

ABCD 201: Galilee Ministries of East Charlotte

Allison Duvall 00:10

Why do you support refugees?

00:12

I support refugees because my family were refugees.

Rebecca Yarborough 00:15

I support refugees because we are all God's children and we all deserve a safe place to grow in God's love.

00:21

I support refugees because God made us all in God's image.

00:25

I support refugees because I'm a legal guardian of a minor asylee named Carol from Burundi.

Rebecca Yarborough 00:32

I support refugees because my Lord was a refugee.

00:36

Because I welcome and I love my neighbor.

Allison Duvall 00:41

Hi, and welcome to Hometown, a podcast by Episcopal Migration Ministries. I'm Allison Duvall.

Kendall Martin 00:47

And I'm Kendall Martin, and we're coming to you today with an in-between seasons episode.

Allison Duvall 00:51

Yes, we're very excited to share with you the audio from a recent virtual workshop we hosted for Partners in Welcome members. Kendall, can you tell our listeners about Partners in Welcome and then I'll talk a little bit about the idea behind the virtual workshops.

Kendall Martin 01:05

Sure. So Partners in Welcome is EMM's newest church engagement program. It is both a ministry network and an online learning community. Through Partners in Welcome we are mapping immigration-related ministries across the Episcopal Church. And we are also creating educational materials, toolkits, resources and other materials to equip, empower, and encourage Partners in Welcome members to welcome newcomers, become advocates, and launch and strengthen local ministries with immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

Allison Duvall 01:36

One of the things we offer through Partners in Welcome is these virtual workshops. Virtual workshops are interactive online learning events for Partners in Welcome members to come together with a practitioner, an expert, or a conversation facilitator, to learn, share best practices and ideas, and to be in dialogue with one another around a common theme or topic. Unlike webinars, which can be pretty passive almost like you're attending a lecture, Partners in Welcome virtual workshops require that participants are actively engaged in a workshop style environment.

Kendall Martin 02:11

Today's podcast episode is the edited audio from a recent virtual workshop called Asset Based Community Development 201: The story of Galilee Ministries of East Charlotte. Galilee Ministries of East Charlotte is a ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina, birthed through the identification of assets and intentional conversation with the community.

Allison Duvall 02:31

Today, just four years later, Galilee Ministries serves over 700 people a week in multiple ways that include providing services for refugees and immigrants, while connecting Episcopal and other congregations to their neighbors. Their mission is one of community building and radical hospitality.

Kendall Martin 02:48

We hope hearing Galilee's story will inspire you and your congregation to similar discernment and ministry.

Allison Duvall 02:58

We're very grateful to our two presenters today, Toni Hagerman and the Reverend Rebecca Yarborough, who are so generously offering ABCD 201: The story of Galilee Ministries of East Charlotte. Thank you both so much. ABCD is an acronym for asset based community development. And what they're offering today is kind of a case study, a window in to how Galilee Ministries of East Charlotte has really implemented that philosophy of community development and lives it out each and every day in their work. Rebecca, over to you.

Rebecca Yarborough 03:31

Okay, thank you. I'm going to start off. I'm Rebecca Yarborough, one of the deacons who was involved in the beginning of Galilee Ministries of East Charlotte, and Toni is going to pick up with where we are now and what we're doing. We're just so glad to be here today. I want to start off by saying that when Allison was listening, listing experts and practitioners and all, I think we would describe our as practitioners, but we are by no means experts. So we are here to share with you what we have learned through lots of practicing. And boy, we are still practicing. When St. Andrew's Episcopal Church closed in May of 2013, it was a--and this is in Charlotte, North Carolina--it was a really messy closing. It was a surprise to a lot of the members of the congregation. There was terrible press. And it was a death. And it was a death accompanied by all the things that accompany death. But then in the spring of 2015, about two years later, St. Andrew's reopened as Galilee Center. And it really it was a resurrection story. It felt kind of miraculous. And, you know, the big question is how did that happen? The short answer to the how it happened was that the Holy Spirit was just busy running ahead of all of us. And we were just racing, trying to catch up. But the longer answer is that we are a great example of asset based community development. But it's truly by the grace of God because none of us have had a ABCD training. We had sort of maybe heard of it kind of, I'd had done some work with appreciative inquiry, but we just sort of fell into it. And that's the honest truth, because of a big asset we were given to work with.

Rebecca Yarborough 05:38

Our timeline is really important. You know, they say timing is everything. So after St. Andrew's closed, there were a lot of discussions about at the diocesan level about what to do with the property, and there was a big push to sell it because real estate in that area is booming, but it didn't get sold. And then in November of 2013, Bishop Michael Curry, who y'all may know, is now Presiding Bishop, but he was our Bishop diocesan at the time. He delivered an address at convention that was based on Jesus's call to the disciples after the Resurrection to meet him in Galilee. And the whole theme was that you go back to your old stomping grounds, your home territory, and you find Jesus there in a new way. And so his thing was, y'all go to Galilee, go to Galilee. Then our Bishop suffragan Anne Hodges-Copple, who is still our bishop suffragan, she put together that call to go to Galilee with the closing of St. Andrew's. And so in January of 2014, in the middle of an ice storm, she called a group of deacons together and said, "Hey, y'all, you want to see if this is a Galilee opportunity?" And of course, being good deacons, we all said, "Sure." So she worked with the powers that be and the sale of the property was put on hold. It was leased to a tenant congregation. And we had been given a year to figure out what to do. Boy, we did not know what we were getting into. So I started out trying to figure out who our neighbors were. And we looked at demographic information, and some maps that you can get down off Census websites, and it looked like they were Latino and African American and white and middle to lower income. But, you know, it was not unexpected. And many of us had not even seen the property. I mean, we'd driven past it, but we hadn't been inside and here's what we found. 16,000 plus feet of heated space with a huge parish hall, offices, classrooms, nave, big commercial kitchen, all in need of some tender loving care.

Rebecca Yarborough 08:13

The next thing we did is we started paying attention to our surroundings beyond the church campus. And when we did that, we found out a whole lot more than the demographic data told us because Central Avenue, where the church is located, is literally like a restaurant row of international restaurants. And I think we all sort of knew that, but we didn't really know it until we started opening our eyes and looking and seeing all the signs on all the businesses in all different languages. Not just Spanish, but Vietnamese and Burmese and Middle Eastern restaurants and African restaurants. So that was a big eye opener. Then we made a little informal list. And this is this is about 5, 4 or 5 deacons working together. We made a list of people that we might know in the community and we started reaching out to them. Talked to people who ran a community organization called Charlotte East. We talked to International House, we talked to the local community policing person, school principals. And we also started enlarging our group because we not every church in Charlotte has a deacon. So we reached out and we pulled in some lay leaders we thought would be interested. And we also picked up a couple of great associate rectors along the way. And one of our volunteers is not a real out front person, but she said, I'll go to community meetings, and I'll just listen, she was--we called her our stealth listener, and she sat in the back and listened and took notes and that turned out to be really valuable. We also met with the tenant congregation, which turned out to be a really good thing as we went forward and we're talking about goals. And then finally a bunch of us started gathering once a week to do morning prayer at a Latino bakery, which has great food. So what we heard from all this process was that it really was a far more diverse community than we thought it was. It was a safer community than we thought it was, people tended to really get along. People absolutely loved the services that St. Andrew's had provided. And they were really sad about the closing of St. Andrew's, not so much because of the worship services because most of them weren't Episcopalians, but because of the community services, including the community garden, and the food pantry and English as a second language classes. And there were a lot of memories that you know of the good stuff that had happened

there. And part of the good stuff was that everybody, when they went to St. Andrews, they felt really truly welcome. Whether they were Christian or not, no matter what color they were, they felt like they were really welcome.

Rebecca Yarborough 11:17

Now the same time that was going on, we also had people coming to us with lots of ideas for single uses. And that was like a bilingual preschool, contemplative center, after school, just all kinds of things that would take the whole building. What we learned from all of that listening was that the expanding our group brought a whole lot more wisdom, and it brought lots more skills to the table, and it brought lots more opportunities for connections within the church and outside the church. We learned that it's important not to miss talking to anybody, because like the conversation with the tenant congregation, we decided that our goals were diverging. But because we had really respectful conversation on the front end, when that happened, there weren't any hard feelings. And we also learned from our stealth listener, that the community really wanted those helping services back, but they did not trust the Episcopal Church, because the Episcopal Church had come in and they closed the church that was doing all that good in the community. So it pretty much didn't matter what we said, we were going to have to do.

Rebecca Yarborough 12:34

So by this point, we've gotten ourselves to the point that we could sort of spell out some options. It was around August, and we'd been meeting for eight months. And one of the proposals was develop a new worshipping community, and we all were like, No, we can't possibly do that. Because those St Andrew's folks who have found other congregations are just starting to heal and this would be like pulling the scab off. We could lease the whole building to another group. But we realized we didn't know the community well enough yet to realize what single purpose would be most helpful. And we had some proposals that hadn't popped up is something that the community wanted in any of the discussions we'd had. So we took that one off the table. So that left either start new ministries based on what we heard, or seeing if the folks who were doing the old ministries wanted to come back. So we prayed and we discerned, and we realized that what we had become without really realizing it was a group that was really committed to being community based, that we were in an exciting community. We had lots of opportunities to reconnect, and we were already getting some connections made. And we just felt like you know, if we're really going to be community based, we need to go find those people who made the community so happy before. And we knew that the St. Andrew's members had volunteered, but they hadn't led most of the helping ministries that were going on.

Rebecca Yarborough 14:19

So at that point, we started looking. We tracked down the person who ran the English as a second language program. And she was with the local community college, Central Piedmont. And because she loves to garden she also ran the community garden. We tracked down the food pantry folks, because people said, the garden and ESL and the food pantry, those were their top three things. Central Piedmont wanted to come back, the food pantry wanted to come back. And it wasn't until that point that we actually realized that the population that we were going to be working with most closely were refugees. So think about that. That means that that community accepted their refugee neighbors so fully, that they didn't even feel it was important to call it out that they were refugees. By this time we knew where we were on a track. So we did some more reaching out and a friend, I talked to a friend of mine at the city who was working on Neighborhood Development. And a day later, he sent me an email from somebody who wanted to start a community kitchen. And that's how we met

them. And Marian at the community college said you need to talk to Refugee Support Services. I'm going to bring my friend Rachel and we said great. One of the things we never did is we never said no, you can't come to a meeting. We, if you are interested in wanting to be a part of a team, you are part of the team.

Rebecca Yarborough 15:52

Now came the hard part because by this time we had the Community College, the food pantry, Refugee Support Services, and Catholic Charities, who also ran an after school program, on board. And we had then-Charlotte Community Kitchen interested. And so at that point came the paperwork. So we had to develop a proposal for Charlotte-area congregations. We wrote grants, we had to get everybody on board with what we were doing. We had to become real because at that point, we were just a group of people with some ideas. And by this time, a fair number of connections. And diocesan council recognized us in January of 2015. We got back in the building in February. We had lots of work to do--I wanted to say this whole business of becoming real is really important. And we thought it was going to take us six months to open. We opened on March 30. Less than two months after we got back in the building.

Rebecca Yarborough 17:01

When I was thinking about some of the assets that I saw, it really, you know, one of the things that stood out to me that we had this big asset, and we didn't know what to do with it, and we were babes in the woods. And we were just blessed that we were able to put together a team that that was really willing really to take some risks and reach out to people they didn't know and, and be really welcoming, not just into the space, but into the whole process of figuring out what to do with it. One of it, somebody said at some point, you're going to have to start saying no, in some ways, we've kind of reached that point we have to at least say pause for right now. But yes, is a really powerful word that opens a lot of doors. It's really interesting that the very first piece of paper that we put anything about who we were down, we caught ourselves Galilee Ministries of East Charlotte and the name has stuck. And our tagline was "Feeding body, mind and spirit." And four and a half years later, that is still true. We are learning every day. We're not strictly a refugee ministry, we work with immigrants. We work with the broader community in East Charlotte and we found that the trick for us one of the most important things we do is we practice radical hospitality. And Toni is actually the queen of radical hospitality. So please take it away, Toni.

Toni Hagerman 18:41

Thank you, Rebecca. So Rebecca brought you right up until when the building reopened in March of 2015. And then in August of 2015, they hired me as a part time program coordinator. And it was halftime, it sounded like the easiest job in the world. I took it because I was finishing up a degree and I had some other stuff going on. But you know that story of the mustard seed that's planted in the ground and it grows and grows and grows. And eventually birds of the air come and make their nests in its branches. And that little seed of Galilee Ministries grew and grew and grew. And one of our biggest challenges has been how to actually control that growth in ways that are sustainable and faithful. Because when you have a building, and we offer it rent free, there are lots of people who are interested in being in your space. So there really hasn't been any problem of growing the ministry at all. Our model has been one, and you probably picked this up already, of just supporting other organizations who are already doing good work really well. We haven't tried to recreate the wheel at all. If there's somebody already doing it and we can offer them space and support, that's what we want to do. We're not trying to dream up competing ministries or copycat ministries. We're just trying to support a lot of the folks in our community who are already doing really good work. And along the way, we are figuring out our niche,

what we can do, maybe better than other people. But for the most part, we have just been able to offer a lot of program by supporting other organizations.

Toni Hagerman 20:22

Yeah, we have several different groups who work with refugees. But as Rebecca said, that's not exclusively what we do. We have a food pantry that's open four days a week that serves a ton of groceries to the general population. And then on the weekends, a whole nother group of organizations come in. This is the Bhutanese Community Associations' karate dojo that they run out of the parish hall, which now we call the Flag Hall. There are several ethnic small churches that serve refugee communities two Montagnard and one Ethiopian, who meet at the church. But one of the best things that we get to do is share the building with people for special events like memorial services and weddings, because we offer it at really low fees that most of these groups, it would be hard for them to afford a space like this usually. The crown jewel of the week is our community meal, which happens on Wednesdays at lunch out of the community kitchen. We serve between 120 and 220 people every week. It is fresh food. It's not a soup kitchen. Farmers market vegetables, halal meat, some of the best food I eat all week, we've got a partnership with a seafood distributor where we get fresh salmon all the time. It's good food. And you sit at table with people from all across socio-economic, religious, racial, national groups and have a conversation like none you'd ever have your whole week. So it is definitely that commercial kitchen has, God has really used that space. Right now we're serving over 700 people a week and that's some most of these people multiple times, most of those people are in English classes and they stay for lunch and they get food from the gleaned vegetables that we serve, their children are in childcare. So they and they count just once. So it's a it's a huge network. And we don't do it alone. We do it with a bunch of help.

Rebecca Yarborough 22:19

And I will say, I think the community listening was so essential to what we did. Because one of the things we've learned over time, it's like every time, every time we do something that has bubbled up through conversations with the community, it generally does really, really well. Every time we just go like, Oh, well, we could do whatever, and it doesn't have community rootedness. I wouldn't say every time but many times those things have just flopped. So that community basis is just critical.

Toni Hagerman 22:58

Yeah, it's really been fun, especially working with other faith traditions. One meeting I remember in particular with the Galilee planning group or the planning... at the time, it wasn't the board. What did we call ourselves? I don't know what we called ourselves.

23:13

Galilee Counsel. We play around with names.

Toni Hagerman 23:16

Yeah, we we've evolved. But you know, we're like, oh, we love having the Hindu temple on the front yard. We love having the mosque on the street serve lunch. We love having the Bhutanese Community Association doing karate, but we're really not sure about allowing a Baptist Church in the sanctuary. You just got to sit back and you go, Okay, what are our what are the barriers we are putting up, you know, and so we've ended up we have this fabulous relationship with the biggest Baptist Church in town. Their construction ministry spent a whole lot of time at Galilee and we just we just, you know, along the way we've had to open up too and it's it's been

fabulous to just see where we have we, as the church, as the mainline church have sometimes put up our own barriers.

Rebecca Yarborough 24:05

And I'll just add to that, because one of the big learning experiences for me and this has been the whole has been really sort of boiling Christianity down to its essentials and boiling my faith down to its essentials. And, and really, you know, we've all gone through the process of thinking about what can we, you know, what do we have to have and what can we give up. And to the beautiful Tree of Life mural that Toni started her presentation with, that used to be a cross. And every morning when all the Muslim students and the Hindu students and the Buddhist students would come into English classes, they would see the cross painted on the wall, and it wasn't done by us. It was done by the tenant congregation, but we got feedback that it was really off-putting for their faith tradition. And we had decided that if we really wanted to love everybody, as a child of God, we need to find a way to come up with a symbol, at least in that main area that everybody was going to be in, that was more inclusive. So the Catholic Charities folk designed the Tree of Life, and the refugee kids painted it. And we say now that the cross is blooming.

Toni Hagerman 25:35

So this is my stab at a little humor. You know, ABCD, these are my ABCDs. This is just a little humor about the practical questions, the practical decisions, that the nitty gritty that comes up when you step into new spaces. There's just an everyday a million little details when you're sharing the building with all these other people. And so I thought you know, just open it up and talk about four of the biggest hurdles that we have faced and how assets have helped us along the way. And the first big hurdle is, is establishing a system for decision making, because there are a lot of decisions to make. But here's some of the questions that we had to discern. How much leverage will the church retain as owner of the building? And how much of it are we willing to share with the other groups in the building? We started out calling those groups partners, and we had to figure out what in the world do we mean when we mean partner? Does it mean we're all equal? Does the church still have some authority as steward of the building and so we've had to wrestle with that. We had to wrestle with how far our hospitality can extend without jeopardizing safety and security. Right now it's parking issues how do you know, how much program can we really have when people park so dangerously in our parking lot, we've had to clarify what's our responsibility as the church? And what are our partners responsibilities, and we've also had to clarify what it means to be a ministry of the diocese, because that's right there on our seal, Galilee Ministries of East Charlotte, the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina and what does that mean? For us? Since we're not really a parish? What does that mean?

Toni Hagerman 27:24

So there's there's some of the big hurdles that we've had to come up with. And while we've needed a system for decision making, what we what we settled on is a board with a kind of a corporate kind of board with bylaws. But what we kept in our bylaws was consensus decision making. We don't have yes and no voting in our meetings. We have consensus and tabling until so there we we've retained really some discernment within our structure. My joke is that we are it should be asset based community discernment, because prayer is a really big part of our decision making. And a trap here was that all of these people have wonderful experiences in different institutions and organizations. Some of them have a lot of experience on church committees. We've got a couple former directors of nonprofits, we have clergy, we have a lawyer, we have people that pull from so many different strengths and different models of decision making. And it would have been really easy just to kind of

settle on one of those models because it was something we were all used to and knew and understood, but we really did come up with our own model that suited us. And I really see that as an asset that we were able to pull from so many different models for decision making.

Toni Hagerman 28:44

The second hurdle was staffing needs. I told you we serve 700 people a week and for a while I was the only employee at Galilee and I'm still we are very, very under staffed if you count people who are paid to be there. We rely very heavily on our volunteers to do most of the work. And where we pull from volunteers we pull from suburban wealthy church members who drive in, you know, for their own cultural experience, but we also pull from the neighborhood itself. I've had one of the rectors of one of the biggest churches in the city asked me Toni, who were people who were volunteering. I was like, volunteers, he's like, No, no, they're like, special needs people. Where did they come from? And I was like, oh, they're just, they're just volunteers. You know, you just thought the line between who was being served and who was serving is very fluid at Galilee. You know, we, our philosophy is everybody is coming with some need. Maybe you need food, but maybe I need good conversation. And so the, we really don't have, even as we collect our data, we just say volunteers and clients, they're all in one pool because we really can't distinguish who's who was being served. I mean, I'm assuming everyone's being served. At our community meal, I remember one of the first two weeks they were open, I came to the window and I said, is there enough food for me? And Ben said, well, you're here aren't you? You're here. That's all you have to do. You don't have to prove you need food, you just show up. So, you know, our asset has really been just welcoming the diversity of people in the community. We have a lot of senior and disabled adults who volunteer and they're not able to do things like carry the tray of coffee cups, but they are, they are the welcoming face that people see when they walk in the door. So that's a big asset just to just to look at the people around you. You have all the people you need to run a program, I promise you.

Toni Hagerman 30:42

The next one is means in ends and I called it this because it really wasn't this kind of leads into from what I said before. Is that just to clarify for ourselves, what are means and what are ends and in grant writing, you always have to have a bottom line, you have data, you show who was being served? And are they being served efficiently and effectively. But our model is so different and it's so hard to describe to people. And our goals are kind of vague. Our goals are we want to create a place where people feel at home, where they can be themselves where they can experience community with other people around them. And so, traditional fundraising hasn't worked very well for us where you know, because our goal is to build community. It isn't necessarily to feed people, the asset has been just to, to focus on the unspoken unnamed needs that are being met, how people feel, and I want to read a couple words that I wrote down if I can find it on my notes. "Respect, dignity, conversation, laughter, a sense of security and safety, your ability to contribute. Come on in, be yourself. Make yourself at home." These are things that are really hard to measure. But what I realized is that the way we do our job is accomplishing our goal. The purpose of community is community. And so just along the way to remember that your means are your ends, the way you do the work accomplishes the goal. And it might not be always easy to measure and quantify, but it is the main thing.

Toni Hagerman 32:26

And then the last thing is what we brought up earlier sustainability, how do we how do we keep all this going? And it's not easy. It hasn't been easy for us. And we are and we don't have any good answers here. Rebecca, though, has reminded me recently that the opposite of scarcity isn't abundance, it is enough. The opposite of

scarcity is enough. And we have enough we have enough each we've been able to pay our bills, we've been able to make our repairs to the building and debt to invest actually, we've got a couple, capital big capital improvements going right now in the building. And so we've just had to trust that God will provide along the way. And we are scrounging all the time. And we have, we don't have the magic bullet on that one at all. But the one thing that I do know that we have plenty of is stories, it is our biggest asset are the stories that we have to tell about the people that we talk with and the lives that are changed. And sometimes we have success telling our story at churches or at the rotary club or, you know, on a webinar, but the best way for us to tell our stories is to invite people to come and experience the community for themselves. So we invite people to come in, experience it and then go tell their own stories. And we're trusting that our fundraising will grow organically in the same way that the program has, and that God will bless those stories as they go out that they are new seeds that are being sown and that they will bear fruit. So our other expression is just come and see, come and see for yourself.

Toni Hagerman 34:05

I don't know what's in the chat as far as other questions, if there are things there are we, how are we doing on time?

Allison Duvall 34:10

Doing quite well, I think we do have some time to field the questions. I'm truly still interested in this as well. Are the programs like, do you just get donations from people who have come and seen? Do you, do you receive some funds from the ministries that are renting space or leasing in your building? There's a question about that funding and then a few more to follow.

Rebecca Yarborough 34:31

Okay. We started out asking for donations from the people who were using space in the building the, the original folks who had designated space and we could not figure out a fair way to do that. And what sort of tipped the balance and made us feel like that was probably not the best way to go was when I found out that one of the people who was using the space was making a portion of the funding that was supposed to be coming from their agency out of the private checking account of the person who was there, you know, running that program, you can just like, yeah, it was just like, Whoa, this is, you know, this is not right. It's appreciated, but it's not right for us to put that much of a hardship on the programs. So, so we don't and now if you have a special event, and you have 200 people there, you know, yes, we're going to ask for a contribution. And we actually have some suggestions about what your contribution should be. We do, we get funding from congregations, in varying amounts. We're not written into anyone's budget yet, but we want to be. We have gotten grants from the diocese. We have gotten grants from different community organizations. So here here's a story about how God works. We've been having all these shingles blow off our nave roof, and it's been awful. All of a sudden, some, you know, so we got the insurance adjuster out from Church Insurance, one of our volunteers got him out. And next thing we know, Church Insurance is buying us a whole new roof. And it's like, Church Insurance never does that. But somehow that, you know, we need a whole new roof and we're getting a whole new roof.

Toni Hagerman 36:37

It's not always magic. I mean, we do we do stress.

Rebecca Yarborough 36:41

Yes, we do. We have sleepless nights.

Toni Hagerman 36:43

It's not all beautiful. But um, but but our bottom line is to keep living by faith and just to trust it, that this is something that we are supposed to be doing as we act in faith. We just, I don't know. We're still we're trying to figure it out right now. We really are. And, you know, we're in the middle of trying to figure out whether we can bring on a second person that would do more development work. And so we, you know, it's just part of our growth right now is trying to figure that out the churches who use space, all faithfully out of their offering plate, give us a donation every month. But the other agencies that are in the building, we do not charge them rent.

Rebecca Yarborough 37:20

One of the things that it is going to help us is the missionary resource support funding that the diocese make has made available, up to this point only to clergy. Their charter has now been changed so that they will be able to support lay-lead ministries. And so we'll be able to pay, for example, Toni's salary using that funding source that we previously have not been able to do and that's going to be a big help.

Allison Duvall 37:50

Thank you. And then Eileen had a question. There are surely many charitable and helping others groups that are interested in using your space. Do you have issues around maintaining a consistent common focus among the many groups with you, so the center is perceived as having a focus and not being all over the place, or is that not a concern?

Toni Hagerman 38:11

It is a concern and it has been all over the place. And we are just now realizing when Rebecca said, we're thinking we're at a place now where we really do you have to say, No, we are at an a new juncture where we are realizing that we it's time to curate, it is time to really prayerfully go out and seek out organizations that that are serving different pockets of the community. The nave building right now is empty pretty much during the week, just because of the way some things have moved around. And we're trying to discern whether that gets shared in this with the same model or if we could use that space as a money maker, you know, as an event space that would support the rest of the program that's happening in the other building. So we are at a place right now where we are curating and really discerning to try to figure out what what what that looks like in the future.

Rebecca Yarborough 38:58

And that's probably also going to have to involve some more listening to the community and really reaching out so that we stay community-based because some of the ideas that have come in again, they may be things that somebody thinks would be great, but if they're not responding to the kind of if they wouldn't resonate with the community and the geography that we serve, it might not be the thing for us.

Toni Hagerman 39:25

We've been really hesitant though, to lock ourselves down too tight on, like a long term mission, five year plan kind of thing. And a good example is we have been pretty refugee focused currently. But who knows, I mean,

with the current and Trump's administration right now talking about zero refugees next year. We know there are a whole lot of migrants just plain old, you know, immigrants from the southern border in our neighborhood and we are starting a Spanish/English conversation night program this fall, in conjunction with our local elementary schools that's just around the corner, where those families 65% of those families are Spanish speaking families. So already we can kind of sense just responding to our community. It had been really refugee focused about six years ago, it might end up being more immigrant focused in the next over the next couple of years. So we've tried to stay kind of nimble and responsive to whatever really is going on the neighborhood. We're in a gentrifying neighborhood. It's it's changing all the time. And so to try to be responsive to that community,

Allison Duvall 40:26

And Linda had a question, are all the board members members of the Episcopal Church? Is the board of board of the diocese or is the Galilee Ministry and board include does it include partners in the building, if you could talk about that board and governance structure?

Rebecca Yarborough 40:42

I'll start out. It's it's not all Episcopalian, it started out it was all Episcopalian, but now we have a Presbyterian and we have is, is Hasta to Hindu or Buddhist?

Toni Hagerman 40:54

He's Hindu.

Rebecca Yarborough 40:55

Hindu. So So and he is from the Bhutanese Community Association. We also have and Toni's Lutheran by the way, we had we started out and we just had everybody meeting all together. And it we went we were having four hour meetings. And so now we have sort of the board meeting. And I really resisted the term board until we all decided that it would be a board kind of like a surfboard, you know, that can just sort of ride the waves. So we have the board that deals with a lot of the the nuts and bolts of just keeping the place going. And then we have a partner's meeting. And you want to talk about that, Toni?

Toni Hagerman 41:42

Yeah, that group's represented in that meeting, and I'd like it to get bigger than it is, but they are the people who actually have doors that lock with their own space. So the people who kind of if they paid money, they would have rented designated space. And so at the beginning of this model, we really did imagine that everybody would just sort of be on the same playing field that there be, you know, this complete decision making flat across all of these organizations in the building. And it became problematic, because because several of the groups really had had a desire to just kind of take the whole building for a refugee center. And that had never been the original idea, at the original idea had been to be a collaboration of a bunch of different organizations that would form community in itself. And so I said, we have evolved, we've gone through a lot of changes and thinking through the structure of how to make decisions in the building and I and it's not, it's not been a straight line, we've really had to discern a lot along the way. And was, what is faithful.

Rebecca Yarborough 42:46

And it's it's really not easy work. I mean, collaboration is hard. And anybody who tells you otherwise it's just flat out lying. But it is so worth it. It is so worth it because you can do so much more together than you can do by yourself.

Allison Duvall 43:08

That's great. And for time, we're going to have to wrap up. The this conversation that we hosted today, literally came about because Toni joined Partners in Welcome. I called her we had an amazing conversation. And then many months later, this event came together. So we want Partners in Welcome and Episcopal Migration Ministries to be a place where we host conversations like this. So if any of you on the call are like, Oh my goodness, I want more. Oh my goodness, we have a story to share. That's what we're here for. So please do reach out. And then that's all I have. So Toni, I'm going to turn it over to you for our closing prayer.

Toni Hagerman 43:47

I wanted to share with us a prayer today that my church uses for it's benediction often and I find it really powerful. So let's pray. May you never feel alone in the struggle for justice and peace. May you know the support of family, friends, and people who feel as passionately about the world as you do. May you feel a part of the great cloud of witnesses, who throughout the ages did God's work and pray for the coming of the kingdom. May you never feel alone. And if you do, may you carry in your heart the words of Jesus, who told his friends, I am with you always. Amen.

Rebecca Yarborough 44:36

Amen.

Allison Duvall 44:38

Toni and Rebecca, thank you so, so much.

Toni Hagerman 44:41

Thank you all very much. And thank you, Allison.

Rebecca Yarborough 44:44

Thank you.

Toni Hagerman 44:45

God bless.

Kendall Martin 44:51

Well, Allison Galilee Ministries' story was so inspiring and I just felt so encouraged by the way the community has come together and the amazing things that they have built together.

Allison Duvall 45:01

I couldn't agree more. And we really encourage you listeners to consider making a gift to support Galilee Ministries and their important work. You can visit galilee.dionc.org to make a donation and the link will also be in the podcast notes.

Kendall Martin 45:18

And we welcome you to join in the work of welcome by making a donation to Episcopal Migration Ministries. No gift is too small and all are put to use to welcome our newest neighbors. Visit episcopalmigrationministries.org/gift or text "hometown" to 91999.

Allison Duvall 45:35

And if you're not in the regular habit of visiting EMM's social media or our blog, we really encourage you to. You can visit episcopalmigrationministries.org/blog and on social media we are @EMMrefugees. We have many upcoming events, webinars, virtual workshops, book club gatherings, and we'd love to have you join us. All that information is on our website, blog and on social media, specifically our Facebook events.

Kendall Martin 46:03

It's time to share the message of welcome loudly and proudly. Purchase an EMM t shirt or bag and join us in proclaiming that you support refugees and you stand with EMM. It's thanks to our listeners like you that even in the midst of grave challenges, we are standing strong, building our network of supporters strengthening our organization and our partners and continuing to proclaim boldly without ceasing that we support refugees go to bit.ly/EMMfall2019 and order one today.

Allison Duvall 46:37

I am most excited Kendall about this this fall fundraiser having hoodies! I'm going to get my very own EMM hoodie and so listeners make sure you get yours too. Our theme song composer is Abraham Mwindo Icando. Find his music at abrahammwindo.bandcamp.com.

Kendall Martin 46:54

Thanks for joining us today listeners. Until next time, peace be with you and all those you consider home.