

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE...

Local Congregations Collaborate on Community Gardens Project to Benefit the Hamden Food Bank

HAMDEN, Conn.—Community gardens are taking root in Hamden, with two local congregations joining a town-wide effort to provide fresh produce for the Hamden Food Bank. Christ the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, 600 Shepard Ave., and Grace & St. John's Episcopal Church, 2927 Dixwell Ave., are collaborating on the project, with each congregation planting vegetables in gardening beds provided by the Town of Hamden.

“Caring for God’s creation and caring for God’s people are two of the principal responsibilities – the two principal responsibilities, really – of the Church,” said the Rev. Robert Bergner, pastor of Grace & St. John’s. “Converting a portion of the grassy areas on our church properties into food-producing gardens and giving the food we grow there to those with limited access to fresh produce is a great way to fulfill both of those mandates.

“The fact that Christ the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church and Grace & St. John’s Episcopal Church are collaborating on this undertaking fulfills yet another divine mandate: to consider ourselves as, and to act as, one body united in faith regardless of the name by which we might be called, the color of our skin, our country of origin, or the details of our theology,” Rev. Bergner said.

At Christ the Good Shepherd Lutheran, three raised gardening beds were installed this spring under the leadership of Rob Hansen, who had previously participated in a community garden run by a church congregation. “I appreciated their focus on caring for the land and caring for their community through donations to the local food bank,” Hansen said. “It was a positive experience for me, and I wanted to bring that to Christ the Good Shepherd.

“I am excited to contribute to this congregation’s efforts to use their land to help feed the people of Hamden,” Hansen added. “I also appreciate the support from the Hamden Food Task Force and our faith partners at Grace & St. John’s. To me, that support emphasizes the ‘community’ in this community garden project.”

Throughout the summer, congregational members will tend the gardens, which will yield tomatoes, sweet peppers, squash, chard, basil, parsley and other vegetables. The produce will be donated to the Hamden Food Bank, located at the Keefe Community Center, 11 Pine Street. A portion of Grace & St. John’s produce will be incorporated into their “Dinner for a Dollar” program.

“Everything in our garden is flourishing,” said Sue O’Connell of Grace & St. John’s Episcopal Church. “We have green tomatoes, little cucumbers, lots and lots of collards and kale. Within the next two weeks we’ll be ready to start pulling some of the lettuce.”

On Sunday, June 11, the Rev. Joshua Sullivan, pastor of Christ the Good Shepherd, led the congregation in a blessing of the new garden following the morning worship service.

“For us, this garden is just one example of how God is already at work in our community,” Rev. Sullivan said. “From the leaders of the Hamden Food Task Force and the Keefe Community Center who brought the need for fresh produce in Hamden to our attention, to Rob Hansen and others at Quinnipiac University who are passionate about community gardening, to our faith partners at Grace & St. John’s. All we had to do was just start paying attention, and saying, ‘Yes.’”

For more information about the joint-community garden project at Christ the Good Shepherd Lutheran and Grace & St. John’s Episcopal Church, contact Pastor Sullivan at pastor@christgoodshepherdlutheran.org or call the church office at (203) 288-3196; or, contact Pastor Bergner at office@graceandstpeters.org or (203) 248-4338.

PHOTO 1 FROM CHRIST THE GOOD SHEPHERD LUTHERAN



The Rev. Joshua Sullivan, pastor of Christ the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Hamden, led a blessing of the new community garden on the church grounds June 11. Produce from the garden, along with that from Grace & St. John’s Episcopal Church, will benefit the Hamden Food Bank. Pictured here with Pastor Sullivan is congregational member John Downs (right).

GARDEN PHOTO 1 FROM GRACE & ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL



Trellising green beans (left) and a grow bag of multicolored potatoes are among the vegetables growing in the community garden at Grace & St. John's Episcopal Church, Hamden.

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GSJ GARDEN PHOTO 2



Collards and kale can also be found in Grace & St. John's community garden.

GSJ PHOTO 3



Green tomatoes are also growing.

OPTIONAL PHOTO 2 FROM CHRIST THE GOOD SHEPHERD



Congregational members gathered to hear a blessing of the new community garden at Christ the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church after worship on Sunday, June 11.

OPTIONAL PHOTO 3 FROM CHRIST THE GOOD SHEPHERD



Congregational members gathered after worship for a Blessing Ceremony of the new community garden installed at Christ the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church on June 11.