

Loaves and Fishes

Episcopal Church of St. Stephen and the Incarnation
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Dear friend of Loaves and Fishes:



Anita Fourcourt, the "book lady," presides over a table filled with her reading offerings of the day.

On a recent Sunday morning I sat down with a tableful of Loaves and Fishes guests to ask them how the program has touched their lives. People talked over each other in answering: it's a safe place to rest, a place to charge your cell phone, a sanitary bathroom in a city where public restrooms are hard to come by—even Starbucks has combination locks on theirs—a barber shop, a place to network, to share advice and news. "All you need here is a hungry belly," said one guest. "It's not just a hot meal, it's a balanced meal, which is a matter of life and death when you're diabetic," said another, an older man.

None of their examples are hypothetical. One end of our table was embroiled in a discussion of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, while guests at the next table laughed and ribbed each other over a game of spades. Across the way,

exhausted-looking folks napped in their chairs. A volunteer barber cut a man's hair on the landing. And by the back wall, guests perused stacks of books, while two volunteers took requests; reading glasses and bilingual dictionaries are popular. All are welcome, and when two ministers offered blessings or holy communion to those who would like them, they made the announcement in Spanish and English.