



Appleton Episcopal Ministries *Celebrating the Dignity of All God's People*

2020 Annual Report

Nov 2019-Oct 2020

Appleton's mission is *Sharing God's love by partnering as parishes in the Middle Georgia Convocation to promote the health, education, safety and well-being of children and families.* We approach community ministry in a unique manner by coordinating the efforts of all of the parishes in middle Georgia to identify and coordinate resources and create cooperative networks throughout the convocation. Those parishes include: All Angels, Eatonton; St. Stephen's, Milledgeville; Christ Church, Macon; St. Paul, Macon; St. Francis, Macon; All Saints, Warner Robins; St. Christopher, Perry; St. Andrew's, Fort Valley; St. Luke's, Fort Valley; and St. Mary's, Montezuma. In recognition of these efforts, Appleton has been designated as a Mission Enterprise Zone by TEC.

Little did we know in November 2019 after a joyful and well-attended Annual Council meeting in Macon hosted by the Middle Georgia Convocation and Appleton Episcopal Ministries that our collective worlds would turn upside down in less than five months. Even in the face of this upheaval, God has blessed Appleton and has, through His grace, given us multiple opportunities to serve and lift up God's people. This year, we have marked several organization milestones: we are celebrating our 150th year of serving Georgia children; our Freedom School Site Coordinator Charlie Marrs-Mier has become a year-round part-time program assistant; and we have confirmed two new parish representatives to the Board of Governors – Dr. Michael Webb of St. Paul's and Dr. Sharon Augustine of St. Stephen's.

Since 2015, Appleton has provided direct support to parish ministries through its program and discretionary grants and has augmented that funding, where possible, with grants it receives from regional foundations. This year, Appleton has funded a weekend backpack program to feed elementary students in Eatonton with All Angels. We have also renewed support to St. Stephen's for the Episcopal Campus Ministry at Georgia College and State University, originally established with start-up funding from Appleton. We continue to support activities for three Path to Shine after-school programs in Macon and Perry through St. Paul's, St. Francis/Christ Church, and St. Christopher's. We have helped to underwrite special initiatives for children at a domestic violence shelter in Macon with Christ Church. Funding to St. Francis helps to support arts enrichment programming for K-12 students, and funding to St. Paul's has continued to supply diapers for distribution to families through Loaves and Fishes Ministries. We also gifted two computers and surplus farm food given to Appleton to the Weekend Lunch program at Christ Church. Appleton's 15-passenger van, acquired with the generous support of Episcopal Community Foundation in 2017, provided weekly transportation for both of Macon's Path to Shine programs as well as event transportation for campus ministries in Macon and Milledgeville and EYC groups in Macon until the pandemic closed schools and parish churches and halted travel.



Of course, the COVID-19 pandemic changed everyone's plans. Rather than sheltering in place, Appleton moved into high gear. The board shifted designated grant funds for St. Stephen's to allow Chard Wray Food Pantry to purchase baby food and infant supplies to better serve their clients in Milledgeville. We gave emergency funding so that All Angels could provide much-needed diapers to Putnam Christian Outreach, and we donated surplus food we received to Loaves and Fishes, Daybreak, and Weekend Lunch for distribution to many people in need. In addition, Appleton responded to a request from the Bibb County School District to help distribute free meals to county children three days a week from mid March until just before Memorial Day. With assistance from our board members and volunteers, we served 4,200 meals during this period.

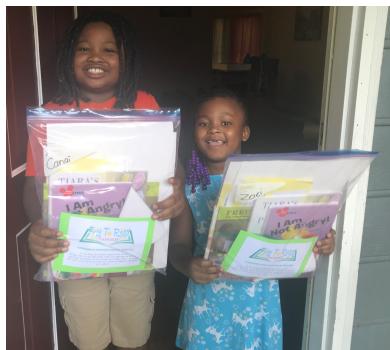
Under normal conditions, Appleton would have hosted its 4th annual Children's Defense Fund Freedom School this past June. Our Appleton Freedom School has a proven track record: testing of Appleton's 2019 participants confirmed that **95.0% of our children did not suffer summer learning slide and either maintained or exceeded their pre-program instructional reading levels, many by an average of 9 months or more.** March 2020 school closings, shelter-in-place orders, and social distancing dramatically changed our plans, however. Bibb County was woefully unprepared for distance learning, and many of our Freedom School children did not have access to tablets, laptops, or internet in their homes to continue learning once schools shut down in mid March. We knew that Appleton had to answer the challenge of transferring the program assets of Freedom School to a remote platform so that our children could resume learning. Our children needed the resiliency of renewing the positive mentoring and creative learning that Freedom School delivers.



A PROGRAM OF APPLETON EPISCOPAL MINISTRIES

After carefully weighing various options, we successfully pivoted to develop **Appleton Free to Read Summer** for delivery to 32 rising 1st through 4th graders in 24 families, all of whom were previous Freedom School participants, their now-eligible siblings, and local Path to Shine participants from our partner schools. Responding to reduced available funding, we cut our normal summer staff from 11 to 5. Following diocesan

guidelines for community ministries operating during the pandemic, our staff wore masks and gloves and practiced social distancing with widely-spaced work stations as we prepared packages of books, curriculum materials, and art supplies for each child, along with 2 meals for each day. Follow-up communication with students was a challenge. Some of our children had computers or tablets, but others did not have internet in the home except on smart phones. This meant that our teachers had to be creative, using a combination of Zoom, Face Time, email and phone calls. It wasn't a perfect system, but we maintained regular face-to-face contact with our children and families, and our scholars read books, completed activities, and increased their knowledge of sight words and math facts. Over the entire **nine weeks of programming**, using the Appleton van and one car to drive two routes three times each week, we made **648 home deliveries** with **864 books** and **4,400 meals!**



As if all of this activity wasn't excitement enough for the summer of COVID-19, our Program Director Charlie Marrs-Mier and her husband Max celebrated the birth of their first child, Maia James, on July 3rd, right in the middle of Free to Read Summer!



Inspired by the book *The Colors of Us* by Karen Katz, each of our scholars made a self-portrait so that we could create a virtual classroom wall. Staff members made self-portraits as well to give to our children for their walls at home.

Our summer literacy program is the single most expensive program that Appleton produces or helps to sponsor annually. This year, some of our most faithful foundations and donors faced their own financial challenges or pivoted to support immediate relief needs caused by the pandemic, so we had to cut our normal Freedom School budget by \$40,000. Nevertheless, Appleton matched its \$20,600 investment with almost \$60,000 in cash and in-kind donations from the Linda Harriet Lane Fund of the Community Foundation, the Community Foundation/United Way COVID-19 Fund, the Powers Family Foundation, Christ Church Community Services Fund, St. Paul's Episcopal Church Outreach Fund, Christ Church EYC, Daughters of the King Chapters, Grace Circle of Mulberry Methodist Church, the USDA Summer Food Service Program, and many individual donors, as well as the use of facilities at St. Paul's Episcopal Church and its Canterbury House for staging, food storage, program administration, and non-resident staff housing.

Despite the challenges of program suspensions and truncated service delivery this year, the projects that Appleton sponsors or supports have **impacted more than 60,580 people** and **leveraged more than \$327,000 in cash and in-kind investment**, an all-time high.

In May 2020, Missioner Julie Groce was recognized by The Peyton Anderson Foundation and *Macon Magazine* as one of Macon's Good Doers in Action - "people and groups who have responded in a lasting and profound way to meet the urgent needs of our community" - for her advocacy work with Appleton's Freedom School. Mrs. Groce's story and the stories of other winners were featured in the June/July edition of the magazine. As Appleton Missioner, I served on the diocesan planning team for Revive ATL: Love in Action and had the honor and pleasure of helping to execute that inspiring event. This summer, I also renewed and updated all of my certifications for Safeguarding God's Children and Safeguarding God's People through virtual training modules. We are proud that Appleton's Missioner and three members of our Board of Governors are certified Safeguarding trainers, and as soon as in-person meetings are deemed safe, we will again offer trainings for parishes across the convocation.

In addition to all of our work within the diocese, Appleton has participated in meaningful work at the national church level as well. In preparation for General Convention, I was invited in May to be a member of the Deaconess Calendar Day Workgroup of the *LFF (Lesser Feasts and Fasts)* Subcommittee of the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music (SCLM). Facilitated by Deacon Stannard Baker of Burlington, Vermont, our team also included Deacons Geraldine Swanson of New York and Keith McCoy of New Jersey; the Rev. Susan A. Williams, Chair of the LFF Subcommittee of the SCLM; and Bradley A. Peterson, church historian and professor in the College of Deacons in the Diocese of California. Together, we developed a resolution and propers for a unified calendar day in *Lesser Feasts and Fasts* to recognize all of the deaconesses set apart by the Episcopal Church between 1857 and 1970, along with a significant body of background materials covering the major Deaconess Houses, Training Schools and Orders, including Appleton's Order of St. Katharine. I am pleased to share that the biographies of three of Appleton's deaconesses are included in the proposed *Lesser Feasts and Fasts* text. The resolution and propers have now been submitted to the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music for final edits and inclusion in the Blue Book. If approved by both the House of Deputies and the House of Bishops during General Convention 2021, this commemoration could go into effect soon after the conclusion of General Convention. I am proud of Appleton's role in this project, as this will bring to fruition the Diocese of Atlanta's 2018 resolution to General Convention for The Episcopal Church to commemorate the Appleton deaconesses.



Appleton Episcopal Ministries receives no funds through the Diocesan budget, so we depend on everyone in the Diocese of Atlanta to help make possible all of Appleton's work. The Annual Diocesan Thanksgiving Offering now directed in Canon 24 has taken place since 1880 and is pivotal to Appleton's ability to operate. Even during a time when Episcopal parishes have been closed and plate offerings are not being taken, we need the generous participation of each and every parish, no matter how small the contribution. By combining the Thanksgiving Offering with cash assessments paid by the parishes of the Middle Georgia Convocation, quarterly distributions from our small endowment in the Common Fund, and donations from regional foundations and individual donors, Appleton is able to leverage our resources and volunteer efforts to support a wide variety of community ministries to God's people. We accomplish all of this with one half-time Missioner, one part-time assistant, and nine dedicated parish representatives who form the Board of Governors.

In 2021, Appleton will enter its **151st year of service to children and families in need**. As we go forward together, we have confidence that God will continue to bless us and powerfully use us as his hands and feet here on Earth. With your help and with God's grace and generosity, we look forward to another year of rich and productive service. Thanks be to God!

Respectfully submitted,

Julie C. Groce, Missioner
Appleton Episcopal Ministries
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Members of the 2020 Appleton Board of Governors are:

Dr. Tracie Jenkins, Chairman
Katie Powers, Vice Chairman
Martha Ray, Secretary
Dr. Michael Webb
Rev. Brian Davy
Dr. Sharon Augustine
Debbie Liipfert
Anne Sanders
Deacon Arthur Villarreal
Position Vacant
Julie Groce

St. Francis
Christ Church
All Angels
St. Paul's
St. Luke's
St. Stephen's
St. Andrew's
All Saints
St. Christopher's
St. Mary's
Missioner *Ex Officio*