



REACH ANNUAL REPORT 2022

Reach is ECA's OutReach and InReach group. We look for ways to care for parishioners who may have needs, as well as serving both ongoing and urgent needs in the community. We meet at noon on the second Sunday of each month. The Reach committee is co-chaired by Cindy Lippert and Jane Sanders, and the Vestry liaison is Nicole File.

Reach had a very active 2022, expanding on some missions and beginning another significant project.

We continued our partnership serving homeless neighbors with Shady Grove Baptist Church. We now serve hot dinners once a month to about 2-3 dozen people who live primarily in the wooded areas near I-75 and the Canton Rd. Connector. Guests have told us that they enjoy the fact that we bring food that is different and better quality from what they usually get. They also enjoy spending time with us, and have said that we are one of the few groups who will sit down with them and get to know them, and recognize them on future visits. We feel this is an essential part of our ministry both to them and internally.



"Our Mission is to bear witness to God's love and invite, encourage, and prepare God's people to share that grace with others."

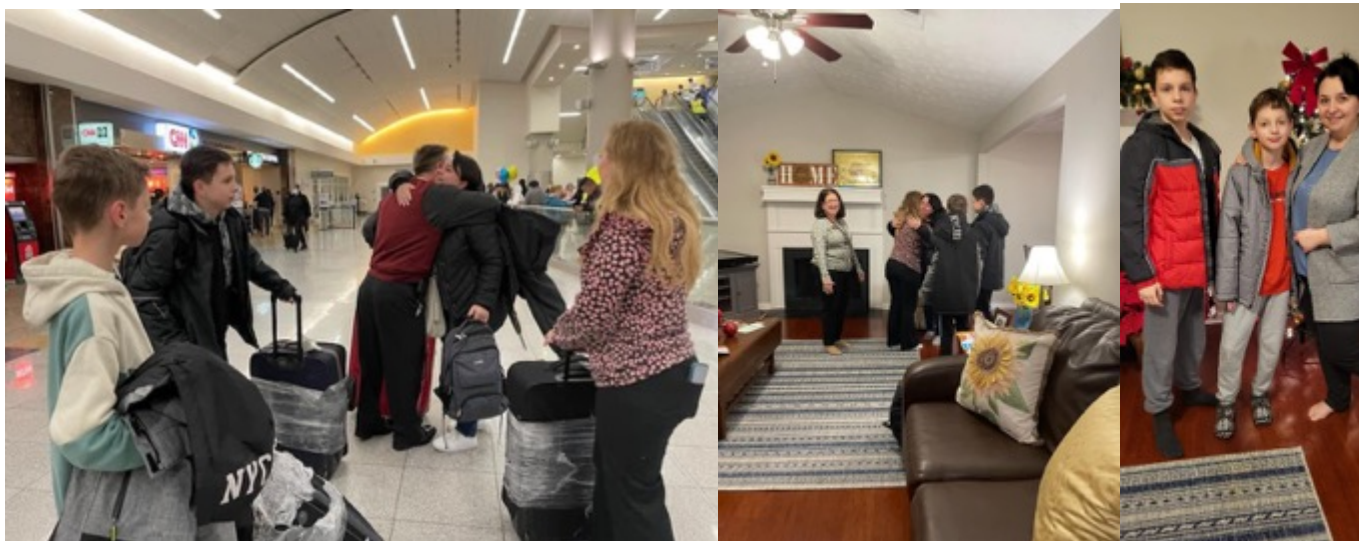
We also have expanded our Shady Grove ministry to include takeaway breakfast bags, so people can also have something to eat in the mornings. On occasion, we have included new socks, toiletries, bug spray, and other highly sought-after items. We also passed out sleeping mats through our partnership with Softer Streets. ECA's young people have started to get involved too. For our Thanksgiving-week meal, young kids decorated the breakfast bags, and older youth helped assemble and serve meals. We have also had non-ECA members contribute or volunteer, with a Brownie troop making 40 gift bags for our December dinner. We feel the inclusion of youth expands the ministry even further, giving our young people real-world, close-up understanding of the people we are serving and allowing them a safe way to interact with people they may not normally come into contact with in their day-to-day lives.



In other food news, our October food drive in honor of Kathy Norris was again a success, with more than 1,800 food items collected. Unfortunately, Ameris Bank has partnered with a larger organization, and did not give us a monetary donation this year based on the amount of food we collected. Nevertheless, Papa's Pantry and Never Alone continue to be blessed by our relationship.

“Our Mission is to bear witness to God’s love and invite, encourage, and prepare God’s people to share that grace with others.”

Our big new project this year was sponsoring a refugee family from Ukraine for humanitarian parole. This allowed them to come to the United States for a period of at least 2 years. Nicole File became the official State Department sponsor for the family. The church approved the expenditure of up to \$35,000 over a two-year period to support the family's transition. We helped them secure a lease on a house nearby, and paid for a large security deposit and six months' rent up front, due to the fact that they had no U.S. credit history or income when they arrived.



Volunteers donated, delivered, and set up an entire 3-bedroom house full of furniture, small appliances, housewares, food, and other essential items as well as a closet full of clothes and numerous toys and school supplies for the family. The involvement and dedication of so many parishioners was spectacular to witness. We formed an executive subcommittee to make sure all needs are met without overburdening anyone. Transportation, supplies, education, job hunting, paperwork for various benefits, and more are all being addressed by our members as well as a refugee resettlement agency in Atlanta. Others in the community have also rallied, with Heritage Presbyterian Church donating a huge stash of Christmas gifts, a nearby Ukrainian church offering any assistance or social opportunities they would like, and the family's old friends in Gainesville who take them to church there and back every Sunday. We also helped the family apply for and secure benefits including Medicaid and SNAP (food stamp) benefits.

“Our Mission is to bear witness to God’s love and invite, encourage, and prepare God’s people to share that grace with others.”



Irina and her sons Timur and Natan have been an incredible joy to know. The boys love attending Mabry Middle School, which has fully embraced them and even bought them bikes for Christmas. Irina is an accomplished baker and has impressed several of us with her beautiful and delicious cakes. We look forward to getting them on their feet financially, and continuing to serve as a resource and good neighbors and friends.

Robin Racoff continued her caregiver support group for those who are providing support for elderly or ill people. A few people meet by Zoom each month to share stories and support, as well as ideas and information for maximizing resources. Robin also arranged for ECA to help pay for an adapted driving van for one of her patients, who suffers from ALS.

Our yard sale this year raised about 3,000. We followed last year's formula of not pricing items in advance and again asked people to make an offer on whatever they selected. This greatly reduced the work and stress involved in preparations and did not impact our bottom line. We also benefited greatly from Father Paul's position as executor of a family friend's estate. After the estate sale, we received many beautiful items such as fine china, crystal, craft supplies, etc as well as an extremely haunted-looking porcelain doll.



“Our Mission is to bear witness to God’s love and invite, encourage, and prepare God’s people to share that grace with others.”

The beautiful items brought in extra money, and the haunted doll found a home with a parishioner who may benefit from counseling. As usual, everyone had a great time volunteering, shopping, cooking, and eating at the yard sale. Some people even got a chance to enhance their looks with samples from our wig collection.



For Thanksgiving and Christmas, we took part in our annual support of Emmaus House, serving at the Grandparents' Dinner and again on Christmas weekend, including delivering toys. This was in addition to a new event we did with Emmaus House, a cookout to honor summer school students and their parents at the end of the session. We also continued our annual Angel Tree and Thanksgiving Dinner ministries, helping numerous families pay for holiday meals and get Christmas gifts for their families.



“Our Mission is to bear witness to God’s love and invite, encourage, and prepare God’s people to share that grace with others.”



The year wrapped up with a significant honor for ECA, when the Diocese of Atlanta awarded Nicole File the Bishop's Cross for her outreach work. We all look forward to continuing our efforts in 2023, sharing Christ's love with those who need it most.



Respectfully submitted,

Nicole File

"Our Mission is to bear witness to God's love and invite, encourage, and prepare God's people to share that grace with others."