

Sykesville parishioners reach out through 'Hammer Ministry'

When an elderly parishioner of St. Joseph in Sykesville needed to have a pane of glass and window frame replaced in her home, the company she called for help pressured her to buy all-new windows to the tune of several thousand dollars. Rather than purchase windows she didn't need, the woman looked for help through the newly launched Hammer Ministry at her parish.

Within no time, a volunteer from the free handyman service showed up at her home, repaired her window frame and found and installed an affordable pane of glass.

David Smith, a St. Joseph parishioner who coordinates the Hammer Ministry, said the outreach to the elderly woman is a great example of the kind of services envisioned for the program.

Since its inception in September, the small team of volunteers has helped fix minor electrical problems, improved plumbing and helped with carpentry jobs for elderly and handicapped parishioners and others in the community. The ministry intends to also offer help to the military families of deployed service members, he said.

"The idea is to do all we can to help people stay in their own homes as long as they can," said Mr. Smith, noting that many elderly parishioners are unable to maintain their houses on their own. "We've had a great response. The people really appreciate what we do."

If a job is too big or complicated for the members of the Hammer Ministry team, they will work with homeowners to help them find fair, affordable professional services, Mr. Smith said.

There are currently several volunteers who work in the ministry, including two women. The Hammer Ministry was established as a collaborative effort of the parish's Christian Service Commission and the Archbishop Sheen Knights of Columbus, Council 7612. The outreach is also affiliated with the Caring Carroll Faith in Action coalition.

Mr. Smith is a natural “Mr. Fix It.” The retiree has a carpentry shop in his home and he launched a successful Hammer Ministry at his former parish, Holy Trinity in Glen Bernie.

The costs of the repair materials are paid by the homeowners and the labor is free, said Mr. Smith. He proudly noted that no one has tried to take advantage of the program.

When asked if it was especially appropriate to have a Hammer Ministry at a parish named after the patron saint of carpenters, Mr. Smith laughed.

“I never thought of that,” he said. “Yes it is!”