



St. James' Church

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Leeanna Varga Named Associate for Mission

Boston area social initiatives professional brings broad experience to active New York ministry

Leeanna Varga has been named Associate for Mission at St. James' Church, a large Episcopal parish on Manhattan's Upper East Side. Ms. Varga was most recently responsible for recruitment and coordination of more than 150 volunteers for the Boston Health Care for the Homeless program, the nation's largest and most comprehensive program offering free health care to homeless people. A theologically trained Episcopalian, she has worked in both secular and religious contexts. Her experience includes extensive volunteer recruitment, training and teaching in South Africa and in rural Mississippi, as well as founding and directing an ecumenical, interracial, urban Mississippi program for youth.

Ms. Varga holds a Master of Divinity degree from the Harvard Divinity School. At St. James', she will oversee mission ministries that involve both direct service and advocacy in programs for the immediate neighborhood, in New York City and worldwide, and will develop strategies for the incorporation and active participation of St. James' parishioners in both parish-based and interfaith programs.

St. James' Church, a member congregation of the Episcopal Diocese of New York, takes an active role, financially and in volunteerism, in local initiatives toward alleviating hunger, providing affordable housing and adequate daycare, and ensuring adult literacy. In addition, its Partners in Mission programs work with outside organizations locally and abroad: with Osborne Association in mentoring children affected by a parent's long-term incarceration; with the Diocese of Louisiana, sending parishioners each year to New Orleans to aid the Hurricane Katrina recovery effort; and with the Diocese of Southern Malawi, providing teams of volunteers to help build housing and healthcare facilities. St. James' supports the UN's Millennium Development Goals to meet the needs of the world's poorest as well as local efforts of the Yorkville Common Pantry, Habitat for Humanity, and others.

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St. James' Church will celebrate its bicentennial in 2010. Part of the Episcopal Diocese of New York City, St. James' was founded in 1810 to serve families who had built summer homes in the Lenox Hill area; today the parish draws its members from across the city and from all walks of life. Extensive programs in family ministries, adult education and music are complemented by vast mission activities from South Africa to the South Bronx, yet worship remains at the heart of the community. Renovations to the church and the parish house, completed in 2004, will ensure St. James' ability to fulfill its mission to actively share the love of Jesus Christ with each other, our city and the world. The church is easily reached via all bus lines on Madison and Fifth Avenues, the M72 crosstown bus line, and the 4, 5, and 6 subway lines to 68th Street, Hunter College, and is accessible to the handicapped via the Parish House entrance at 865 Madison Avenue.