

Parish Partners Grant

By now, everyone knows that we were blessed to have been one of two Parishes in the Diocese to be selected for a Parish Partner Grant. Our grant is specifically for building a collaborative partnership in our community to address food sovereignty and food security in the Annie Glidden North and adjacent communities. The grant will help us expand our garden, provide for NIU interns to work in the garden, and develop a local food system that empowers the community to become food sovereign and secure.

Food sovereignty means that communities have a degree of control over their food system, how food is produced, processed, and distributed. For food sovereignty to develop we must work on a system by which those who have resources practice a model of “doing with, not doing for.” It requires collaborative decision making and consensus with leadership that recognizes everyone coming to the table is an expert by virtue of experience, knowledge, and/or education and position.

Food security means that every person has access to affordable and available foods that satisfy not only filling the belly, but creating a healthy body through eating nutritious, minimally processed, whole foods. St. Paul’s Donation Garden, soon to be christened as one part of “The Rick Johns Memorial Gardens,” has a long history of providing food to many hungry families in our community. Our donations have always been celebrated by very appreciative food pantries and their shoppers.

The grant has provided funds for one year and requires a report at the end of the year that Kris Borre and Tom Skuzinski will write and submit with Vestry approval. Kris is the grant manager and will work with members of the vestry as needed. Kris and Tom work together to teach sustainable food systems to NIU students enrolled in Environmental Sciences courses and/or those who do research with the Institute for the Study of the Environment, Sustainability, and Energy (ESE) of which Dr. Thomas Skuzinski is the Chair and Director. Our grant will support the experiences of students to learn about local food systems and meeting food sovereignty and food security needs to support food justice for all in our community.

On Sunday, July 30 our church townhall about the garden grant provided a wonderful experience for us as a parish to discuss our garden and our prayerful intentions for the garden and its mission. Tom and Kris are in the process of reviewing and analyzing the information that you all shared about your joys, concerns, and suggestions regarding the garden and our community. We will be reporting back next month about the results of the townhall and what we think we can do with all the great ideas.

We also will be building a sustainable gardening plan for St. Paul’s in collaboration with community partners that we believe will help grow our church and build membership and given us a strong presence in our community. This plan will provide for how the garden will be managed in future years and for an exit plan, should that become necessary. Tom and Kris

remain devoted to finding appropriate grant funding with our partners to maintain and grow as long as our community needs us.