

175 SISTER PROFILES: St. John's Bread & Life

Sister Marie Sorenson



**Sisters Judith Park, Kathleen Kull, Fran Fahey,
Frances Gritte, Barbara Buxton, Liz Bickar,
Virginia Blend, Maureen Murphy,
Caroline Tweedy, RSM and Marie Sorenson**

St. John's Bread & Life

St. John's Bread and Life recently concluded its 40th year anniversary serving the local community of Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn.



CELEBRATING

175

YEARS OF JOYFUL WITNESS

1849 - 2024



**Sister Judy, Chaplain
St. John's Bread & Life**

During those 40 years the Sisters of Charity-Halifax have been integral partners, supporting the mission and providing a continuing presence to those most in need.

Sister Susan Dean was the first Sister to come to Bread and Life in the early 2000s and since then many Sisters have been engaged in the mission.

Sisters Virginia Blend, Barbara Buxton, Frances Gritte, Josephine D'Agostino and Susan Dean volunteered on the Mobile Soup Kitchen.

Sisters Fran Fahey, Maureen Murphy, Kathleen Kull and Elizabeth Bickar shared their expertise in counseling, singing, crocheting and support for our guests.

Sister Margaret Mary Fitzpatrick served as the Chairperson of the Board of Directors and Sister Judith Park ministered to the community as chaplain.

Sisters and Associates far and near have provided toiletries, warm clothing, and financial assistance so, to paraphrase, "it takes a village to keep the mission thriving!"

Over the course of these past 40 years, Bedford-Stuyvesant has seen its share of good times and times of struggle. Bread and Life came into existence during the crack epidemic in the early 1980s when the effects of drugs and poverty took a toll on the area. At that time, the Daughters of Charity and Vincentian Community staffed the local parish, St. John the Baptist Church.

Seeing the need before them, they mobilized the parish community to



Sisters Caroline and Marie St. John's Bread & Life

respond to a most pressing concern, hunger.

Sister Mary Bernadette Szymczak, DC was instrumental in leading this effort and 40 years later her legacy continues.

Bread and Life provides hope.

Our tag line, *feeding body, mind and spirit* calls us to encounter the whole person coming through our doors,



**Sister Margaret Mary Fitzpatrick
St. John's Bread and Life**

recognizing the dignity of each person.

People often hear about Bread and Life through word of mouth from people who live in the community. We welcome people with a smile, respect, compassion and inclusion. In today's world, that matters deeply.

Throughout major events in New York City including September 11th,
175 SISTER PROFILES

Hurricane Sandy, the Corona-19 pandemic and the current migrant crisis, Bread and Life is motivated by its Vincentian heritage *to do what is before us* by serving those most in need. The pandemic has “flipped the script” on how we serve the community. Our expanded outreach to 25 new sites in the Brooklyn and Queens areas allows us to deliver fresh fruit and vegetables to underserved areas. Fifteen hundred *grab and go hot meals* are prepared daily to feed hungry New Yorkers and our digital choice food pantry averages 350 visits per day.

One last post-pandemic hurdle remains, to reopen our dining room for in-person dining. Soon, very soon!

As we go forward, we carry with us the amazing support and generosity of the Sisters of Charity-Halifax as we stand with our brothers and sisters living on the margins.