

# The ADVOCATE

Queen of Peace Quarterly Newsletter

SPRING 2021



## In this issue...

- 1 . Environmental Racism
- 3 . Parish Solar Panels
- 4 . Medor Loves the Earth
- 5 . Remembering Fr. Tunney
- 7 . Father Tolston Award
- 8 . RIP Tyra Newman
- 9 . Youth Ministry
- 11 . Volcano!

## Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Church

2700 19th Street South  
Arlington VA 22204  
Phone: 703-979-5580  
Fax: 703-979-5590  
[www.olqpva.org](http://www.olqpva.org)

**Editor's Note:** *The Spring issue of The Advocate reminds us of the words of St. Francis, "we must listen to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor." While we learn how climate change disproportionately harms low-income communities and people of color, positive environmental actions by the OLQP twin parish in Medor, Haiti, offer us signs of hope. Articles also honor those who have passed away, OLQP members engaged in community advocacy, and an update on the Youth and Young Adult ministry.*

Paula Cruickshank  
Editor, The Advocate

## Environmental Racism and Justice

By Kathy Desmond

Sally Diaz Wells chose environmental racism as a topic in the Stone Soup series continuing the conversation about race "because we are OLQP and we truly care about the environment and because it was another facet of racism that people do not think about." The OLQP Social Justice and Outreach Minister wanted people to see how racism impacts their lives in multiple ways."

Rev Faith Harris, Co-director of Virginia Interfaith Power and Light, presented the topic via Zoom. The interfaith coalition's mission is to "empower faith communities to advance climate justice through education, advocacy and worship." ([www.vaippl.org](http://www.vaippl.org)) It can be called the *Laudato Si* of the interfaith world because of its focus on climate and justice. "We must listen to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor," said Pope Francis, whose encyclical describes the interlocking factors harming the earth and the poor<sup>1</sup> and is a ringing call to action.

VAIPL's definition: "Environmental racism is based on historic Jim Crow era redlining policies and includes such things as zoning African American communities for toxic polluting industry like landfills and dumps; continued exemption of farm workers from minimum wage increases; siting new pipeline and energy production industry pollution near Indigenous lands and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) land; underfunding public transportation; curtailing access for low-income riders to employment, housing, cultural and shopping opportunities." Social justice work intersects with these issues of environmental racism, which underlies these problems.

Housing advocates know the story of how in the 1930s the federal government designated color-coded areas riskier for lenders to make mortgages, largely African American neighborhoods. Richmond, VA is a typical example. See this *New York Times* [article](#), which shows the effects of disinvestment on green space and health of residents in these neighborhoods. Life expectancy is 63 years in a neighborhood studied compared to 83 years in more affluent neighborhoods. Even though the Community Reinvestment Act of 1977 outlawed redlining, enforcement remains weak or non-existent.

*Continued on page 2*

<sup>1</sup> "...today we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor."

## Environmental Racism

*Continued from page 1*

Harris' organization uses the Environmental Protection Agency's definition of Environmental Justice: "the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies." Fair treatment means that no segment of the population should face a disproportionate burden from the environmental consequences of industry, business or government policies. Meaningful involvement means that communities have the opportunity to participate in decisions that can affect their health or environment and say no to unwanted destructive industry, etc.

VAIPL, with 200 faith community members, organizes by region within the state. A chart listing the priority issues in each region shows many aspects of environmental justice. They range from air and water quality, sea level rise preparedness, public transit, mitigation of hot spots, lead in water of public buildings to agricultural waste disposal, landfill siting, pipelines, energy burden, and chemical disposal.

Pollution of water, air, and land by corporations, individuals, or governments disproportionately and adversely affects the health and lives of low-income people and communities of color. They are often the most impacted by climate disruption because areas where they live are often the sites of fossil fuel infrastructure, fracking, oil spills, asthma-inducing pollution, and other environmental hazards.

"Environmental racism" was first used by Ben Chavis, who led a protest against dumping toxic chemicals (PCBs) in a poor neighborhood in Warren County, SC in 1982. He recalls, "There were public outcries of 'We can't breathe' and 'I can't breathe' by African American environmental justice protesters in Warren

County." This [Washington Post article](#) details the 20-year fight to clean it up.

Successful strategies include local organizing and advocacy, exposés, court cases and legislation. Michelle Chang pointed out Soledad O'Brien's new BET series

*Disrupt and Dismantle*. The first episode examines a tower of shingles dumped next to a house in southern Dallas as an example of industrial zoning overlapping with residences and lax government oversight. It shows adverse health impacts — asthma, rash, keeping children indoors — and contrasts this with other sections of Dallas. Advocates contend that the city's zoning is racist because it doesn't allow industrial uses in whiter, more affluent areas.

The Biden administration's infrastructure plan addresses environmental racism and includes components to retrofit (weatherize) homes to reduce energy bills and to promote electric vehicles

(EVs) that reduce fossil fuels, air pollution and provide new jobs. It includes an "equity fund" to reconnect neighborhoods cut off by old construction projects, such as a "racist highway" in New Orleans, among highways coming to the end of their 50-year life span. ([Washington Post](#), 2 April 2021).

*Frontline* (March 2021) and the *Tampa Bay Times* investigated the Gopher Resource lead smelting plant that exposed hundreds of workers to dangerous levels of lead in the air. Workers advocated enforcement of U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration standards.

So, what can we do? To Reduce, Reuse and Recycle on a household or individual organization level, while good, does not much affect these systemic problems of environmental racism. Correcting these wrongs re-

*Continued on page 3*



Rev Faith Harris, Co-director of Virginia Interfaith Power and Light

## Environmental Racism

*Continued from page 2*

quires advocacy and organizing in coalition with others. Joining and supporting VAIPL is a good way to do this. Interfaith Power and Light is a national organization with state and local affiliates.

This year a main VAIPL objective is to advocate for policies advancing climate and environmental justice, especially related to water, transportation, renewable

energy and energy burden.

How to get involved is familiar to OLQP advocates: sign up for VAIPL e-news list; work with and support an organization of your choice; write letters to editors, members of Congress and state officials. We know how to do this. The challenge is to do it for an environmental justice issue.

### Update on the Parish Solar Panels

By Luc DeWulf

Pope Francis' 2016 encyclical *Laudato Si* called for urgent action on climate change and invited everyone on the planet to care for our common home and to take action where we can. The 2018 Catholic Climate Covenant Declaration reflected a commitment to support the international climate agreement (Paris Climate Accord) to limit global warming to less than 2 degrees Celsius.

In early 2021, President Biden renewed the U.S. commitment to this objective. Nearly 800 U.S. Catholic institutions, including 49 dioceses and OLQP, have signed on to the Accord proclaiming that "Catholics Are In" regarding this Covenant Declaration.

In recent years, OLQP has taken major steps to do its part, upgrading insulation in the church buildings, changing all lights to LED, and replacing throw-away cups, plates, and cutlery with multiple-use items.

The 2018 installation of solar panels on three of its buildings – the rectory, Father Ray Hall, and the church – was a logical next step in OLQP's climate change remediation program. The outcome is largely in line with the project's intention to make the buildings self-sufficient in energy, thereby substantially reducing OLQP's climate footprint.

#### Project Details and Outcome

In early 2019, OLQP installed a solar panel system consisting of 315 solar panels with a capacity of 93.3

Kwh. Per the agreement with Dominion Electric (DE), OLQP sells the generated electricity at \$.15 per Kwh under a favorable "five-year renewable contract" that OLQP was able to mobilize just before DE withdrew this type of contract. This price is 36% higher than the rate DE charges OLQP. Investment costs (about \$230,000) were financed by a parishioner whom Father Tim contacted for that purpose. The investor could benefit from some fiscal advantages related to this investment in renewable energy.

From the start of the solar energy project until the end of



December 2020, energy produced covered 93% of the total electricity consumption of the three buildings with solar panels: Father Ray Hall, the church proper, and the priests' residence. For the two buildings that have no solar panels, OLQP has a contract with ARCADIA.

For a small monthly fee, ARCADIA ensures that the electricity used by these two buildings is wind-generated. As such, nearly all electricity used by OLQP is renewable energy. Solar production at Father Ray Hall was 67% of its electricity consumption, 118% for the church and 136% for the rectory.

*Continued on page 4*

## Solar Panels

*Continued from page 3*

Total payment by DE for purchase of electricity produced by the solar system was \$23,266, an amount that was shared 80% by the investor and 20% by OLQP. As of January 2021 this sharing will be done at a 50/50 basis.

Under this arrangement with DE, OLQP receives a credit for the energy it sells to DE and is debited for the energy if purchased from DE. Over the lifetime of the project, the credits have exceeded the debits by \$5,668 despite the fact that OLQP's electricity consumption exceeded its solar energy production by 7.4%. This is because OLQP sells the energy pro-

duced by its solar panels to DE at a higher price than what it pays DE for the electricity it buys.

The electricity produced by the system avoids CO2 emissions that are equivalent to the planting of about 2,124 trees. It is hoped that the solar power project will inspire all of us to find ways to rely a larger part of our energy consumption on renewables.

*Luc DeWulf is a ten-year member of OLQP and expeditor of the project to bring solar-powered electricity to the parish.*

## Medor Loves the Earth

**By Sue Carlson, M.D.**

Pope Francis, in *Laudato Si*, challenges everyone to care for our common home. The people in our sister parish, St. Joseph of Medor, Haiti, follow Pope Francis's directive. They have a small carbon footprint and practice the Gospel of Creation in their daily lives through minimal reliance on fossil fuels, use of renewable energy, tree planting, organic farming practices, and more. As we at OLQP strive, both individually and collectively, to demonstrate our LOVE FOR THE EARTH, we can look to the example set by our family in Medor.

Walking is the main mode of transportation for Medor residents. The road to Medor is impassible by four-wheel drive vehicles for the majority of the year and there are only three or four vehicles owned by the

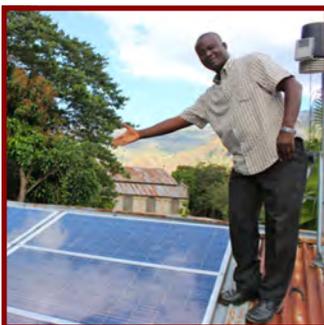
40,000 people living in the seventy-four square mile parish, including the parish Land Cruiser. The community uses minimal gasoline or diesel fuel, helping keep the area's carbon footprint to a minimum.

St. Joseph parish's solar energy program provides renewable power to Medor's church, convent, rectory, parish clinic, computer laboratory, library, and school office. It allows the people in the community to meet, pray, study, and celebrate after sundown in many parish facilities, while avoiding the use of fossil fuel powered generators.

Medor uses few plastics. Its remote location means that many prepackaged articles are less readily available. Plastic, paper and Styrofoam plates are rare; disposable plastic bottles, utensils and bags are seldom used.

St. Joseph parish was chosen to participate in a currently ongoing pilot project sponsored by the World Food Program, helping to assess fuel-efficient stoves in the school lunch program. The school lunch cooks are learning the benefits of this technology, which cuts wood usage in half and reduces smoke production. The cooks have been showing others that these

*Continued on page 5*



Fr. Luckson with solar panels



Fuel-efficient stoves

## Medor

*Continued from page 4*

stoves help them cook their meals more efficiently while preserving the precious trees.

Since Medor's agro-forestry program began in 2010, farmers have transplanted nearly 800,000 trees from St. Joseph parish's ten tree nurseries onto the surrounding hills. The tree planting initiative addresses climate change, increases biodiversity, protects water sources, and prevents soil erosion. In addition, Medor families appreciate the added shade, and, in the case of fruit trees, the food that the trees provide.

Most of the people in our twin parish are smallholder farmers, defined as farmers who work on plots of five acres or less. All Medor farmers utilize organic farming practices, avoiding synthetic pesticides and fertilizers. Their harvests provide the beans, grains, fruits, and vegetables, which are the dietary staples of the community. The people of Medor may eat chicken, turkey, or dried fish on special occasions, but there is little beef consumption. They eat few processed foods and have very little food waste. The mainly plant-based organic diets of Medor are eco-friendly. The parish's sanitation program encourages the use of arbor-loos, a type of composting latrine. This technology, described by Catholic Relief Services as best practice for rural sanitation, involves these components: a cement slab including a central opening is

placed over a shallow hole in the ground; participants build their own privacy hut around the slab; people defecate in the hole and when it is filled, the slab/hut is moved to a new hole; the original hole is topped with soil and a tree seedling is planted. Arbor-loos provide two environmental benefits: 1) because the hole is shallow, harmful fecal bacteria cannot contaminate the water supply; 2) tree seedlings planted in the filled holes grow more quickly because of the fertilizer, increasing tree coverage.

Admittedly, many of Medor's environmentally friendly practices are due to lack of other options. But even if a road, electrical grid and other major infrastructure programs were to become available in Medor, many of the earth loving activities mentioned above would continue because the people there appreciate their value.

We know that the poor are disproportionately affected by climate change and that they contribute less than the wealthy to the factors that cause global warming. Pope Francis calls us to acknowledge the urgent environmental crisis. He requests an "ecological conversion" so we can listen to the "cry of the earth and the cry of the poor". The people of Medor can help guide us toward that conversion, so we can strive toward the common good for our common home.

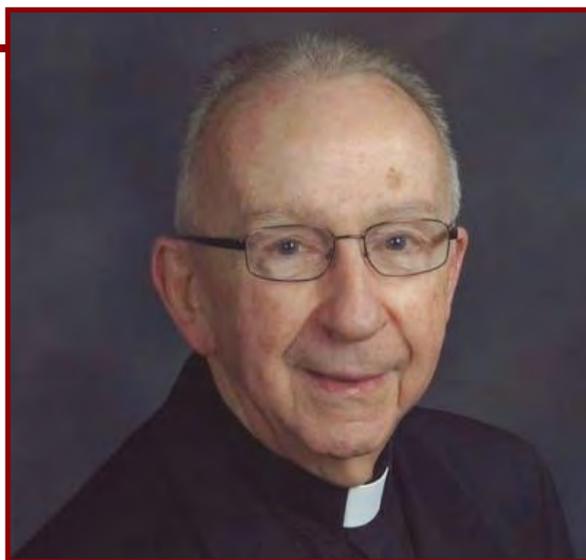
## Remembering Father Tom Tunney

by Jack Sullivan

When young Thomas Tunney, a schoolboy in Ambridge, Pennsylvania, decided to follow the example of an uncle and join the Spiritan Congregation, he could hardly imagine what the ensuing years would bring. Many OLQP parishioners whose lives he touched during his nine years with us may also be unaware of Father Tom's earlier life. When he died last year, Covid-19 restrictions limited parish recognition of his accomplishments. It is time now to set that right.

When young Tom was a high school freshman, he enrolled in the Spiritan junior seminary in Connecticut, proceeding on

*Continued on page 6*



Father Tom Tunney

## Father Tunney

*Continued from page 5*

to the major seminary and to ordination in September, 1960. His first assignment was to start a school for boys among the Maasai, a semi-nomadic tribe who follow their cattle over a wide expanse of East Africa, including Tanzania where Father Tom, age 26, was assigned to start a boys school “out in the middle of no place,” as he put it. It was a huge challenge.

Initially speaking neither the local Maasi language or Swahili (he learned), Father Tom was aided by a government edict that all boys should have an elementary education. Assisted by a Tanzanian official, at the start of every term he would drive a truck to the Maasi camps to pick up a highly resistant group of youngsters and take them to the school. “It took about a week for them to calm down and acclimate to school life.” Father Tom told me.

In a 2010 Catholic Herald interview, Father Tom also recounted how he had learned to hunt game on the plains to provide food for a school that eventually held 300 boys. “Food had to be hauled in from 120 miles away and there was no refrigeration, so the only meat available was that on the plains,” he said.

This was just the first task among many during Father Tom’s 35 years as a missionary in Africa. He brought Christianity to remote villages, started clinics, a hospital, and other schools. When a new diocese was created in East Africa, Father Tom was asked to create a minor seminary. He also led recruitment and formation efforts. His last assignment in Africa was as seminary rector in Nairobi, Kenya.

Returning to the U.S. in 1996, Father Tom served for a time as director of the Spiritan Foundation in Wheaton, Maryland, the arm that helps fund the order’s overseas development projects. Then he was handed



St. Mark's in Harlem

another challenge — to become the pastor of St. Mark the Evangelist, the largest parish in Harlem, New York. Founded by people of European descent, it was the first Catholic church in Harlem to open its doors to the African-Americans and Caribbean immigrants who had moved in great numbers to Harlem. He became a beloved pastor during his ten years at St. Mark's.

Even before he was appointed to OLQP in 2009, Father Tom's name was familiar to parishioners. He often was referred to as “Tunney” in homilies by his good friend and former pastor, Fr. Tuzzolo. After his arrival, Father Tom was active in administering the Sacraments, making sick calls, and teaching

Catholic doctrine to potential converts. Parishioners remember him as the pastoral liaison with OLQP's Gay, Lesbian, Family, and Friends (GLFF) Ministry. In addition to attending GLFF meetings, he was present at its Christmas parties, barbecues, and at least one Seder. He also was the facilitator of OLQP's very popular, bimonthly Theology on Tap.

As he aged, Father Tom's health declined and multiple falls resulted in stints at local hospitals and rehabilitation centers where he was always happy to see visitors from the parish. In 2018, Father Tom left OLQP for residence in the Spiritan retirement community in Bethel Park, Pennsylvania, just 27 miles from his birthplace. Father Tom died there last October. Because of Covid-19 restrictions, his funeral was attended only by family members. He lies buried in the Tunney family plot in Sewickley, Pennsylvania.

Former OLQP pastor and now Spiritan provincial, Fr. Jeffrey Duiame, succinctly summed up the life of this man of God whom Queen of Peace was so privileged to know: “Father Tunney was an exemplary Spiritan priest who radiated the joy of the Gospel. All who knew him were blessed by his kind and gentle spirit, and he will be greatly missed.”

## Veronica Dabney Receives Diocesan Award

By Jack Sullivan

She was baptized at OLQP. She received First Communion at OLQP. She was married at OLQP. Now this true lifetime parishioner, Veronica Dabney, has brought honor to OLQP by being awarded the 2021 diocesan Black Catholic Ministries Father Augustus Tolton and Mother Mary Lange Award. It was given for her service to the parish and the region's Black community.

Veronica received the award at Nativity Church in Burke, VA, on March 20, at a ceremony attended by Cardinal Wilton Gregory, Archbishop of Washington, and Bishop Michael F. Burbidge of Arlington. She was honored during the ceremony for putting Catholic values into practice. The award is named for two black Catholic religious who worked in the U.S. and are both on a path to being canonized. Parishioner Cecilia Braveboy is a prior recipient. (The award will hang in the vestibule at OLQP for a year until the next recipient is chosen.)

Veronica's principal contribution to the parish has been as longtime chair of the UJAMAA Committee, a Swahili word translated as "universal family." The name symbolizes the identity of OLQP as a parish where all are welcome, but with a special mission to the Black community.

Since UJAMAA's founding in 1990, Veronica has coordinated its initiatives, including youth summits, African American history lectures, forums on coping with racism, scholarship and daycare assistance, and the founding and sponsoring of a youth choir. Over the years the ministry has facilitated the distribution of more than \$300,000 in scholarship funds to support student education. The scholarship funds come from the diocesan Black and Indian Fund, OLQP, donations from members, non-members, past recipients,

and anonymous donations. Awards are made annually by the group and have assisted dozens of young people.

At the same time, UJAMAA members have been encouraged to assist in as many other ministries as possible. Veronica has taken primary responsibility for arranging the parish Martin Luther King Day observances for more than a decade. She also coordinates and contributes, with other UJAMAA members, articles in the Sunday bulletin during Black History Month. She is also a writer on the staff of *The Advocate*.

Additionally, Veronica is an active member of the National Black Catholic Congress and has attended all of their conferences and workshops since 1992. She also

has actively supported VOICE (Virginians Organized for Interfaith Community Engagement), an ecumenical group committed to bringing people together across religious, racial, ethnic, economic, and political party affiliations to build a stronger Northern Virginia. To VOICE, Veronica brings an understanding of the Catholic tradition of social justice.

Growing up in Arlington, Veronica was among the first African-American students at St. Mary's Academy for Girls, moving on to higher education at George Washington University and Trinity Washington University. She majored in English and History. Her career took her to the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) where she was employed for 42 years. She spent her last 25 years at DOL in the Division of Indian and Native American Programs, which was devoted to supporting Native American efforts to provide vocational training and employment to Indians, native Hawaiians and Alaskans. Her responsibilities meant traveling to reservations and urban Indian Centers in 45 states.

*Continued on page 8*



Veronica Dabney accepts Father Augustus Tolton and Mother Mary Lange Award

## Veronica Dabney

*Continued from page 7*

Amid all of this activity, Veronica was a wife and mother and today counts three grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

Now retired from government, Veronica continues to be an active member of OLQP. Moreover, extolled by her second-grade teacher for her ability to write, she

has had a lifelong passion and ability for the written word, both fiction and nonfiction. Veronica hopes to bring these writings to publication someday soon. As Veronica looks at her award, she can be reminded of the words of Father Augustus Tolton: “I shall work and pull at it as long as God gives me life.”

### In Memoriam: Tyra Elcetia Newman

by Veronica Dabney

Of all the sadness and loss we’ve experienced because of the COVID-19 pandemic, nothing has caused more shock and disbelief to the OLQP family than the accident that suddenly took the life of Tyra Newman and left her sister, Karen, in a coma. Both were lifelong, dedicated members of our church, brought here by their devout parents, the late Ellsworth and Lorine Newman.

Tyra was born on January 15, 1958, in Arlington, Virginia. She attended St. Thomas More elementary and O’Connell high school and studied at Howard University, eventually receiving an associate degree from Northern Virginia Community College. Tyra loved learning and continued to attend classes throughout most of her life. She received several scholarships from OLQP/UJAMAA, the last in 2005, to attend Marymount University to study English and the humanities.



Tyra with sister, Karen Newman

Her obituary states that, “Tyra began her career with the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) in 1994. Her last position was Educational Technician at Headquarters in the Office of the Registrar (Education Directorate), where she supported the Headquarters Director by performing various administrative functions. One major contribution was her volunteer work with the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). Tyra was a familiar face and friend to coworkers. [She] always had a smile and a kind word for everyone.”

Those who knew her at OLQP can certainly attest to Tyra’s friendly personality and her willingness to volunteer for any duty. She always wanted to help. She was a member of the UJAMAA Committee from its inception in 1990 and she was active in several other ministries over the years. They included the church choirs—most recently the 8 AM choir—the Minkisi ministry, a breakfast crew, and a recent term on the Parish Advisory Board. Away from church, she enjoyed karaoke, traveling, dancing, and at-



Tyra Newman Receives Special Appreciation Award from UJAMAA at 25th Anniversary Scholarship Breakfast, June 2017

to attend Marymount University to study English and the humanities.

*Continued on page 9*

## Tyra Newman

*Continued from page 8*

tending family gatherings and reunions. In June 2017 at its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Scholarship Prayer Breakfast, the UJAMAA Committee gave Tyra a Special Award of Appreciation for her many years of dedicated service to the Committee, the church, and the community.

Tyra has been sorely missed since her untimely death on January 8, 2021. We miss her friendly smile and her eagerness to be of assistance anywhere she could be. But most of all we will miss her sweet spirit. We will continue to pray for the repose of her soul and for a healing for her equally kind sister Karen.

---

## Rebecca Grant Jenkins — Following The Call to Youth Ministry

By Paula Cruickshank

There was no doubt in her mind when Rebecca Gantz Jenkins became OLQP's Youth and Young Adult Minister in the Spring of 2019. "I have worked with youth and young adults for the vast majority of my life. I am called to help students and young adults embrace who they are as they are, as God does unconditionally."

Rebecca's calling started while she was an undergraduate at Columbia University where she served as a tutor and teaching assistant to high school students. Upon graduation, she created a tutoring program for middle school students and, in addition to the demands in her professional life, she currently co-facilitates a diversity and inclusion book club at Flint High School in Oakton, Virginia. Rebecca's volunteer activities also reach beyond high school; she serves on the boards of a number of community organizations.



Rebecca Gantz Jenkins,  
Youth and Young Adult Minister

Given her involvement in so many youth-related activities in the past, Rebecca hit the ground running at OLQP. "Community service is a regular thing for us," she explained and noted their volunteer action in the food pantry and Matt 25 thrift shop. The youth ministry's main event during the year is a summer work camp where students and group leaders go to an area for one week and help to repair homes. "They connect with the families they are helping and hopefully get an understanding of their roles as disciples. They also understand that they have the OLQP family supporting them financially and prayerfully on these journeys."

When the COVID-19 virus ground everything to a halt in March 2020, Rebecca had to adapt her youth and young adult programs to ensure everyone's safety. "We had a work camp reboot last summer, in partnership with Phoenix Bikes. Instead of working on houses, the kids repaired bicycles and donated them to the Shirlington Employment and Education Center (SEEC).

"The kids learned lifelong skills and got to hand the repaired bikes directly to the recipients, which gave them a sense of connection," Rebecca noted. The youth group is teaming up with Phoenix Bikes again this summer for the Young Disciples Work Camp, which is an on-site service camp for rising 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> graders.

Rebecca was also delighted to share that the youth group will be heading to North Haledon, New Jersey, at the end of July and partnering with Catholic Heart Work Camp. "We will be repairing homes, working with local agencies such as food pantries, shelters, and day care facilities. And Father Martin is joining us this year!"

*Continued on page 10*

## Youth Ministry

*Continued from page 9*

Beyond her role as ministry leader, Rebecca's has found herself to be a youth counselor, too. "One of the things I talked [about] with the students — even before the pandemic — was being flexible, that things don't always go the way we think they should."

Due to COVID-19, the youth and young adult programs shifted to meeting virtually. "I think the kids have adapted well. With the help of Chabeli Wells, the Youth Ministry volunteer assistant, we plan the weekly series. We start with prayer and then I take a temperature to see where the kids' heads are that week. Sometimes they were doing well, other weeks not so much. Sometimes they're dealing with isolation, stress, and anxiety."

"The kids have been very courageous in their vulnerability in sharing with the group, which I think helps. Depending on where they are, we continue with the series, we play online games, or we just talk about what's happening in their lives or around the globe, which is sometimes just what they need. We also went gleaning in the Fall, which was a way to get together, but be socially distant and do great service work." A Teen Bible Study, which started during the summer work camp, continues to be held virtually. "This is great considering the past year we've had," she said.

## Young Adult Ministry

When Rebecca began her ministry in 2019, she said the Young Adult program "kind of ran itself with the 6 pm Mass, potlucks, and Theology on Tap." Her goal is to revisit the current structure and to introduce some new gatherings that bring the group together while keeping in mind that members are at very different stages when they are in the 21-40 age range.

Rebecca also hopes to connect kids more directly with the various ministries at OLQP so they understand that "they are the future of the church and that they can participate, even as young people." One other possibility is starting a college ministry to keep OLQP's young people connected when they are away and come home during school breaks and holidays. "I believe that is a critical time in keeping our young people connected to each other and their faith," she said.

## Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteers for the youth and young adult ministries are always welcome. Rebecca stressed the importance of connecting with all ages. "*Studies have shown that if children get to know at least five people in their church community, they will stay connected to their faith throughout their lives.* We have fantastic youth and young adults in our community and intergenerational connections are important not only to their growth, but the growth of the church. Join us!"

Interested in volunteering? Contact: Rebecca Gantz Jenkins (RGrantJenkins@olqpva.org).

*(Editor's Note: Invited to OLQP by her husband John's Uncle CC Jenkins, Rebecca and her family have been part of the OLPQ family since 2000. She and John will be celebrating 25 years of marriage in July. They have three adult children, Grant, Nina, and Theo. Rebecca has been involved in teaching baptism classes, religious education advisory, assisting with communion classes, and serving as a lector and a communion minister at OLQP).*



Youth Summer Work Camp in Wise, VA. (2019)

By Keren Charles (Introduction: Veronica Dabney)

**Introduction:**

*On April 9, when La Soufriere, the largest volcano on the main island of St. Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG) erupted, a connection didn't register at first until the article suggested that other Caribbean islands might possibly be affected, including Trinidad. I knew that was the home of OLQP members Keren and Kezia Charles. Also, nearly half of the membership of UJAMAA, the ministry that I chair, is from that region—not only Trinidad, but Jamaica and Guyana. Other OLQP members hail from St. Lucia and Grenada.*

*Keren Charles, who works at the World Bank, wrote me that as a Disaster Risk Management Specialist there, she supports Caribbean governments in strengthening their resilience in natural disasters and climate change through infrastructure and capacity building projects. The St. Vincent eruption had become a priority for Keren's office.*

*UJAMAA members began expressing concern about the disaster and wanted to know if we could offer any assistance to the people of that region. Although Keren would be very busy during this time, she agreed to provide information and also contribute to an article about the volcano for the Advocate. She has done so through a series of updates and reports on progress and setbacks as La Soufriere continues to erupt periodically and wreak havoc on the inhabitants of SVG and nearby islands. Here is a summary Keren wrote on April 24, followed by a few notes she sent during the month:*

**St. Vincent And The Grenadines Faces Compounding Risks From  
Ongoing Volcanic Eruptions,  
COVID-19 Pandemic , and  
the Upcoming Atlantic Hurricane Season**

The lives and livelihoods of the 110,000 persons<sup>1</sup> living on the Eastern Caribbean nation of St. Vincent and the Grenadines are being impacted by the ongoing explosive eruptions of the La Soufriere volcano. These explosive eruptions started on April 9, 2021 and were followed days later by pyroclastic flows (ash, rock fragments, gas) which have destroyed everything in its path. No one knows for how long the volcano will erupt, but if it follows a pattern similar to the 1902 eruption, it could last up to 11 months. [La Soufrière's eruption in 1902, was the country's most catastrophic and killed more than 1,000 people.\*]

The biggest impact is on the 13,300 (12% of the population) people who evacuated their homes near the volcano and are now staying in other parts of the country and neighboring islands. About 4,400 of these are living in government-run emergency shelters with an additional 6,800 in private shelters, according to the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA). All schools have been closed as many of them and churches in the "safe" zones in the south of the island are being used as emergency shelters.



Plumes of Ash Rise from La Soufriere as it Erupts

Phys.Org/News/2021

*Continued on page 12*

## The Eruption of La Soufriere

Continued from page 11

The government is working to meet the basic needs of all persons displaced, including food and water. Specifically, food from the loss of crops and water shortages due to the impact on water catchments and water supply systems are growing concerns. Citizens are also at risk for health impacts on air quality and respiratory systems due to prolonged exposure to ash. The water authority is rationing water supply and the country is experiencing intermittent power outages.

This comes at a time when the government was starting to manage the effects of the pandemic with reductions in the number of cases and increased distribution of the vaccine. However, the COVID-19 outlook will worsen due to the number of persons in emergency shelters where social distancing is more challenging. Moreover, the volcanic eruption is likely to further worsen the tourism-based economy, which was suffering due to reduction in tourist arrivals because of COVID-19.

Trinidad and Tobago [as well as Jamaica, Grenada and Guyana] will likely not experience much effect.

\* *Town and Country*,

<https://www.townandcountrymag.com/leisure/travel-guide/a36096361/st-vincent-volcano-eruption-2021-news/>

<sup>1</sup> World Bank Development Indicators, 2019 population,

However, the volcanic ash may impact Saint Lucia (where [OLQP member] Carlton Augustine is from) and Barbados. Another major concern is the Atlantic hurricane season starting in June 2021. Forecasts expect it to be more active than usual<sup>2</sup>. Mudslides from excessive rainfall can cause further destruction and wet ash is heavy and could damage infrastructure. The Caribbean region has rallied in support of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, with countries supplying food, water, goods, and services. Development partners, through the leadership of the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), are also providing financial and technical support. However, more aid is needed.

While the volcano is still erupting, there continues to be a need for resources. Persons interested in donating to support St. Vincent and the Grenadines can find more information from CDEMA ([www.cdema.org](http://www.cdema.org)).

We continue to pray for the people of SVG (Vincentians).”

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=VC>

<sup>2</sup> Accuweather, April 2021. <https://www.accuweather.com/en/hurricane/accuweathers-2021-atlantic-hurricane-season-forecast/924431>

*Advocate Staff*

**Paula Cruickshank**, Editor: 703-533-7355, [laika1031@gmail.com](mailto:laika1031@gmail.com)

Feature Writers: **Sue Carlson, M.D., Keren Charles, Veronica Dabney, Kathy Desmond, Luc DeWulf, and Jack Sullivan**

**Dan Larkins**, Layout

**Jeannette Gantz Daly**, Distribution

Please send an email message to [jgantz Daly@olqpva.org](mailto:jgantz Daly@olqpva.org) to receive *The Advocate* by email or to have it sent to your home address.