

CATHOLIC
CHARITIES

CHERISHING THE DIVINE WITHIN ALL

Social Justice Toolkit

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In 1792, Archbishop John Carroll mandated that a portion of all parish revenues be set aside “for the relief of the poor.” This set the stage for the establishment of Catholic Charities of Maryland. In 2023, Catholic Charities of Maryland celebrated the 100th anniversary of our official incorporation. This occurred in 1923, when the Catholic service programs founded under this call-to-action from Bishop Carroll were officially consolidated underneath a single agency.

Our celebration of this centennial, however, has been about more than just our agency’s history. As we look forward to the next 100 years, we have the opportunity to recognize, cherish, and uplift all communities, partners and faith traditions that share in our mission, vision and values. As a community, we can unite to pursue the work of improving the lives of Marylanders in need.

The enclosed Social Justice Toolkit is comprised of resources, activity ideas, and community organization profiles that highlight the social justice principles informing our mission. These are living values that have informed our work since the beginning — it is our hope that this toolkit serves as a resource for you to continue to write that history in your own neighborhoods and faith communities.

Catholic social teaching guides much of our work. Because of this, the Social Justice Toolkit you find here is organized around the seven principles, which present the way that we navigate our society and live the call to holiness. Here, we present some examples of service opportunities, lived stories, and other resources for consideration in living these principles and working for social justice.

For current listings of volunteer opportunities across Catholic Charities’ programs, please visit our **[Volunteer Portal](#)**.

Principle 1: *Life and Dignity of the Human Person*



Stories of the Principle Lived Out

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: Jeff Weber, Gallagher Services

We are blessed to have many long-term volunteers. One of those is Jeff Weber, who just celebrated his 20th year of volunteering at Gallagher. Jeff is an integral part of our spiritual development program, as he prepares a Gospel lesson each week and leads the people we support in song with guitar music. Jeff continued his volunteer service virtually during the pandemic.

Jeff shared:

The people at Gallagher Services have become my church — my home for fellowship and worship. I am anxiously awaiting the time when we can be together in-person again. But sharing time together in our video meetings has been a blessing. I appreciate the opportunity to pray together, share a word of encouragement and learn about the Gospel together with my church family. Singing together is a little more challenging, and I find that the hand signals and sign language that some residents use are helpful and expressive — a great way to share the meanings of the songs. I also find that I use more props when presenting Gospel lessons, holding them up to the camera so all can see, which helps to hold attention and convey the Gospel message.

I think, though, that the thing I enjoy most is seeing the joy on the faces of everyone when they see each other — they call out each other's names and I see laughter and genuine joy. It is just a hint of what it will be like when we are back together physically, but it is still a connection. How wonderful! I am thankful to God and the staff from Gallagher and Catholic Charities who make this possible.

Everyone is equally sacred and important. At Catholic Charities, our vision is “Cherishing the Divine within all.” When we believe that every one of us is sacred, then every person we encounter will be treated with dignity and love. We honor the inherent dignity of others when we recognize and celebrate their unique gifts, talents, and abilities at all stages of life. It is not enough to just meet others where they are — we are also called to treat our neighbors in need as we would want to be treated. For example, the meal programs at Our Daily Bread Employment Center and My Sister’s Place Women’s Center use a restaurant-style seated table service approach rather than traditional “serving line” delivery to foster a more empowering experience for our guests.

Experiential learning ideas

Catholic Charities opportunities:

- Volunteer with a Gallagher Services residential program as a special friend or with a Gallagher Services day program in other capacities to support people with intellectual/developmental disabilities.
- Volunteer as an activity coordinator for older adults at the Jenkins Senior Living Campus.
- Volunteer at Our Daily Bread Employment Center or My Sister’s Place Women’s Center Meals Programs.

Additional opportunities:

- Commit as a faith community to support programs that affirm the life and dignity of the human person (through offerings or collections, the poor box, or other ministries).

Resources to support living out the principle

Catholic Charities resources:

- [Caritas House Assisted Living](#)
- [Gallagher Services](#)
- [My Sister’s Place Women’s Center](#)
- [Our Daily Bread Employment Center](#)
- [St. Ann Adult Day Services](#)
- [St. Elizabeth Rehabilitation and Nursing Center](#)

Additional resources:

- [Best Buddies](#)
- [Special Olympics Maryland](#)
- [Volunteer Match](#)
- **Book Recommendations:**
 - *The Optician of Lampedusa*, by Emma-Jane Kirby
 - *Deus Caritas Est*, Encyclical by Pope Benedict



Principle 2: *Call to Family, Community, and Participation*

We are not meant to be isolated – we need each other. Communities are meant to take care of each other. Every person has the right to participate in decisions that affect their own lives and to be an agent of change in the communities they belong to, from their families to their neighborhoods, and up through the state and national level. The work of fostering community can take many forms: joining an activity program at a Senior Living Community, getting involved in state and local activism, and supporting family and community-based empowerment programs are all ways to honor the call to joint participation.

Experiential learning ideas

Catholic Charities opportunities:

- Volunteer as an activity coordinator or book club leader for older adults at Catholic Charities Senior Communities locations across Maryland.
- Support Catholic Charities' emergency family shelters: Anna's House in Harford County and Sarah's House in Anne Arundel County.
- Donate back-to-school supplies.
- Volunteer as a tutor for children in Catholic Charities St. Vincent's Villa residential treatment center
- Get involved in Catholic Charities' Parish Social Ministry office.

Additional opportunities:

- Join your faith community's Social Justice, Community Engagement, or Outreach committee.
- Join/create a ministry of outreach to parishioners who are most isolated (e.g., older adults living alone and without a great deal of support).
- Volunteer with a social enterprise organization that helps facilitate equitable community participation.

Resources to support living out the principle

Catholic Charities resources:

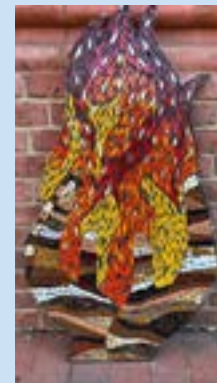
- [Anna's House](#)
- [Carroll County Head Start](#)
- [Catholic Charities Advocacy](#)
- [Harford County Early Head Start](#)
- [Head Start of Baltimore City](#)
- [Parish Social Ministry Office](#)
- [Sarah's House](#)
- [Senior Communities Volunteer Portal](#)
- [St. Vincent's Villa](#)

Additional resources:

- [Art with a Heart](#)
- [Habitat for Humanity of the Chesapeake](#)
- [Innovation Works Baltimore](#)
- [Maryland Catholic Conference Social Concerns](#)
- **Book Recommendations:**
 - [Communities of Salt and Light: Reflections on the Social Mission of the Parish](#), United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
 - [Fratelli Tutti](#), Encyclical from Pope Francis
 - [Not in My Neighborhood: How Bigotry Shaped a Great American City](#), by Antero Pietila

Stories of the Principle Lived Out

ORGANIZATIONAL SPOTLIGHT: **Art with a Heart**



Art with a Heart provides equitable access to visual art experiences by providing classes and engaging students with workforce training and civic participation experiences. They also have a social

enterprise retail store, which sells artwork created by its participants.

Founder and Executive Director Randi Pupkin shared:

Twenty years ago, as Art with a Heart was just starting, I had an encounter with a young man in East Baltimore. He was riding a bicycle and pulling a grocery cart behind him, hitting the cars parked along the side of the road as he went. I thought, this young man needs a job. And while our new organization had not yet provided job training, I realized that we had a unique opportunity to provide social enterprise training to the community, while giving the community an active voice through art. For me, it is not enough to just talk about values and principles — it is important to create something that helps to move community forward. For me at Art with a Heart, this has meant finding leadership that sees the importance of family, community, and participation. The mosaics that we have created together with communities across the city since then are such a perfect metaphor for the power of community collaboration: together, we are greater than the sum of our parts.

Principle 3: *Rights and Responsibilities*



Stories of the Principle Lived Out

FAITH COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT: Huber Memorial Baptist Church

The right to shelter does not just mean the right to stable housing, although that is certainly an important element of the principle. Our right to shelter also includes our right to a safe and clean community, and is accompanied by our responsibility to create and help maintain these conditions for others. In service of this obligation, Huber Memorial Church benefited from a grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust to fund a clean-up event on Loch Raven Boulevard in Baltimore City. They now host this event once a month as an ongoing commitment to their community.

We all have fundamental rights, such as the right to shelter, food, education, a living wage, immigration, and equal protection under the law. These rights are universal and are rooted in the inherent dignity of our shared humanity. With these rights come responsibilities. We have a duty to ensure that not only our rights but our neighbors' rights are being upheld.

Experiential learning ideas

Catholic Charities opportunities:

- Promote the right to shelter by donating toiletries and clothing supplies to the Weinberg Housing and Resource Center.
- Support the right to a safe and flourishing community by donating to a back-to-school drive or community fair offered by Safe Streets.
- Donate to the Esperanza Center to help support access to pro-bono and low-cost legal aid for members of the immigrant community.
- Support the right to health and wellness by volunteering with a family support group for individuals receiving behavioral health services.
- Get involved locally in justice-related initiatives and advocating for local changes that affirm the rights of workers through supporting the legislative priorities of the Catholic Charities Advocacy team (e.g., push for a living wage).

Additional opportunities:

- Help to support a community's right to a safe, clean environment by organizing a Community Clean-up.

Resources to support living out the principle

Catholic Charities resources:

- [Advocacy](#)
- [Behavioral Health](#)
- [Esperanza Center](#)
- [Safe Streets Brooklyn-Curtis Bay](#)
- [Safe Streets Sandtown-Winchester](#)
- [Weinberg Housing and Resource Center](#)

Additional resources:

- [Chesapeake Bay Trust](#)
- [Huber Memorial Baptist Church](#)
- [Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake](#)
- [Maryland Catholic Conference](#)



Principle 4: *Option for People who live in Poverty and are Vulnerable*

We believe in prioritizing the people who are most vulnerable to poverty and injustice. Although we direct our time and resources in this way, we recognize we are nobody's savior. We walk alongside the people we serve, listening to their voices and their knowledge, and accompanying them on their journey. At Catholic Charities, we believe that the preferential option for those who are vulnerable represents a call to both address our neighbors' immediate needs and to empower others in their journey toward independence and flourishing. Supporting emergency assistance programs like meal service and housing programs are just a few ways to meet the immediate needs of those who are vulnerable, while volunteering or donating to job training programs can address the conditions that contribute to that vulnerability.

Experiential learning ideas

Catholic Charities opportunities:

- Volunteer to serve dinner at the Weinberg Housing and Resource Center.
- Support a workforce development program such as Christopher Place Employment Academy, Learn2Earn, or Work4Success — either through volunteering or donating to the program — to assist those living in poverty to find and maintain employment.
- Help support people seeking assistance to overcome poverty by joining the efforts of Western Maryland Community Connections.

Additional opportunities:

- Address food insecurity by organizing a non-perishable food collection in your faith community for a chosen food pantry.
- Partner with organizations that support people living in poverty, and collect gifts and/or supplies for those people during the holidays or any time of the year, based on their stated needs. Some organizations in addition to Catholic Charities of Baltimore include: St. Vincent de Paul, Loaves and Fishes, Roca, Healthcare for the Homeless, Franciscan Center of Baltimore, and the Center for Urban Families.
- Collect school supplies for students in underserved schools.
- Volunteer as a GEDCO CARES Financial Assistance Volunteer.

Resources to support living out the principle

Catholic Charities resources:

- [My Sister's Place Women's Center Learn 2 Earn](#)
- [Our Daily Bread Work4Success Program](#)
- [Weinberg Housing and Resource Center](#)
- [Western Maryland Community Connections](#)

Additional resources:

- [GEDCO CARES](#)
- [Franciscan Center of Baltimore](#)
- [National Center on Institutions and Alternatives](#)



Stories of the Principle Lived Out

ORGANIZATIONAL SPOTLIGHT: **National Center on Institutions and Alternatives (NCIA)**

For over 45 years, the NCIA has provided person-centered care for veterans, returning citizens, and individuals living with disabilities. They actively strive to engage those who are most vulnerable with employment, residential, and community day programming services. They provide certification-based programming in the automotive, HVAC, and commercial driving fields to help empower individuals living in poverty to develop and exercise their gifts to their fullest potential.

Walter Billips, Operations Director, and Imam Earl El-Amin, Vice President of Community and External Affairs, shared:

At the heart of our work is a desire to restore and develop the self-esteem of those we serve. We are here to both recognize and amplify their dreams and vision. In service of this mission, we are dedicated to providing participants with a specific skill set through vocational training that will provide opportunities for viable careers. Through this work, we help to instill in our participants the faith to navigate through life and solidify their ability to achieve their desired goals with integrity and conviction.

Principle 5: *The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers*



Stories of the Principle Lived Out

ORGANIZATIONAL SPOTLIGHT:

Catholic Charities Advocacy Department

Regan Vaughan, former Catholic Charities Director of Advocacy, shared:

Advocacy for paid family and medical leave has been a key priority for Catholic Charities and a broad coalition of partners, who have been working to bring it to reality in Maryland for nearly a decade.

In 2022, Catholic Charities' advocacy team was part of a coalition that helped to pass the Time to Care Act. The experience of many families during the COVID-19 pandemic has only reinforced the importance of paid family and medical leave in our state. COVID forced many of us to re-examine our priorities, and there is a broader recognition that employees face family challenges outside of work. We've seen many people leaving the workforce to care for parents and spouses during COVID. Women have left the workforce in droves at a time when we have a critical labor shortage. People don't want to re-enter the workforce if they can't take time when they need it.

The new law will provide nearly all Maryland employees the right to 12–24 weeks of paid, job-protected leave so they can bond with a new child, care for a seriously ill loved one, deal with their own serious health needs, or address needs in connection with a military deployment. It is life-changing for those who, for example, have to choose between getting paid and caring for a sick child.

The coalition will continue to work on implementation to ensure that there are strong regulations and a program that will benefit Marylanders for generations to come. The law covers nearly all employees in the state, regardless of employer size, and includes both full- and part-time workers in both the private and public sectors.

People do not exist for the economy; the economy exists for the people. Work is intended to provide a means of creativity and sustenance for workers. Every worker holds certain rights meant to protect their well-being: the right to a living wage, a safe work environment, to sick leave, disability protection, a pension, etc. In addition to supporting access to training and employment that provides a livable wage, we are called to protect the rights of employees within their jobs.

Experiential learning ideas

Catholic Charities opportunities:

- Support advocacy for legislation that supports the dignity and rights of workers.
- Volunteer to facilitate a life skills employment workshop series at Christopher Place Employment Academy.
- Support expanding vocational programming for young adults and the economically disenfranchised through programs like LevelUp and Compassionate Caregivers.

Additional opportunities:

- Volunteer as a GEDCO CARES Job Assistance Volunteer.
- Become an employer or training partner for Turnaround Tuesday.
- Support occupational training programs at NCIA, IT Works, and Center for Urban Families.

Resources to support living out the principle

Catholic Charities resources:

- [Catholic Charities Advocacy](#)
- [Christopher Place Employment Academy](#)
- [Compassionate Caregivers](#)
- [LevelUp](#)

Additional resources:

- [Center for Urban Families](#)
- [GEDCO CARES](#)
- [itWorks Learning Center, Inc](#)
- [Maryland Catholic Conference](#)
- [NCIA](#)
- [Turnaround Tuesday](#)



Principle 6: *Solidarity*

We are one human family across every border, race, ethnicity, religion, belief, etc. We believe in the global common good and that we should work alongside one another to make life better not only for our immediate neighbors but for those who are different or geographically distant from us. At Catholic Charities, the principle of solidarity finds special expression in our support and advocacy for our new neighbors in the immigrant community.

Experiential learning ideas

Catholic Charities opportunities:

- Volunteer to teach English as a second language (ESOL) at the Esperanza Center.

Additional opportunities:

- Fundraise or get involved with an international relief organization such as the International Rescue Committee or Catholic Relief Services. Consider inviting someone from an organization to present information to a group.
- Sell Fair Trade products after services; educate faith community about Fair Trade principles and products.

Resources to support living out the principle

Catholic Charities resources:

- [Esperanza Center](#)

Additional resources:

- [CASA Maryland](#)
- [Catholic Relief Services](#)
- [Fair Trade Certified](#)
- [Immigration Outreach Service Center](#)
- [International Rescue Committee](#)
- [SERRV International](#)

Book Recommendations:

- [*Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*](#), by Nick Kristof & Sheryl WuDunn
- [*Tattoos on the Heart*](#), by Fr. Greg Boyle

Stories of the Principle Lived Out

ORGANIZATIONAL SPOTLIGHT: The Immigration Outreach Service Center

The Immigration Outreach Service Center, Inc. (IOSC) is a non-profit organization based on the grounds of St. Matthew Catholic Church in Northeast Baltimore City. The organization is committed to serving immigrants, including refugees, asylum seekers, and people who are undocumented, regardless of status or ethnicity. The Center was established in response to the immigration needs of many of its parishioners. At St. Matthew's, immigrants from over 45 countries are represented. Today, the center is an independent non-profit organization that has served immigrants from 123 countries.



Principle 7: Care for Creation



Stories of the Principle Lived Out

FAITH COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT: St. Pius X Green Initiatives

The environmental stewardship ministry of St. Pius X Church in the Rogers Forge neighborhood of

Baltimore facilitates three projects that give parishioners and community members opportunities for living out this principle. Each of these projects highlights a different facet of caring for creation, and how it intersects with other social justice principles.

- **The Giving Garden:** In 2018, Elizabeth Wagner, long-time parishioner at St. Pius X, began construction of a vegetable garden adjacent to the church rectory. Every spring/summer season since then, she and numerous volunteers have prepared and maintained the garden, harvested the vegetables, and donated them weekly to GEDCO CARES in Govans and the Assistance Center of Towson Churches (ACTC) to be distributed to people in need in nearby neighborhoods. Community gardens help increase biodiversity and improve air quality. Volunteering in the garden is a healthy outdoor activity, and the garden provides fresh, local produce to those who may not have access to it.
- **The St. Francis Bioretention Garden:** With grants from the Chesapeake Bay Trust and partnership with Interfaith Partners of the Chesapeake, Blue Water Baltimore, and CityScape Engineering, St. Pius X built and later updated a bioretention facility/garden on the parish grounds. It filters the stormwater runoff so that pollutants do not flow into the Chesapeake Bay. The native plants and flowers in the garden provide a home for birds, butterflies, bees, and other pollinating insects. Parishioners and neighbors have regularly volunteered to maintain the garden, providing a service to the community while learning about these types of facilities.
- **Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Distribution:** For over 10 years, St. Pius X Parish has hosted a seasonal, once-a-week drop-off/pick-up of fresh produce from One Straw Farm in a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) arrangement. Parishioners and other members of the community purchase “shares” for a lump sum amount and they pick up a large bag of various produce items each week. Aside from providing participants with fresh produce, supporting local farming cuts down on one’s carbon footprint by reducing transportation emissions and resource usage attached to big industry. Additionally, One Straw Farm donates one bag of produce to food pantries for every 10 bags purchased each week. The season runs from June through November, and there generally are 60 or more families participating each season.

We began with a belief in the sacredness of the human person, and we conclude with a belief in the sacredness of all creation – not only humans, but animals, plants, water, and air. We share the earth as our common home. We are gifted with the task of caring for the health and future of this home of ours. Ecological justice is a matter of social justice.

Experiential learning ideas

Catholic Charities opportunities:

- Volunteer to work with the individuals supported by Gallagher Services’ vocational program in the garden or greenhouse.
- Volunteer to help clean up the nature trail near Villa Maria School in Dulaney Valley.
- Volunteer at Anna’s House or Sarah’s House emergency family shelters to maintain the outdoor and gardening areas for families.

Additional opportunities:

- Plant a giving garden on your faith community property.
- Contract with agencies to create a bioretention facility/garden on your faith community property.
- Host a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Distribution.
- Volunteer with First Fruit Farm or The Black Church Food Security Network to assist with food harvesting and distribution.

Resources to support living out the principle

Catholic Charities resources:

- [Anna’s House](#)
- [Gallagher Services](#)
- [Sarah’s House](#)
- [St. Vincent’s Villa](#)

Additional resources:

- [Blue Water Baltimore](#)
- [Chesapeake Bay Trust](#)
- [Chesapeake Climate Action Network](#)
- [CityScape Engineering](#)
- [Community Supported Agriculture Distribution](#)
- [First Fruits Farm](#)
- [How-to instructions to create a giving garden](#)
- [Interfaith Partners of the Chesapeake](#)
- [LocalHarvest](#)
- [Pearlstone Retreat Center](#): Jewish Faith-based approach to farming and education
- [Planting Seeds of Thought](#): About Community Gardens
- **Book Recommendations:**
 - [Laudato si’](#), Encyclical by Pope Francis
 - [Abell Foundation Climate Reports](#)

Conclusion



As you live out these social justice principles in your own communities, we hope you will keep adding to this list with agencies, activities, and resources you are passionate about. This work is ongoing and we are grateful to be part of a community that shares a common vision for a more just world where all people can thrive.

If your faith community would like to discuss more ways you can connect with [Catholic Charities](#) in service, donating, or learning, or if you have ideas for further resources that would help support your outreach efforts, our [Parish Social Ministry](#) office is here to help.

Contact Sarah McIlvried, Assistant Director of Social Ministry, at smcilveried@cc-md-org or 667-600-2020.

We encourage you to access our calendar of experiential learning opportunities through [AWARE](#), listed below, for more hands-on opportunities to engage these principles throughout the centennial year and beyond!

AWARE



AWARE invites individuals into a meaningful encounter with the daily realities of Catholic Charities' clients. This interactive, hands-on learning program allows participants to gain a better understanding of our region's social issues and the impact they have on real people. Each session highlights a particular area of service and social justice. AWARE sessions explore hunger and homelessness, aging, early childhood education and family strengthening, mental health in childhood, immigration, and disability.

Visit www.cc-md.org/aware to view upcoming AWARE sessions or contact us and we'll work with you to schedule one. Sign up as an individual or invite your family, coordinate a group from your parish, or bring a friend! AWARE is designed for adults, including young adults of high school age.

For more information, please contact Sarah McIlvried, Assistant Director of Social Ministry at 667-600-2020 or smcilveried@cc-md.org.





CATHOLIC CHARITIES

CHERISHING THE DIVINE WITHIN ALL

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*Inspired by the Gospel mandates to love, serve and teach,
Catholic Charities provides care and services to improve the lives of Marylanders in need.*