A Visit to St. Ann's Episcopal Church

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*by **Caitlin Buckley***

The **South Bronx** is **one of the poorest areas in the nation**, and **food poverty** is widespread in the neighborhood of **Morrisania**, home of **St. Ann's Episcopal Church**, one of the Food Bank's network members. For more than a century, the church has been a Bronx landmark — in fact, it is **the first church in the Bronx** — but St. Ann's has grown into an innovative and esteemed community resource.

St. Ann's operates a **food pantry and soup kitchen**, as well as after-school and summer programs for **children**, which incorporate nutrition education along with field trips, healthy snacks and exploration of the church's vegetable garden. Cynthia, who cooks at the soup kitchen, moved to New York from the West Indies and has been a member of the St. Ann's congregation for 20 years. "We are a family," she says, and many members of the church both **volunteer** and rely on the church's services. Alberta, a senior living on social security, first came to St. Ann's for the food pantry and has joined the community. "I get **food stamps** now, so I don't need the pantry as much, but I feel right at home here," she says.

St. Ann's is led by the **Rev. Martha Overall**, an ardent and compassionate leader in the fight against hunger. Author and educator **Jona Jonathan Kozol has chronicled her work**, and Bernice King, who helps run the kitchen and after-school meal program at St. Ann's, says, "She makes sure that we can feed everyone nutritious food…and she cares."

Bernice is proud that St. Ann's is helping meet the needs of its neighbors. "Whatever we have to do, we'll do," she says. "We have a lot of **seniors** who come to us, and they're ashamed. They've worked their whole lives, and they don't want to take help. But [they find] a community here."

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From top: Alberta, a soup kitchen client and member of St. Ann's congregation; St. Ann's board member Virginia Potter catching up with congregation member Florence Taylor during soup kitchen service; Cynthia Black, a cook at St. Ann's soup kitchen; photos courtesy of Scott Waddell