

Loaves and Fishes DC

A ministry of St. Stephen and the Incarnation Episcopal Church

March 31, 2017

Dear friend of Loaves and Fishes:

When our guests sit down for a Saturday or Sunday lunch, most of them are not simply a random collection of folks of limited means who have turned up because a free meal is available. Many are there because Loaves and Fishes is their community.

Consider, for example, Gwen and Gene Brisbon. Gwen is 72 now, Gene 57, but it was 25 years ago that they met—while having a meal at Loaves and Fishes. The next year they married, and over the years they returned for an occasional Loaves and Fishes meal. In her working years Gwen had a job at the Pentagon while Gene worked in patient support at the National Institutes of Health. Uncertain health forced both of them into retirement on disability and they now struggle to stay afloat on a monthly income of \$1,010 a month, \$505 apiece. Even with their



subsidized rent, that's not easy at Washington prices. Metrobus and Metrorail fares are poised to go up again a few weeks from now. A no-cost meal at Loaves and Fishes—and a chance to be with old friends—helps them to get through to when the next check comes.

And it's especially good it's happening in an Episcopal church, says Gene. He's an Episcopalian who grew up in the congregation of St. George's Church, the neighboring Episcopal parish to the east of St. Stephen's.

Gwen and Gene Brisbon live life in good cheer in part because they are embraced in a community. The friends of Loaves and Fishes—folks like you, in fact—are embraced in that community as well.

The community of Loaves and Fishes has been happening a long time now at St. Stephen's. Next year we'll be celebrating the program's 50th anniversary, which we believe makes it the oldest church-based free meal program in the Washington metropolitan area. The 25,000 meals that Loaves and Fishes serves each year add up to a far bigger operation than St. Stephen's congregation can support and sustain on its own. We depend on friends like you to hear our call for support, to volunteer to cook, plate, and serve the meals, to help clean up afterwards, and to pitch in on the administrative work that keeps the program running.

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We are also dependent on upon friends like you to share money from what you have to enrich the lives of those who have less. Loaves and Fishes is able to hold down costs because it is overwhelmingly a volunteer-powered endeavor. We have only two professional employees, Denise Stanton-Williams, our able part-time program manager, and our part-time bookkeeper. Two other part-timers, our kitchen manager and our hospitality/security worker, were guests and then volunteers before they came onto the paid staff. That's it. All the rest of work that produces and serves those 25,000 meals is in the hands of volunteers. It puts us in the unusual position for a nonprofit organization that we will spend more of our \$123,000 expense budget for 2017 on program supplies (\$46,000) than we will on personnel (\$41,000).

So I invite you to join me and hundreds of other friends of Loaves and Fishes to cover some of those costs. You'll find an envelope included with this letter in which you can slip your check for any amount you're comfortable with. And please do include your email address in the space provided so that we can stay in touch. If you prefer to donate by credit or debit card, you may go to our website www.loavesandfishesdc.org make an online donation there. Loaves and Fishes is a ministry of St. Stephen's Church, which the Internal Revenue Service has determined to be a 501(c)(3) charity, and contributions to it are generally deductible from federal income tax.

Gwen and Gene Brisbon thank you for attention to this letter and for your support. And so do I.

Faithfully yours,

Edward F. Grandi
Chair, Loaves and Fishes Management Board