the summer the red door pantry supplements the canned goods given to our guests with fresh vegetables from Mary Lou's community garden. Located on a formerly vacant lot adjacent to the churchyard, the garden was started by St. Clement's member Mary Lou Smith after the two abandoned houses on the lot were destroyed in the early 1990s by a fire. A master gardener through the University of Illinois extension center, Mary Lou tended the garden with enormous faith and

following tornados in the spring of 2013.

Resources for Disaster Preparedness and Response:

Visit Episcopal Relief & Development's online [Resource Library](#) for numerous case studies and best practices in disaster response at the diocesan and congregational level.



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care until age forced her to retire in 2010. When I came to St. Clement's the garden had been fallow and empty for two years. After just three weeks worshipping at St. Clement's I mustered all of my 22-year-old zeal and gumption and volunteered my services as coordinator for the community garden project. I had learned to garden from my grandparents as a kid growing up in North Carolina but had exactly zero experience managing this type of project.

There are times in all of our lives where it is easy to see God's hand at work. I needed a place to belong and feel productive, Mary Lou's garden needed a gardener, and the people of St. Clement's had enough faith to turn me loose on the project. That first year the garden thrived and our guests enjoyed fresh vegetables all summer long. Then winter came, bringing a welcome break, at least for the first few weeks. This was my first Chicago growing season and only my fourth Chicago winter.

By mid-December my garden zeal teamed up with my cabin fever and I went a little crazy. By late December seed catalogs began arriving in my mailbox in all their titillating glossy glory. I began attending diocesan meetings and gardening planning meetings. In late January as I was flipping through one of my glossier catalogs dreaming of spring, I noticed a small article towards the back about the "seeds of hope" program. This seed supplier was encouraging community gardens associated with feeding programs to write in for a free supply of seeds. I jumped on it and applied.

Wanted: A congregational networking tool

By early March my spring fever had reached delirium levels and my application for seeds of hope program long forgotten. In my quest for things to do, I'd registered for a diocesan summit on social outreach. The morning of the summit, a package arrived: St. Clement's had received a cubic foot of seeds. I was overwhelmed by the generosity of the seed company and wanted to share this good fortune with other congregations with community gardens. I was surprised to find there did not seem to be an easy way to do this. I am not sure what I expected, but it seemed odd that a networking tool for congregations did not exist. After some detective work, we were able to compile a semi-complete list of congregations with food gardens. I called up a few of them and managed to give away about half of our seeds all the while thinking there must be an easier way to accomplish this.

Read more about Nathan and the Asset map [here](#).