

Peaceways

CENTRAL KENTUCKY COUNCIL FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE

June 2017

CKCPJ hosts successful Re-Set Supper

by Margaret Gabriel, Editor

CKCPJ hosted about 20 people at its Re-Set Supper on May 24 at the Quaker Meeting House. The supper was designed to gather input from people concerning the future direction of the 35-year-old organization. The evening began with a light supper and lively table conversation among some people who are long-time Lexington activists as well as newcomers who arrived to gather information about CKCPJ and its individual members and member organizations.

Dinner was followed by Kerby Neill's presentation that highlighted CKCPJ's founding and such events as the annual commemoration of Hiroshima Day; the celebration of CKCPJ's 25th anniversary in 2007 with "Twenty Days of Peace and Justice"; the organization's involvement in the launch of the Peace Studies program at the University of Kentucky; the 300th publication of *Peaceways*; and Lexington's recent non-violence workshop presented by



Margaret Gabriel

the Institute for the Study and Practice of Non-Violence in Rhode Island.

"It was an exciting conference," Kerby said. "People want to bring the presenters back for another workshop with a larger audience."

Following his presentation, Kerby asked the audience to divide into groups of three and compile a list of items of justice issues that interest

them. The groups then reported on those areas of interest, which Kerby displayed on poster paper.

He categorized the areas of interest as non-violence, the economy, and civil discourse, issues that cut across political and ethnic dividers, he noted.

CKCPJ steering committee member Richard Mitchell said, "We become more effective when we have larger coalitions. We started as a white group and we discovered that, as such, we've had a more difficult time diversifying." But, he added, it is essential that CKCPJ diversify in every way possible to accomplish its goal of addressing issues of injustice and inequality.



Floating lanterns illustrate the annual commemoration of Hiroshima Day, a CKCPJ cornerstone of peace-making.

Gun Violence In America as of 5-24-17 (excluding suicide)

2015	
Killed	13,293
Wounded	26,826
2016	
Killed	13,218
Wounded	27,241

Source: www.gunviolencearchive.org

KFTC stands for immigrants

Kentuckians For The Commonwealth (KFTC) has a vision of a Kentucky where “discrimination is wiped out of our laws, habits and hearts.” While discrimination already hurts many members of our communities, the current state legislature and our national government are taking aim at some of our most vulnerable neighbors: immigrants, refugees and religious minorities, especially Muslims. As we always have, KFTC is standing up for the targets of discrimination and working hard toward wiping discrimination out of our laws, habits and hearts.

We voice our solidarity with immigrants, refugees and religious minorities who are coming under increased attack in the current political climate.

Kentucky, the same as the nation as a whole, was built by immigrants, refugees and people brought here as slaves. Everyone who lives here, with the exception of Native Americans and people who came as slaves, arrived as an immigrant or is the descendent of immigrants.

Today, refugees and immigrants, some of them undocumented, continue to contribute to our great state through work, paying taxes, helping grow the economy, contributing to the diversity of our culture, and revitalizing our communities.

Yet, today, the human rights of many immigrants are threatened, especially the undocumented, refugees, and religious minorities, particularly Muslims. These actions are motivated by racial prejudice and fly in the face of the many contributions to society and to the economy made by all of these groups. In fact, without immigrants, refugees and Muslims, the United States could not be the United States, and Kentucky could not be Kentucky.

KFTC is showing up for immigrants, refugees and Muslims by supporting efforts to respect their human rights and dignity. We are committed to opposing bills in the Kentucky legislature and actions by our federal government that target immigrants and refugees in unfair, inhumane ways, or that seek to turn ordinary police officers into border patrol agents.

We call upon our members — and all Kentuckians — to resist such policies and practices. We encourage our members — and everyone — to get to know their neighbors and work to make Kentucky a state where “discrimination is wiped out of our laws, habits and hearts.”

We are proud to stand with our sisters and brothers, whether they are immigrants, refugees or Muslims. WE ARE ALL KENTUCKIANS.

Reprinted from *kftc.org*



KFTC hosts a pro-immigration rally near the Fayette County courthouse.

The Central Kentucky Council for Peace and Justice

Board of Directors: Rebecca Ballard DiLoreto, David Christiansen (co-chair), Rick Clewett, Bilal El-Amin, Mary Ann Ghosal (secretary), Heather Hadi, Randolph Hollingsworth, Rahul Karanth, Steven Lee Katz (treasurer), Richard Mitchell, Bruce Mundy, Steve Pavey, Nadia Rasheed, Rabbi Uri Smith, Teddi Smith-Robillard, Craig Wilkie. *Peaceways Staff:* Margaret Gabriel (editor); Penny Christian, Gail Koehler, Betsy Neale, Jim Trammel (proofreaders). The views expressed in *Peaceways* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of CKCPJ.

Member Organizations: ACLU-Central Kentucky Chapter; Ahava Center for Spiritual Living; Amnesty International, UK Chapter; Bahá'ís of Lexington; Berea Friends Meeting; Bluegrass Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Bluegrass Domestic Violence Program; Bluegrass United Church of Christ; Catholic Action Center; Central Christian Church; Commission for Peace and Justice, Catholic Diocese of Lexington; Gay and Lesbian Services Organization; Humanist Forum of Central Kentucky; Hunter Presbyterian Church; Islamic Society of Central Kentucky; Jewish Federation of the Bluegrass; Kentuckians for the Commonwealth; Kentucky Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, Central Kentucky Chapter; Kentucky Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights; Kentucky Resources Council; Lexington Fair Housing Council; Lexington Fairness; Lexington Friends Meeting; Lexington Hispanic Association (Asociación de Hispanos Unidos); Lexington Labor Council, Jobs with Justice Committee; Lexington Living Wage Campaign; Lexington Socialist Student Union; Maxwell Street Presbyterian Church; Newman Center at UK; North East Lexington Initiative; One World Film Festival; Students for Peace and Earth Justice (Bluegrass Community and Technical College); Peacecraft; The Plantory; Progress (student group at Transylvania University); Second Presbyterian Church; Shambhala Center; Sustainable Communities Network; Union Church at Berea; Unitarian Universalist Church of Lexington; United Nations Association, Bluegrass Chapter.



Peaceways is published ten times a year by the Central Kentucky Council for Peace and Justice, 1588 Leestown Rd., Ste. 130-138, Lexington KY 40511. **Special deadline for calendar items for the July issue is June 30.** We do not publish in January and August. Contact (859) 488-1448 or email peacewayseditor@gmail.com.

Update: BUILD

by Margaret Gabriel

Representatives from Building a United Interfaith Lexington through Direct Action (BUILD) met April 24 with Commissioner Ronny Bastin, Glenn Brown from the mayor's office, and Commissioner Chris Ford to give them the questions they would field at BUILD's Nehemiah Action at Heritage Hall the next day.

At that time, BUILD learned the city would have no representative at the action to respond to the request for a city representative to attend the conference of the National Network for Safe Communities.

BUILD instead received a letter signed by Mayor Jim Gray, among others, and were asked to read it to the assembly of 1,800 people representing 26 faith communities in Lexington.

The National Network for Safe Communities says on its website it supports cities implementing proven strategic interventions to reduce violence and improve public safety, minimize arrest and incarceration, strengthen communities, and improve relationships between law enforcement and the communities it

serves.

Through its research, BUILD learned that the network is "gold standard" for preventing the type of gun violence that plagues Lexington.

After the Nehemiah Action, about

The bigger the ask, the harder it is to get a 'yes.'

35 BUILD members attended a LFCUG council meeting to voice their concerns about violence and their disappointment in the city's refusal to attend the Nehemiah Action.

Mayor Gray said that he appreciates BUILD's tenacity, saying that the city would not have made the progress it has made toward affordable housing without that tenacity, but that he and other city officials do not agree with the lack of discussion that takes place at the Nehemiah Action.

"We have asked for meetings to discuss the issue and [the] present the findings from our research," said

BUILD co-chair Kabby Akers. "All we got was a letter that they expected us to read."

On May 22, nearly a month after the Nehemiah Action, BUILD learned that while Mayor Gray would not attend the conference, the city will send Commissioner Ronny Bastin and Commander Mike Wright to the conference. Mayor Gray will not go.

The city's refusal to attend the Nehemiah Action is not the first time that BUILD has met with such resistance, Kabby said, pointing out "the bigger the ask, the harder it is to get a 'yes.' But, ultimately the bigger gain for the people of Lexington. The mayor is right, we are tenacious."

BUILD, she said creates the tension that is necessary for change.

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Submissions to Peaceways

Articles submitted for publication in *Peaceways* should show an awareness of and sensitivity to the CKCPI's mission and concerns.

Articles of varying lengths are encouraged. Short essays reflecting an individual's experience of peace- and justice-related events and community action or activism are encouraged, as well.

Feature articles should be no longer than 500 words, unless you are willing to have the piece cut to fit one page of *Peaceways* text. Pieces will be edited for clarity.

Please include references in the text for all quotations, statistics, and unusual facts. End- or footnotes are not used. Please query submissions to peacewayseditor@gmail.com before writing a feature article intended solely for *Peaceways*.

For all submissions, the author's name, address, and phone number should appear on the body of the submitted text. If you submit material that has been published or which you are also submitting to other publishers, be sure to indicate this. Also include information about your relationship to any organization or issue mentioned in the article for inclusion in a biographical reference at the end of the story. Submissions should be made in Word format *via* email. Book reviews are usually solicited by the editor but we welcome inquiries from potential reviewers.

Submission deadline is the 10th of each month. *Peaceways* is published 10 times a year. We do not publish in January and August.

EECD makes plans for summer

With a quote from Pope Francis, "In the shoes of the other, we learn to have a greater capacity for understanding," the East End Community Development newsletter spotlights the events and activities of its area of focus, the East End of Lexington, with a mission of strengthening its communities by helping people achieve greater economic opportunity, improving the quality of life, and empowering individuals.

The June issue notes that the former home of the Catholic Action Center at 400 East Fifth Street now belongs to the city, and future public meetings will be held to determine its use.

To help make the East End safer, cleaner and more attractive, a "Take

Back Our Neighborhood" initiative has been launched. The initiative encourages people to pick up trash in public spaces and dispose of it properly; call the police in the event of suspicious behaviors or undesirable activities, (258-3600 to report a non-emergency), or text a tip about a crime to lexpd+your tip or go to bluegrasscrimestoppers.com; and get to know our neighborhood police officers, Dawn Dunn and Eddie Thurman.

The newsletter welcomes newcomers to the neighborhood, commends residents for remodeled homes, gives contact information about homes for sale and/or rent, and lists job training opportunities.

For more information about EECD, contact mallory.billie@gmail.com.

Calendar for Peace & Justice

The council seeks to promote dialogue as a path to peace and justice. Consequently, we announce events that we do not necessarily endorse.

Thurs., June 15

Kentucky Refugee Ministries,
Lexington World Refugee Day Summit,
9 a.m.-5 p.m., Lexington Public Library,
140 E. Main Street. \$25 registration.

Thurs., June 15

Kentuckians for the Commonwealth,
Central Kentucky Chapter meeting, 7 p.m.,
Episcopal Diocese of Lexington Mission
House, 203 East Fourth Street, Lexington.

Tues., June 20

CKCPJ steering committee meeting,
7 p.m. Quaker Meeting House, 649 Price Ave.,
Lexington. Discussion will include follow-up
on the May 24 Re-Set Supper, planning for
the upcoming committee meetings, proposals
for new initiatives, continuing action, and
planning for the annual meeting and awards.

Sat., July 29

Kentucky Refugee Ministries,
Dreamer album release concert, 7 p.m.
Downtown Arts Center, 114 E. Main
Street. \$25 registration.

EECDC

The East End Community Development Corp. (EECDC) has hosted two successful "Coffee with the Cops" events at local coffee shops for first- and second- shift officers working the Central Sector. The group will offer two more informal chats for third-shift and Special Units to help improve communication and build better relations between the police force and citizens. Local businesses that serve the community have been promoted, including North Limestone Donuts, Third Street Stuff, Martine's Pastries, Cup of Commonwealth, and Bicycle Face. Thanks to police officers and community partners who have helped nurture relationships over a sip of coffee or iced tea.

EECDC encourages other neighborhoods to do the same in other sectors/areas of town to build stronger communities.

Your Event Here

*Send information about your upcoming event to peacewayseditor@gmail.com. Send notice of July events by **June 30, 2017**. We do not publish in January or August.*

MONTHLY MEETINGS

CKCPJ Steering Committee Meetings, third Monday, 7 p.m. More info: (859) 488-1448 or peaceandjusticeky@gmail.com. All are welcome.

Interfaith Prayer Vigil for Peace, every Thursday, 5:30 - 6 p.m. at Triangle Park (corner of Broadway and Main Street) in downtown Lexington. Contact Richard Mitchell, (859) 327-6277.

Migrant Network Coalition, first Monday, noon - 1:15 p.m., GLOBAL LEX, 1306 Versailles Road, Lexington. Contact Lindsay Mattingly, lmatingly@lexpublib.org, (859) 231-5514.

PFLAG Central Kentucky, second Tuesday, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. LGBTQ individuals of all ages, family members, friends and allies are welcome. St. Michael's Episcopal Church, 2025 Bellefonte Dr., Lexington. Visit info@pflagcentralky.org or (859) 338-4393. Speakers followed by confidential support group meeting.

Bluegrass Fairness of Central Kentucky, second Tuesday, 7:30 p.m., Lexington Public Central Library, 140 E. Main St., Lexington. Contact Craig Cammack, chair, (859) 951-8565 or info@lexfair.org.

Wednesday Night GLSO "Heart to Heart" discussion group, 7 p.m., Pride Center, 389 Waller Ave., Lexington. GLSO operates Kentucky's only Pride Center, where they have quietly provided services to the GLBTQQIA community for decades. More info, Pride Center hours. and other links at www.glsso.org.

Humanist Forum of Central Kentucky, first Thursday, 7 p.m., Great Hall of the Unitarian Universalist Church, 3564 Clays Mill Rd., Lexington. The Forum is a Chapter of the American Humanist Association. Meetings are open to people of all beliefs willing to express their opinions in a civil manner. Child care is provided. Contact President Staci Maney, staci@olliegee.com or (859) 797-2662.

Kentuckians for the Commonwealth, third Thursday, 7 p.m., Episcopal Diocese Mission House at Fourth St. and MLK Blvd, Lexington. Contact Ondine Quinn, (859) 276-0563.

NAMI Lexington Support Groups, every Sunday, 2:30 - 4 p.m. Participation Station, 869 Sparta Court, Lexington. Call (859) 272-7891 or visit www.namilex.org.

Christian-Muslim Dialogue Program, fourth Saturday, 10 a.m. - noon. All are welcome. Locations vary, call (859) 277-5126. The Christian-Muslim dialogue promotes understanding and mutual respect between Christians and Muslims. By exploring moral, cultural and political factors shaping the current context, the program promotes personal and collective responsibility to build a more just and peaceful world.

Dance Jam, every Tuesday, 5:30 - 7 p.m., Quaker Meeting House, 649 Price Ave. Move to the extent you are able. Sponsored by Motion Matters, \$7 per session to cover space rental. Contact Pamela, info@motionmatters.org, (859) 351-3142.

Movies with Spirit, second Friday of every month. Unitarian Universalist Church, 3564 Clays Mill Road, Lexington. Potluck at 6 p.m., film at 7.

National Action Network, third Thursday each month, 7 - 8:30 p.m. at the Central Library, Lexington.

To include a regular meeting of your organization in this space, contact Margaret Gabriel, peacewayseditor@gmail.com.

New shelter opens in Lexington

by Margaret Gabriel

Volunteers and friends of the Catholic Action Center dedicated its new facility at 1055 Industry Road on May 24. CAC chaplain Laura Babbage welcomed the group of nearly 200 people and was then surprised to learn the new building was dedicated to her, in honor of her ministry.

The rain that was forecast graciously held off for much of the day, as reflection was offered by Bishop John Stowe, Mayor Jim Gray, and Councilman Bill Farmer. The Catholic Action Center Choir sang "Amazing Grace" in the Sanctuary, in which the audience joined with gusto.

Following the ribbon cutting, refreshments were served and members of the Community Service Team gave tours of the building.

The new center has been open since late April, bringing under one roof activities from the Catholic Action Center (the day center on East Fifth Street), the Community Inn (the overnight shelter on Winchester Road), and God's Net (the clothing bank, free laundry services and

administrative offices).

Sandra and Gary, both of whom have experienced homelessness, folded clothes and told of the value they placed on the welcoming atmosphere of the center. They expressed gratitude for the faith community providing a facility that they see as family.

Volunteer coordinator Kelly Duffy said the center consistently provides overnight accommodations to 103 men and women nightly (on Sealy Tempur-Pedic mattresses, the only homeless shelter in the nation to provide such an amenity, according to co-director Ginny Ramsey).

As members of the Community Service Team, Sandra and Gary volunteer a minimum of four hours at the CAC every week, and in exchange for their services they have a reserved bed and a locker every night.

Because they turn people away every night, the CAC is adding beds in the area that is currently serving as the clothing bank. Clothes will be stored in a large closet and distributed as needed, Kelly said.

The Community Service Team signs up every Sunday and most of the 100-plus beds are reserved every night. People who must be turned away from the CAC are offered rides to the Hope Center or Salvation Army and told of the opportunity to return



(L-r) Elder James McDonald and Calvin Coleman staff the registration and welcome desk at the CAC.

on Sunday to join the Community Service Team and therefore reserve a bed. Although overnight accommodations are not always available, people are welcome to eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner at the center and to relax in the large, sunny gathering room.

Among the progress that has been made at the center since its opening in April is the recent announcement that the building will undergo the changes needed to operate exclusively on solar power. The Lexington shelter is one of four in the U.S. to use renewable energy. Partnering with Synergy Solar and Edelen Strategic Ventures, the CAC is embarking on a historic initiative that is grounded in Catholic social teaching and financial responsibility. The savings from the use of renewable energy will net a \$36,000 savings annually that will, in turn, expand CAC's services. Those services include a day center, overnight shelter, three meals a day, and connections to services for people experiencing homelessness.

The Catholic Action Center operates totally on donations and volunteer labor. For more information or to make a donation of time or treasure, connect through Facebook, email caclex2000@gmail.com or call (859) 514-7210.



Gary talks with Sandra in the clothing bank at the CAC. Since the photo was taken, the clothing banks has been down-sized to include additional beds.

“Nevertheless, she persisted”

This Fight Is Our Fight: The Battle To Save America’s Middle Class, by Senator Elizabeth Warren. 352 pages. Published April 18, 2017, by Metropolitan Books.

Reviewed by *Jim Trammel*

Most books trying to explain the Trump victory can be summed up as “voters felt insecure, angry, and/or racist,” I am weary of analyzing last November. If I keep poking at this self-inflicted wound on the body politic, it will never heal.

So instead let’s look forward to what we can do to limit the damage and reclaim the middle class’s place at America’s economic table. You know what they say – if you’re not at the table, you’re probably on the menu.

Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) has here provided a thoughtful and workable plan to repair America into something that works for everybody. The most jaw-dropping statistic of the many she cites: Since the election of Ronald Reagan, 37 years ago, NONE of the newly created income in the U.S. has gone to anyone other than the top 10 percent.

You know this; you haven’t gotten a raise lately. In fact, you’ve had to pick up another job to meet your growing expenses. Warren knows and feels your pain – she’s been out there scouting it out. And regardless of Sen. McConnell, she is nevertheless persisting in defending you. (His intended disapproving “nevertheless, she persisted” quote has become a rallying cry for her supporters.)

She tells three particularly heartbreaking stories of people who played by the rules, acted with economic prudence, and had faith in better times, but are still being crushed in America’s new economic realities that benefit only the rich:

- Gina, a WalMart employee exploited by her employer. WalMart receives millions in what amounts to corporate welfare, while many of its 1.5 million employees live on food stamps and public assistance;
- Michael J. Smith, whose full-time job at DHL and 14,900 others were wiped out in the 2008 economic

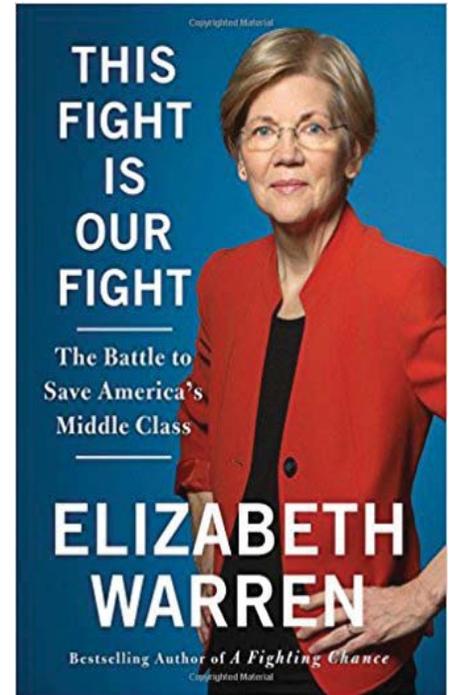
crash. He was rehired – but this time as a part-timer, with no benefits. He fought foreclosure for two more years, losing that fight in 2010. No one on Wall Street has gone to jail for the financial shenanigans that crashed the housing market, started the Great Recession, and almost wrecked the world economy.

- Kai, victimized by false promises of a relevant education at a private for-profit university (not Trump U, this time, but rather Art Institutes of Seattle). She acquired six-figure student debt for those wasted years and the attempt that followed to continue schooling elsewhere. Now she hopes only to somehow repay the remaining \$90,000 of her student loans.

The plight of these three is being worsened by Trump Cabinet appointees from the privileged classes more oriented toward personal enrichment than public service. Their names and shames are listed in detail by Warren; we have no room to recap here. I note with some regret that Sen. Lamar Alexander of Tennessee told Sen. Warren that if he had his way, there would be no minimum wage at all. I don’t know what happened to him, whether he’s playing to the peanut gallery or what; he used to be a more sensible person in the 1970s when he was my governor.

The book gives the expected sad recap of election night 2017, its prelude and postludes, and recounts Warren’s up-from-Oklahoma-poverty story that you may already know. A particularly sad chapter recounts her Consumer Financial Protection Bureau’s triumph over Wells Fargo, as the CFPB exposed a multi-million-dollar fraud involving phony accounts. Republicans don’t like the CFPB and have opposed and weakened it at every step since last November, and its future is highly uncertain. (A provision in the proposed TrumpCare law will render CFPB toothless.)

I always prefer a book that offers solutions over one that only carps about problems. Warren’s solutions revolve around individual efforts. Key is speaking up to fight bigotry and



hatefulness to contain the regrettable renewed open hostility we’re seeing. We also have to let business leaders know that bigotry is bad for business, and they can not play it safe by merely sitting silently — they must express active disapproval of intolerance.

The power could be found in a wide range of economic policies about which public opinion is on the progressive side. Most Americans believe students should have a chance at debt-free education (70 percent), want Social Security expanded (75 percent), want a Federal minimum-wage increase (67 percent), and want an increase in infrastructure spending (75 percent). Somehow these voters have to be found and rallied, Warren says.

She challenges her readers to take any individual action – as small as wearing a button, or as large as taking part in actions such as the Women’s March the day after Trump’s inauguration; as small as helping register voters, or as large as considering a run for office yourself – as she did when, as an inexperienced citizen, she first considered running for Senate. “We can let the great American promise die, or we can fight back,” she concludes. “Me? I’m fighting back.”

Reviewer Jim Trammel is amazed that the same nation of voters that elected Barack Obama also elected Donald Trump and wonders if he’s smelling a rat somewhere.

PEACEWAYS



The Central Kentucky Council
for Peace and Justice
1588 Leestown Rd., Ste. 130-138,
Lexington KY 40511

Issue #303 • June 2017

*“Let us realize the arc of the
moral universe is long, but it
bends toward justice.”*

— Martin Luther King

New Director serves St. Vincent Mission, David

When Erin Bottomlee turned on the computer in her office in Louisa, Ky., on an April morning in 2016 she was surprised to see an email from Joyce Mitchell. She was returning to her office at the Father Beiting Appalachian Mission Center after meeting with Mitchell, administrative assistant at St. Vincent Mission, a Christian service agency in David, Ky., that will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2018. Just an hour earlier, Erin had been in Joyce’s office, sharing ideas about how their two organizations could work together to bring Christ-centered services and relational ministry to eastern Kentucky.

The email she opened offered Erin a job with St. Vincent Mission; when she called to decline, Mitchell offered her the career opportunity she dreamed of: executive director of a non-profit agency.

Although Bottomlee had met Benedictine Sister Kathleen Weigand when they had served on a panel several months earlier, she did not know of Sister Kathleen’s plan to resign as SVM’s executive director.

Joyce knew the mission wasn’t looking for just anyone, but when Erin left her office, called Sister Kathleen and told her Erin was the person they were looking for. “Her caring was evident,” Joyce said.

Erin, a native of Cedar Hill, Tenn., and a graduate of Austin Peay State University, first came to Kentucky in 2014 as a volunteer with the Christian Appalachian Project. For nearly two years she worked in Floyd and Johnson counties with CAP’s elderly housing, repairing homes of elderly people, assuring their housing is warm, safe and accessible. Home repair is a signature program of St. Vincent Mission, so Erin’s experience with CAP equipped her with many of the skills she would need to bring to the mission in David.

But like the work Bottomlee did with CAP, the volunteers of SVM focus on more than just building ramps and adding

insulation. “It’s more than just fixing what’s broken,” Bottomlee said. “The reason we’re able to do what we do is because Christ is working through us. If it was just about what we could do, we’d have messed it up a long time ago.”

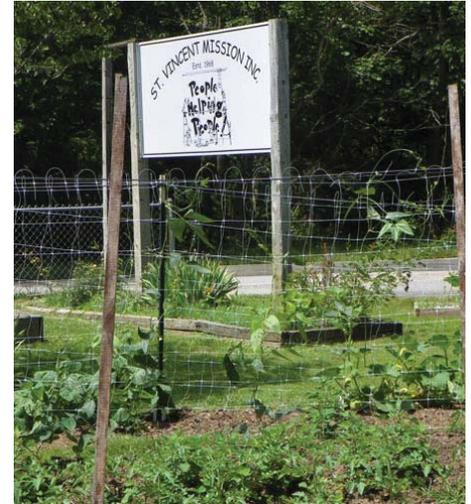
Assured that the job would enable her to continue similar work, Bottomlee accepted the job and began working as the co-director of the mission in May 2016. Until September, she worked and learned from Sister Kathleen, who had begun serving as executive director in 1999. Her experience in home repair gave Bottomlee a leg up in much of the mission’s work; during her training time, she learned the details of administration.

Bottomlee finds a challenge in managing the time her new position requires. Because the home repair work of St. Vincent Mission is led by volunteers, Bottomlee reviews requests from people asking for help, interviews them, and schedules repairs based on the volunteer groups that come to the mission from March through May.

Planning and acquisition for the SVM Christmas Store starts in the fall; Bottomlee is grateful that during her first Christmas, Joyce and social services director Princess Lyons were responsible for the store. In the coming year, Erin will have a better idea of the demands of the store.

Each year, Joyce and Princess send invitations to families they know that will have little or nothing for Christmas. Families who apply to participate in the Christmas store are asked to give back for a subsequent year, Mitchell says.

After their second year in the program, they’re asked to enroll in the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program, a program of the United States Department of Agriculture that meets once a month from February through August, discussing such topics as health, nutrition, and budgeting.



“We have classes here at the mission, but there are several other places in the county that offer them, too,” Joyce said.

In subsequent years, participants in the Christmas Store are asked to contribute 12 hours of community service.

Erin has learned that community service is a longtime tradition of the mission. While people who receive assistance are asked to repay the help they receive by working, they often continue to work at the mission long after their debt has been repaid.

Individuals help with maintenance and cleaning and with the gardening program. Community volunteers have also worked on a longtime dream of Sister Kathleen, the new St. Vincent Mission Volunteer House that is nearing completion and has started housing volunteer groups.

Erin revels in the goodness of the people she serves, and praises the hospitality they show to the volunteers who come to Floyd County to give of themselves but take away far more than they give, she said.

“People here are loving, kind and friendly,” she said. “They’re rich in the things that really matter.”