

Text of letter from The Reverend Robert Nelson Back, April 1968

To the People of Saint Luke's:

The recent assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King has shocked all of us into searching our hearts and minds. Dr. King was a scholar. He could easily have risen in eminence as a theologian and received much praise and few, if any, insults. But he chose to throw in his lot with the poor - - black and white - - and was shot while pleading the cause of garbage collectors.

Few of us have the courage to choose such a path. We try to help in smaller ways but it seems lost in the gigantic problem of the poor of our cities. Somehow the poor have become, to us, a faceless mass, caught in circumstances beyond our, or their, control.

Yet the poor, of course, are not faceless, and in casting about for something that Saint Luke's could do to help, it was just this need for seeing the poor as people that caught the attention of the Vestry MRI* Committee to whom I gave the task of showing us where Saint Luke's responsibility lay.

This letter is to tell you all of our decision. An office will be staffed at St. Luke's with volunteers under a full time, paid director. Mrs. William Sherman, whose dedication and talent many of you have come to know through the Church School, has agreed to take on the job. Money for running this new office has been donated by concerned parishioners. Mrs. Sherman will have a desk, a telephone and file cabinets. Her task will be to coordinate work that will bring together the needs of individuals in disadvantaged areas of nearby communities, with the resources of individuals in Darien.

What needs and what resources! We are not yet sure. It depends on what experienced organizations tell us is needed - - perhaps a teenager to organize basketball, a tutor for a ten year old, a coat for a toddler. Or there is the whole unexplored field of how we could help overburdened social workers. Perhaps several people in Saint Luke's could become centers of information on available aid to the handicapped and follow through to find the best answer for some individual or family. The same plan might work for scholarships for talented children, care for the aged, on the job training for young people.

Or perhaps Saint Luke's job will develop differently; but we have decided that the best way to find out is to start and Monday morning our new office was officially opened. Two things we do know - - the main emphasis of our work will be in the direction of people, persons in need and not toward a faceless mass. By persons, I do not mean only the poor - - for we, too, are in need of forgetting our problems as we help those with greater ones, of losing ourselves for Christ's sake, is simple care of our neighbors.

In due course you will be hearing more from us. If you want to indicate your interest now, you may phone Mrs. Sherman at the parish phone number.

God bless you!

Yours,
Robert Nelson Back, D.D. Rector

**Mutual Responsibility and Interdependence Committee*