

St. Mark Church

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Barnabas House Update (Dec. 14, 2020)

Greetings to you all, and Blessed Advent,

I'm sure many of you have been wondering what has been going on with the house behind St. Mark's Church that we purchased. So I wanted to give you all some updates, and answer some questions about it (and my apologies for not updating you all sooner).

As you already know, the house, which has now been named the "Barnabas House," is now being used for the mission of Christ's call to serve the poor and love the least among us. It is being used as a transitional home for families who are struggling, to help them get back on their feet.

The Barnabas House has already served one family, who after a few months of living there have since been able to transition to more permanent housing. I am happy to announce that this past week, we just moved in and are able to serve our second family! There has already been a lot of learning on my part from having one family in the house, that has allowed us to continue to take steps to put things in place that will better and more effectively serve the families in the Barnabas House.

Each family will be able to stay a maximum of six months, beginning with first month free and then pay a minimum amount of rent on a "sliding scale" that increases month to month. This method is to:

- 1) make the housing affordable to them as they transition, while
- 2) teaching them responsibility to budget for payment, as well motivating them to take responsible steps to more stable, long-term housing.

You may be wondering where is the money for this program coming from?

The first major expense of purchasing the house was helped made possible by your generous donations and financial support (and support of our parish in the past, making us financially stable enough for such a purchase). Since making the decision to set up the house as a ministry to the poor, what is now "the Barnabas House," we were blessed to find out there was money leftover from the ministry known as "Barnabas Uplift," a ministry that grew out of a partnership between the Catholic and Lutheran church to be a "hand up" to help people transition out of poverty by paying for training for CNA, and getting employment. As that ministry no longer exists, Pastor Tim Maybee of Bethany Lutheran Church suggested that this money be now used towards the Barnabas House, which, while different from Barnabas Uplift, is still a partnership ministry between local churches to be a hand up for the poor in our community.

So far, with this initial fund of approximately \$12,000, with other donations of materials, funds, and time both from individuals and some of the local churches, we have been able to cover cost of furnishing

the house, as well as cover ongoing expense of utilities, upkeep etc., and thus have not yet had to add any expense to our parish expenses!

But while we have an initial fund which has been great, it is not unlimited, and will need ongoing support to make this ministry sustainable.

You can make donations to St. Mark's parish, and just mark, "Barnabas House."

If you want to donate to some specific thing of the house itself (i.e. paint, specifically pay for utilities for a month, contact the parish office).

If you would like to donate material donations to the *family* (i.e., clothes, food, etc.), please reach out to Roxanne Petersen at ATLAS who is managing that. Which brings me to my next point...

Partnership

To help make the ministry of the Barnabas House more effective, I am also happy to announce that we have formally partnered with ATLAS of Central Iowa, to accompany and walk with the family in the house, to mentor them, and guide them to taking steps to a better, healthier life. I am very grateful for their partnership in ministry, and their commitment to serving the families in the Barnabas House. I am especially grateful to Roxanne Petersen, founder and director of ATLAS of Central Iowa. I urge you to strongly consider supporting ATLAS, as supporting ATLAS helps support our Barnabas House Ministry, and serve the families there.

You can learn more about ATLAS at their facebook page here:

<https://www.facebook.com/Unitecommunityandfamilies/>

I also need to express my gratitude to other Iowa Falls area churches: Bethany Lutheran church; United Methodist church; and First Congregational UCC church; who have formally partnered with us to help support this ministry.

Also a special thanks to Doug Aldinger who has agreed to be the "Maintenance Man" for the Barnabas House, and so is the point person on basic maintenance needs.

And finally a special thanks to the many volunteers who graciously donated furnishings for the house and to all those volunteers who put in much time and work to clean, paint, and prepare the house to receive families, both before our first family, and between families. It is this network of support that allows us to more fully respond to Christ's call to us to care for the poor

"Whatever you did for the least one of these, you did for me" (Matthew 25).

Peace,

-Fr. Kevin

PS: Feel free to reach out to me if you have more questions about the Barnabas House.

PS: Below are a few words I wrote last May but wanted to share with you again about the House's namesake and patron Saint, Saint Barnabas:

St. Barnabas, the "Son of Encouragement" - by Fr. Kevin Earleywine (May 11, 2020)

St. Barnabas is a Saint who I've been very inspired by lately. He is a very important figure in the early Church but one who often tends to fade to the background, overshadowed by great figures like St. Peter and St. Paul. Barnabas was "a good man filled with the Holy Spirit and faith" (Acts 11:24) whose name means "son of encouragement" or "one who encourages," (Acts 4:36), and he lives true to his name. He is one who sees the good and gifts in people (even when others don't), and encourages and fosters that good and those gifts, inspiring them to full flame and life!

In Acts 9 we hear about Saul of Tarsus who has a great conversion experience and starts to preach about Jesus Christ. However, many people were afraid and suspicious of Saul as he had a history and reputation for persecuting Christians. He had after all, overseen the execution of St. Stephen watched approvingly as he was stoned to death (Acts 7:58; 8:1). So some thought his conversion was just a ruse or a trick to try and trap them somehow and get them all killed.

Barnabas, however, saw that Saul was genuine and saw his zeal and gift for preaching, and decided to take Saul under his wing (see Acts 9:26-27). Later, Barnabas further encourages Saul's gifts by inviting him into ministry at the growing Church of Antioch. Had it not been for Barnabas, Saul probably would never have become the great apostle St. Paul that we know!

Barnabas also had a younger cousin named John Mark (sometimes just simply called Mark) (see Colossians 4:10). Barnabas, again saw many gifts in Mark and invited him to go on mission with him and Paul (Acts 13:5).

However partway through the mission, for whatever reason, John Mark "flakes out" on them and decides to return home to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13), and this does not sit well with Paul. Later, Barnabas, still seeing Mark's gifts for ministry and wanting to draw those out, again invites Mark on mission with him and Paul. But Paul is still so upset about Mark leaving that he will have none of it. So Barnabas and Paul decide to go separate ways and Barnabas takes Mark under his wing (again, seeing the good and believing in people who others can't see) (see Acts 15:36-41). Tradition holds that Mark later became the first bishop of Alexandria, a very important city, a center of culture and learning in the world at that time (it had had the great Library of Alexandria, listed as one of the 7 wonders of the Ancient World). And Mark himself would contribute to the great center of learning by writing down the succinct and concise story of Christ, in what we know now as the Gospel according to St. Mark! Had it not been for Barnabas, willing to see the good where others couldn't, Paul would probably not have become the great pillar figure that we know him as, and probably would not have written all those important letters that are now a part of our Scriptures. If it had not been for Barnabas, Mark may never have become a bishop or put to pen the story of Christ, the Gospel that has been passed down to us!

So who are the Barnabas figures in your own life? Who have seen the good and gifts in you and helped breathe those to life, encouraging you in that. Especially who have fostered you in the living and sharing of your faith, who have encouraged you to share your story, who think you have a story worth sharing!

And how are we "Barnabas" to others? Are we the "ones who encourage" and foster to life the gifts and work of the Holy Spirit in people around us?

The final thing I want to say, is that the house we have bought in Iowa Falls, that will be used to help families get back on their feet, will be called the Barnabas House. We selected this name, first of all, for the aforementioned reasons: that Barnabas is the "one who encourages" and who encourages and inspires the good in people whom others have given up on. It's also appropriate that here at St. Mark's we name the house after St. Barnabas, as he was a cousin and companion of St. Mark. And finally, the name "Barnabas House" is also a nod to a past collaborative ministry project between the Catholic and Lutheran churches, called "Barnabas Uplift." While Barnabas Uplift no longer exists, as we are collaborating with the Lutheran Church and others, we thought it an appropriate name for the project.