

News from St. John the Baptist Episcopal in Portage

SJB has a long-standing tradition of identifying, coordinating, and collaborating with other community agencies to assist individuals and families in the Portage community. Past and current activities include the Portage Food Pantry, the Community Meal, the River Haven Family shelter, and now includes a men's shelter.

River Haven, the local family shelter in Portage, had been looking for a men's shelter site for several years. After numerous discussions and plans, we are happy to report in November 2012, the first men's shelter, in a five county area was opened, in the rectory of St. John the Baptist Episcopal Church. Several of our parishioners volunteer at both the family shelter as well as the men's shelter. 10 men have been served at the Men's shelter since mid -November.

Another new project we are excited about is the Sunrise Hospitality Center. Through collaboration with other Portage area churches, Bethlehem ELCA, Bonnet Prairie ELCA, and St. John the Baptist Episcopal Church, [on Wednesday, March 6, 2013](#), the Sunrise Hospitality Center will open in Couper's Hall of SJB Church.

The origin of the Sunrise Hospitality Center was a desire to serve those in need; in need of a friend, someone who would listen, a cup of coffee, a conversation, a smile, an acknowledgement that God loves all. The Center will provide information and referral to local services such as the free clinic, housing information and other resources. Many individuals are seeking work and will be offered assistance with resume writing and other skills. We plan to have computers and phones available to assist individuals in their various searches. SJB has a beautiful garden where people come to think, to pray, and to seek respite all year long. SJB has a hall we thought was underutilized, and opening the hall to visitors seemed a natural step for our faith community.

We learned that Racine has a Hospitality Center and we had discussions with Deacon Kevin on how to start a Hospitality Center. We are so appreciative of the amount of time, ideas, and suggestions Deacon Kevin gave to us. In October, SJB had a fundraiser for which the funds would be used to start up the Hospitality Center. Bethlehem

and Bonnet Prairie churches contacted SJB and expressed an interest in collaborating with us to establish a Hospitality Center. Through all of the time various people gave, the Sunrise Hospitality Center will be opening in March 2013.

Please keep us in your prayers and if your congregations want to seed into our ministry, we will soon post a 'Wish List' on our website. Questions: please call Christina Martin (608) 742-6054 or email j.baptist@frontier.com.