

Trinity Hot Lunch Ministry _ 2021 Annual Report

In preparing this Trinity Hot Lunch Ministry report, I reviewed what I wrote last year.

"We enter the new decade with much hope, some expectations and sadly, many of the same issues and struggles that marked the decade just ended. Hunger in the St. Louis region is but one concern but a staggering and a relentless one. The trend that areas of the city rank among the worst in this country with regard to food deprivation and to malnutrition continues unabated. Trinity Episcopal in the Central West End has made it their mission for decades to be a major resource for their area and Holy Communion has been fortunate to part of their amazing efforts for many of those years. We inaugurate the 2020 with the same commitment and dedication to the mission of alleviating hunger through Sunday hot lunch program and the weekday food pantry."

Sadly, for reasons of which we are acutely aware, these words are even more relevant as we begin 2021.

The Trinity Food Ministry did start off the year as in the past, with the only change being that the take-away bags with a sandwich, snack and drink were no longer being supplied. The reason was that the accumulated yearly costs were quite high and the immediately benefit could not be accurately measured. So, after consulting with Barbi Click, the coordinator and all-around awesome leader of the Trinity Feeding Ministry – which includes both the weekly food pantry and the Sunday Hot Lunch program, for which Holy Communion provides, every third Sunday of the month, the food and the volunteers to serve it – I decided to end that portion of our service and look for other ways to better use the funds for the feeding ministry.

Then along came Covid-19 and in March, changes were made to adhere to the guidelines of city/county and the Diocese. Dining indoors was and continues to be

suspended. All lunches are served as carry outs, with Holy Communion's menu comprising lasagna, green beans, coleslaw and a cookie (replacing the legacy apple pie). A reduction of volunteers was required to observe distance regulation and was inevitable due to fact that there was no longer cafeteria-style indoor dining. Since those first months, we have been able to reduce the volunteer count to 3, 4 at the most, which further ensures their safety and still allow for preparation in a timely, sometimes hectic, but an efficient manner.

Despite the dramatic changes that Covid-19 imposed on the customers, restricting access and having to tolerate weather conditions from which, in a normal year, they would have refuge in the dining hall, the Hot Lunch program served over 4000 meals in 2020, down by less than 500. The pantry numbers, which record those who come by during the week to collect groceries, were more greatly reduced by the pandemic. One benefit for the weekly pantry (one must try to find that lining of some brighter color) has been the wonderful bounty from Whole Foods, CWE, which has been providing weekly an array of foods, from meat and fish, to fresh fruit, to an eye-popping abundance of greens and vegetables. Also, donations of canned goods from a variety of sources has been especially generous, which has been a great blessing to Trinity Episcopal, as the church provides the vast majority of funds to sustain the feeding ministry. And finally, a special thanks needs to go to all the Holy Communion Garden Ministry, who so graciously and diligently dedicated their time and energies to the garden this year and which, for several months, supplied fresh greens every week.

As every year, I give a special thanks – and this year, a virtual hug – to all who volunteer and support this ministry. Without this support, there might be the food, but it takes the hands that serve it and the hearts that share the abundance of God's grace to

make it a ministry. The goal of providing a hot, nourishing meal is met every Sunday, by all the churches and organizations that volunteer during the year. But what is missed by all is the enrichment that comes from the engagement within and across the communities of volunteers and of clients. What a wonderful day it will be when the doors can be opened not only to hand out the food but embrace the hands of the customers who over the years have become family.

Scott Ferguson