

The Pandemic Shift: A Food Pantry Story



Silver Spring Christian Reformed Church, August 2021

Thanksgiving: To God and to Others

Psalm 136: 1, 25-26

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.

His love endures forever.

He gives food to every creature.

His love endures forever.

Give thanks to the God of Heaven.

His love endures forever.

Philemon 1: 4-7

I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, because I hear about your love for all his holy people and your faith in the Lord Jesus. I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ. Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the Lord's people.

SSCRC Food Pantry History: August 2013 - March 2020

- Food Pantry operates on a choice-based food distribution model in partnership with Capital Area Food Bank
- Funded fully by church General Fund, with occasional special contributions/grants made to Food Pantry Fund
- Volunteers mainly from SSCRC and committed group of volunteers from Arcola Towers
- Open monthly from 4 - 8 pm on the third Tuesday of each month
- Served average of 98 households per month in 2019 for a total number of food pantry visits of 1,172. These visits represented 340 individual households that came an average of 3.4 times.
- Pantry improvements made with support from other organizations included hygiene items (supported by school drives) and frozen meat (supported by Manna).

The Pandemic Shift: Overview

- March 2020: We prepack food and distribute outdoors
- April 2020: We begin weekly drive through distributions of pre-packed food; distributions last only 2 hours
- We receive funding from grants and individual donors from outside of church in addition to General Fund
- Volunteers come from other churches, local synagogues, schools, and the neighborhood in general
- Food comes from CAFB, Montgomery County Government Food Security Task Force, Shalom Kosher Market, and individual donations

The Pandemic Shift: Community Relationships

- We work with new supporters:
 - Shady Grove Presbyterian Church
 - Faith Presbyterian Church
 - Christ Presbyterian Church
 - Washington DC CRC
 - Mosaic Community Church
 - Restore Church
 - Beth El Synagogue
 - Shalom Kosher Market
 - Ben Yehuda Pizza
 - Montgomery County Government
 - Montgomery County Public Schools
 - Department of Parks and Recreation
- We deepen relationships:
 - St. Andrew Catholic Church
 - Kemp Mill Synagogue
 - Kemp Mill Village
 - Montgomery County Food Council
- We continue relationships with:
 - Washington Christian Academy
 - Forcey Christian School
 - Capital Area Food Bank
 - World Renew
 - Yad Yehuda
 - Manna
- Some relationships “pause”:
 - Arcola Towers
 - Northwood High School

Pandemic Shift: Volunteer Needs

2019 (monthly)

- 4 “Shoppers” take turns ordering food and picking up food at CAFB
- 2-3 “Drivers” help pick up produce and shelf stable food at CAFB
- 4 volunteers to set up
- 10 volunteers for set-up and distribution on first shift
- 4 volunteers for second shift and clean up
- Evening worshipers help with set up

Pandemic (weekly)

- Weekend: Two shifts of volunteers pack bags for large households
- Monday morning: Volunteer meets delivery trucks
- Monday afternoon: 2 volunteers organize delivered food
- Monday evening: 10 volunteers pack bags
- Tuesday morning: 12+ volunteer pack produce
- Tuesday afternoon: 25+ volunteers set up, pack, distribution, clean up, and direct traffic
- Other: Sort donations, pick up paper bags, other tasks as needed

Pandemic Shift: Participation Overview

2019

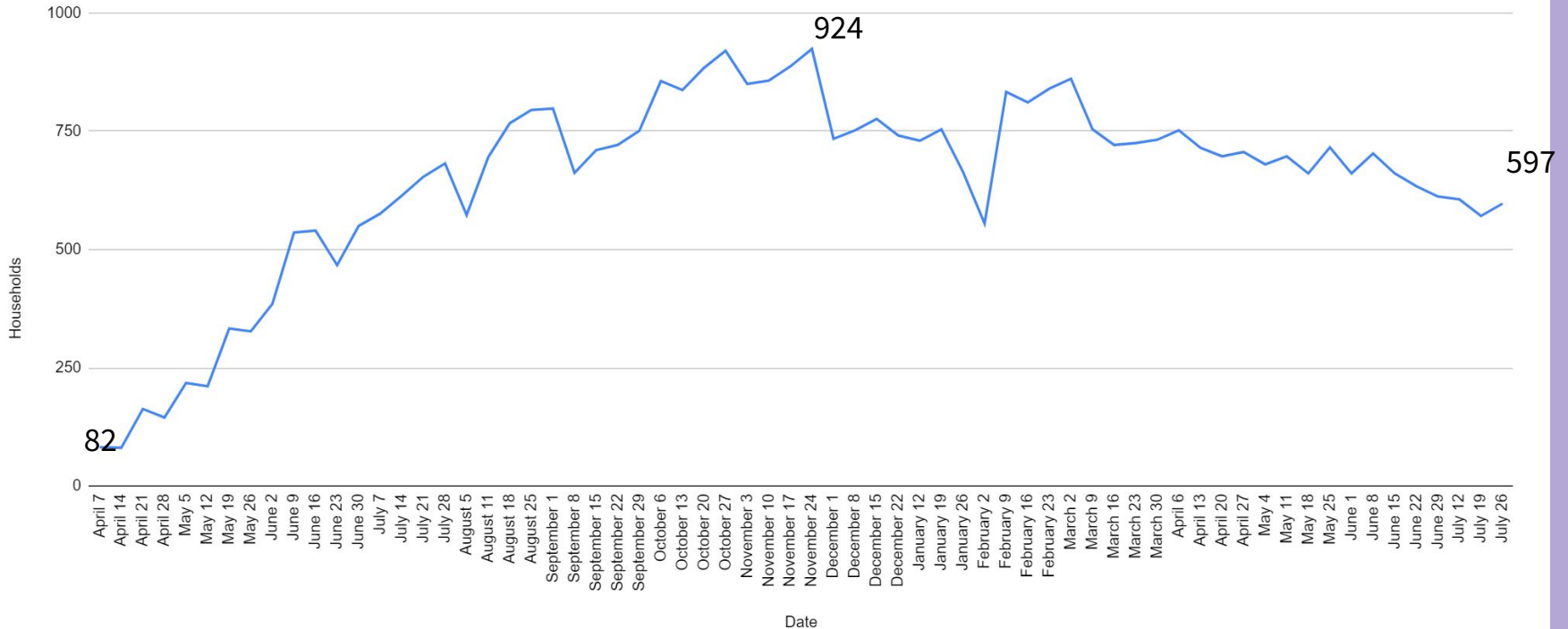
- 98 households per month
- 49% of households 5 or more people
- 42% of households live in 20902
- 35% of households live in 20901, 20904, 20906, 20910, 20895
- Average number of visits per household was 3.4/year

Pandemic

- 647 households per week for 66 weeks
- 44% of households 6 or more people (2021)
- 38% of households live in 20902 (July 2021)
- 38% of households live in 20902, 20904, 20906, 20901, 20895
- Average number of visits per household unknown

Pandemic Shift: Participation Rates Over Time

Food Pantry Attendance Trend



Pandemic Shift: Funding and Costs

2019

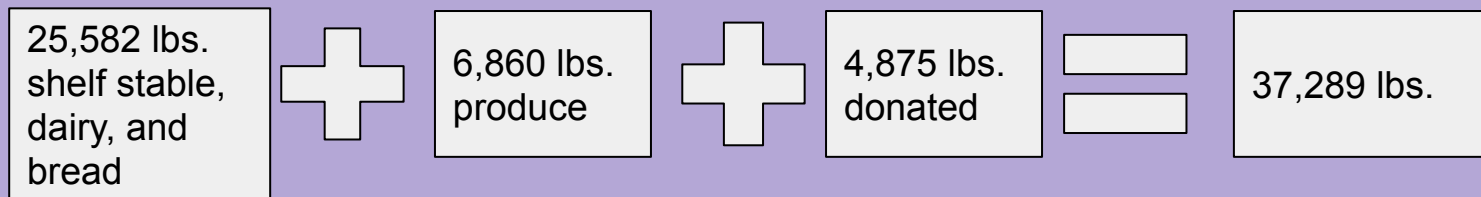
- Food Costs: \$6,579
- Staff Costs: \$7,997
- Hygiene Products (Food Pantry Fund): \$1,349

Pandemic (April 2020-July 2021)

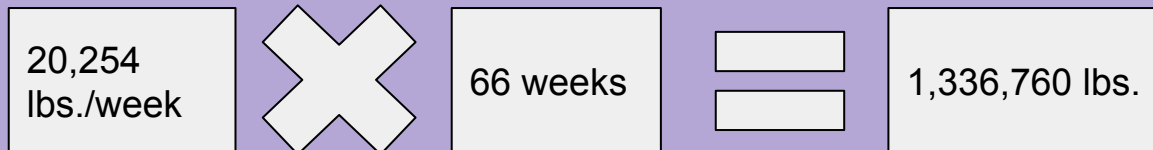
- General Fund Costs
 - Food and Supplies: \$4,685
 - Staff: \$22,632
- Grants:
 - World Renew - \$3,000
 - ShopRite (CAFB) - \$3,000
 - No Kid Hungry - \$10,000
 - Montgomery County Government - \$12,220
 - CAFB - \$65,682
- Food Pantry Fund (individual and organizational donations) \$174,256
- Montgomery County Food Security Task Force:
 - \$8,000/week since 9/20/20 shelf stable
 - \$1,000/week since for produce October 2020
- Kemp Mill Produce Funding
 - Varies from \$300 - \$800/week
- USDA - Boxed produce, dairy, meat

Pandemic Shift: Food Amount

2019



Pandemic



- Shelf stable
- Produce
- Bread
- Dairy
- Meat
- Over 71,757 lbs. donated food

Pandemic Shift: Stories and People

Pre-Pandemic

- Participants volunteered
- Talked with participants, got to know some of their stories
- Included participants in decision making for program changes and improvements (i.e., hygiene items, frozen meat, new intake procedures)
- Invited participants to Coffee Break and special church services
- Open with prayer

Pandemic

- Participants volunteer
- Talk with few participants, but harder to connect due to distribution format
- Wide variety of volunteers allows us to get to know other churches, Jewish neighbors, and non-religious neighbors and volunteers
- Volunteers are impacted by the work as well as people who receive food
- Invited participants to Coffee Break, online worship, and special food pantry celebration service
- Included volunteers from other organizations in initial conversation about post-pandemic food pantry support
- Open with prayer

Food Pantry Impact on Community

- Not able to measure our “long term” impact on food pantry participants - food is a “relief” program for emergency needs
- The pandemic shift moved us from a small, mostly church-based pantry to a community supported pantry
- Known for our love, hospitality, and leadership in serving our neighbors who are hungry
- We are a witness through our actions as well as through our words

Kingdom Concept

God graciously calls us, in a scattered and isolated age, to be builders of community in which God's saving word is proclaimed and all are welcomed, fed, and nurtured.

This kingdom concept was defined as a simple, clear, 'Big Idea' that defines how our church will glorify God and make disciples. SSCRC developed this statement as part of a visioning process in late 2018 and 2019. It is intended to help guide our congregation and reflects the congregation's unique gifts and characteristics.

The Future of the Food Pantry

Kingdom Concept Questions

- How does the food pantry fit in with our congregation's ministry as a whole?
- How do we respond to the long-term needs of the community as families work to recover from this pandemic, economically and socially?
- What do we do with the gifts we have been given?
 - New relationships
 - New funding
 - New participants

General Food Pantry Operations

- What size food pantry can we sustain?
 - How often?
 - How many households?
 - How will to be supported financially?
 - Where will the volunteers come from?
 - Where will the food come from?
- What format can we sustain?
 - When can we return to a choice-based model?

Closing: Twice Blessed

Genesis 1: 9-13

And God said, “Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.” And it was so. God called the dry ground “land,” and the gathered waters he called “seas.” *And God saw that it was good.*

Then God said, “Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.” And it was so. The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. *And God saw that it was good.* And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.

Lamentations 3: 22-23

Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.