
THE SHEPHERD'S PANTRY



GEIGER MEMORIAL BRETHERN CHURCH

2543 West Lehigh Avenue
Philadelphia Pennsylvania 19132-3207
(215) 229-2967 FAX (215) 228-9940

Rev. Anthony DiBenedetto, Jr., Pastor

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Here's How it Started:

Christmas Eve 1986 was cold and raining as if the waters of heaven were coming to earth. Pastor Ben DiBenedetto arrived to the church early to turn up the heat and make final preparations for the Christmas Eve Service. The door bell rang and when the door was opened there stood a lady on the pavement poorly dressed and soaking wet. She said to Pastor Ben 'Are you the church that is giving out food tonight? I don't have anything for my children and I need food for them.' Pastor Ben replied that we had given the last of our food to needy families the day before; perhaps it was the church across the street or down the block, but he hadn't heard anything about it. The lady wandered toward the corner, totally dejected, surrounded by a cloud of despair and hopelessness. After she left Pastor Ben sat in the Sanctuary thinking about the lady's request while waiting for the congregation to arrive. He remembered the look of hopelessness, the anguish of facing Christmas without anything for her family, her dress and total wetness. A sense of gloom settled over him and he felt weary, helpless, and frustrated because there wasn't even a can of beans in the building that he could have given her; and he was nice and dry, looking forward to a great Christmas. The more he thought about it the sadder he became and vowed to himself never again would someone come to the door for help and he not have something to give them.

Telling the story at the Christmas Eve and the Christmas Day services motivated a number of folks to give donations for the start of a food pantry. Since then donations for the food pantry are received each Sunday through cash placed in a can located at the rear of the Sanctuary, donations received in the mail, handed to Pastor Ben, or placed on the offering plate.

So was born 'The Shepherd's Pantry' on a cold, wet Christmas Eve in 1986.

PURPOSE

To provide emergency food for individuals, couples, or families to help them get by for a few days until permanent

help can be obtained or further temporary aid sought. By so doing we show our concern for the body as well as the soul and thereby better reflect the love of God in Christ Jesus.

REASON FOR THE PANTRY

Lest we forget our primary responsibility, to evangelize the unredeemed sinner and to encourage and build up the child of God, a clear effort will be made to share the Gospel, or to encourage the recipient in the faith if he/she is a Believer. Christian literature (such as a Forgiveness Folder, Daily Bread, New Testament, Bibles, or tracts, and other Christian literature on hand) is given to each person requesting aid or placed in the bag along with the food. A personal invitation to the services and activities of the congregation is also extended. All food is given in the name of Jesus, not the congregation.

THE PEOPLE WE SERVE

Anyone, regardless of race, creed, nationality, political persuasion or whatever, will receive aid if we have the resources to meet their need. We serve those who come to our door on their own or are referred to us by friends, schools, congregational members, the city, or agencies.

AMOUNT OF HELP GIVEN

In the beginning of this ministry, several large bags of food were routinely given out; until experience dictated a wiser course. It was discovered that some recipients were selling the food to get drugs or buy alcohol. Therefore a new method was decided upon. Currently enough food is given for two to three days. Where there is a genuine need for more help, an effort is made to meet it.

FAMILY SIZE, AGE, AND SPECIAL NEEDS CONSIDERED

The number in the family and the ages of family members is taken into consideration so that special needs can be met whenever possible. Individuals who request aid receive whatever we have available that constitutes 'a meal in a can' such as spaghetti and meatballs, soup, and other similar items. Recently we have been designated as a USDA Emergency Food Cupboard.

WHAT'S KEPT IN THE PANTRY

After years of experience we have settled on the following items to keep on our Pantry shelves:

Canned Goods

Pork 'n' Beans
Pasta with tomato or cheese sauce
Spaghetti and Meatballs and/or sauce
Ravioli
Luncheon Meat
Canned Meat
Beef Stew
Tuna
Corn
Peas
Green Beans
Potatoes
Soups (Chicken Noodle/Vegetable/Rice-
please, no broths or creams)
Fruit
Applesauce
Pudding
Juice

Boxed, Bagged, and Jar Items

Soups - such as Ramen, Oodles of Noodles
Spaghetti and Spaghetti Sauce
Jelly
Peanut Butter
Rice
Cereal - Cold and Hot
Macaroni & Cheese
Milk (dry)
Pancake Mix & Syrup

We also receive USDA/Share food items and such items that become available through the Phila. Food Bank or elsewhere.

WHAT MAKES UP A TYPICAL BAG

An effort is made to provide food that is both tasty and can be used individually as a meal or combined with other items to make a meal.

CONTENTS OF BAG

Bags prepared for distribution may contain any or all of the following items when available:

Canned meat or Stew
Tuna
Pasta
Cereal
Canned Vegetables - corn, green beans,
potatoes, beans, etc.
Canned/pkg. Fruit
Dry Milk
Applesauce
Juice
Peanut Butter
Jelly
Christian Literature
Invitation to Worship Folder

NOTE: Quantity of items depends on family size.

TIME OF OPERATION OF PANTRY

Food is available 365 days a year as long as it is in stock. However, we prefer not to give it out on Saturday or Sunday because of programs held in the church on those days. Food is distributed by appointment as well as whenever we are in the building.

GUIDELINES FOR DISTRIBUTION

(How we determine who gets food)

- Referrals from city, agencies, schools, and concerned neighbors
- Those who can prove a need
- Those with whom we are familiar as to their need
- Those who do not have a record of abuse of the emergency nature of our food distribution service or who have sold food for drugs or other addictive substances.
- Those who are a part of the programs at the Church

WHO DECIDES WHO GETS HELP

Our ladies in the office are in charge of who receives food. They are familiar with those in the neighborhood who are in need and make decisions when no referral is available. Different agencies in the city, such as the Philadelphia Food Bank, and various neighborhood offices, send referrals to us through the Food Bank Hotline.

METHOD OF GIVING AID

Those requesting aid are warmly greeted and invited in, engaged in general conversation, while inquiry is made into the nature of their need (if no referral is available or no phone call has been received).

An information card is filled out if there isn't one on file. All information is verified or corrected.

- The Gospel is briefly shared, appropriate Christian literature given, prayer offered, and an invitation to attend the services of the Church is given.
- If aid is unable to be given, a gracious refusal is given and suggestions made as to where aid may be received.

RECORD KEEPING

In the past, in order to keep track of food dispensed and those who receive it, food bag inventory forms and household need forms were filled out.

Recently the USDA/Tefap program has given us forms to keep on file showing family size and what food items they have received. These forms also show pertinent information such as signature, address, age category of family member(s), and signature of the person who has handed out the bag(s).

By keeping a record of all foods distributed and households sizes, it is possible to anticipate the needs for the coming year; as well as discover those who have special needs and those who are abusing our assistance.

Whenever possible an effort will be made to visit recipients in their homes, especially where families are concerned.

SOURCE OF FOOD

- Gifts of canned and packaged foods and related items from individuals, organizations, and churches. A specific list is provided for those who request them. A list is provided in this brochure.
- Cash contributions received through the mail from interested individuals, families, churches, and organizations are used to purchase needed items.
- Cash contributions received at Geiger through the box at the rear of the Sanctuary or designated gifts on the offering plate are also used to buy needed items.
- Gifts of USDA/Tefap food are received from the government; other organizations also contribute.

HOLIDAY FOOD BASKETS

Large size family and individual food baskets are handled through our Holiday Community Outreach program. Most of these referrals come from seven schools in the immediate area. They are notified in September to submit names of families who are in need - physically or emotionally - because of extenuating circumstances.

SHORT AND LONG RANGE GOALS

- To increase the amount of aid that can be given.
- To improve the manner of distribution.
- To improve our method of record keeping.
- To increase the number of people who are able to dispense aid.
- To develop a trained staff that will be able to not only give aid, but also aid with financial, family, personal, and spiritual problems.
- To develop a strong base of support from individuals, churches, and other organizations.
- To develop an efficient follow-up program that will uncover other needs and or to confirm the need expressed as well as to encourage folk in improving their life style and to establish a spiritual walk with Jesus.

HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

1. Individuals can give cash gifts or gifts of items listed in this brochure.
2. Families can make a project of collecting money from family members or by earning money through odd jobs and then forwarding these gifts to 'The Shepherd's Pantry'. Families can make trips to the supermarket and purchase as many of the items listed as they choose. They can deliver the canned goods to the church as a family.
3. Churches, Sunday Schools, Youth groups and other organizations or groups can take offerings that can be forwarded to 'The Shepherd's Pantry' or can collect items needed and bring them to the church. See listing under 'What's Kept in the Pantry'.

PLEASE NOTE:

Checks should be made out to:
GEIGER MEMORIAL BRETHERN CHURCH
Memo: Outreach Ministries

and mailed to:
Geiger Memorial Brethren Church
2543 West Lehigh Avenue
Phila., PA 19132-3207