

Saint Luke's Lutheran Church was founded in 1850 by a group of German immigrants. Its early history finds the congregation involved with thousands of immigrants, not only providing them with the pastoral ministry of Word and Sacrament but also assisting with settlement into their new community and assistance with employment, integration, education. Saint Luke's operated a parish school for grades one through high school at its 42nd Street location. The congregation was always involved in community efforts to improve quality of life conditions and offer assistance to persons in need. It was long known as a welcome place for youth activities, hundreds of children, teens and young adults using its facilities on 46th Street . . . a gymnasium, bowling alleys, lounge areas and extensive programs of recreation and remedial academic help.

During World War II Saint Luke's was the site of the Lutheran Service Center for the East Coast. Thousands of military personnel enroute to the war zones of Europe spent time at Saint Luke's. The parish's members kept coffee, sandwiches and sweets readily available; counseling and worship opportunities, recreational activities offered a warm welcome to guests regardless of color or creed. After World War II and dramatic changes in the demographics of the community, Saint Luke's began to adapt its ministry to meet new needs of its neighborhood.

Saint Luke's helped organize and continues to be involved in low-income housing projects in Clinton. The church opened its doors to the first Senior Center in the entire area, operated by Project FIND for the Aging from 1973-77, when Saint Luke's assumed sponsorship of the Center. A school offering Spanish as second language, high school equivalency assistance and immigration counseling was begun in 1976. Centro de Educacion still enrolls between 75 and 100 younger Hispanic persons from the neighborhood. A clothing distribution program was begun in 1977, providing free clothing to hundreds of persons in need. Saint Luke's Soup Kitchen, serving homeless, frail elderly, emotionally disturbed and transient persons has been operated by the parish since 1983. From 1984-1992 Saint Luke's was the site of Sanctuary for Families, Inc., a social service agency helping victims of family violence. The program left Saint Luke's in 1992 because of the need for greatly expanded space to accommodate the growing number of clients. For twenty years Saint Luke's volunteers have taken over the Project FIND Coffee House at Port Authority on fourth Sundays of each month to serve about 200 senior citizens a nutritious afternoon meal. Saint Luke's sponsors the Clinton-Chelsea 6th and 7th Meal Program, delivering nearly 800 meals (one hot and one cold) to about 400 elderly and homebound clients in the area each Saturday. In addition, our Door Ministry offers counseling, temporary assistance, referrals, etc., to transients and persons caught in emergency situations.

While all of the above programs serve a clientele primarily from Community Districts 4 and 5, our proximity to the Port Authority Bus Terminal and the train stations and Times Square means that a significant number of our clients are transients or from other parts of greater New York. Many referrals come via the Coalition for the Homeless and the Midtown Street Sheet.

Our clergy serve as Protestant chaplains to the Broadway theatre community. Many of our members are affiliated with the performing arts community. Our Pastor serves on the Board of Directors of the Times Square Business Improvement District and their Social Services Committee. He is also a member of the Mayor's Midtown Citizens Committee. Lay members of the parish serve on the Board of the Clinton Housing Corporation, the umbrella organization for low-income, senior citizen and section eight housing.