

Food Pantry Update

So what did Christ Church's food pantry do during COVID? Just what we always do, though with modifications. Thanks to the support and dedication of everyone who is involved, we never missed a distribution. When we had to close our buildings to gatherings, the pantry set up outside. It was quite a sight: awnings setup to shield everyone from rain and sun, tables with blankets and space heaters to spare our paperwork denizens from the worst of the cold, coolers on wheels to move frozen foods out to clients, and well muffled wagon pullers scurrying back and forth. Only those few actually preparing bags and produce were inside the building. In summer months we shaded clients as well and offered water in coolers to any who wanted it.

In fact, the pantry expanded its mission during this period. Thanks to a special grant, the Fredericksburg Area Food Bank was able to waive its usual fees for food during the worst of COVID, freeing up money in our budget. Nudged by Doreen Fagiano's gentle persuasion (and with her hard work) we used these funds to expand our OTC Pharmacy. We are able to purchase for clients things that do not regularly show up at the Food Bank. Items such as soap and shampoo, pain relievers, and allergy relief have been a very welcome addition to our regular distributions. The Outreach Commission will continue to budget for this in addition to our regular Food Bank food purchases.

Of course, none of this would be possible without the volunteer efforts from our dedicated congregation. At the last pantry we had fourteen people, including two of our clients, helping with distribution, they did paperwork, assembled groceries and pulled wagons to waiting vehicles. Our distribution-day volunteers are only the most visible members of the pantry team. In addition, we have a team of bag packers under Tracy Magin's able direction. Tracy makes sure we have enough bags for each pantry, even if it means coming in the morning of distribution after an overnight flight from the West coast! We have shoppers who pick up food from the Food Bank, including bread and produce just before distribution days. Other volunteers shelve items, coordinate special offerings at Holiday times, tend our pantry garden where we raise fresh produce, and coordinate our backpack program for school-aged children of our clients.

A whole other level of supporters makes monetary contributions toward holiday food baskets, back packs and general pantry operations. Some choose to fill back packs themselves and others give time at holidays to prepare for our special distributions. We could not run a pantry without all those who volunteer their time and treasure. The pantry is truly a congregation-wide outreach program. We all work together to make this ministry available to our community.

Respectfully submitted,

Roy Smith