

STEWARDS OF THE HUNGRY

by Rev. Thomas Soltis, SELC Stewardship Director

Sharing Spiritual & Temporal Food

Upon leaving a complex of fast food restaurants, I noticed a bearded middle-aged man bending over a trash can. "He couldn't be rummaging for food?" I queried. He was. He fished out a half eaten hamburger and put it in his pocket. I walked over and asked him, "You're hungry, aren't you?" "Sure am," he replied. I bought him a meal. As he eagerly and happily ate away, he profusely thanked me. "Don't thank me." I replied. "Thank Jesus. He's the one feeding you through me. He gave me the money and moved me to buy you a meal." I then shared the Gospel via Jesus, the Bread of Heaven. After a number of explanations, he finally understood and embraced the Gospel grace of salvation.

Caretakers of the Hungry

The word, "steward", means "caretaker". Jesus, the perfect steward, cared about the hungry. He fed over 5,000 on one occasion (Matt. 14:13-21) and over 4,000 on another (Matt. 15:29-39). With a promise of reward, Prov. 25:21-22 encourages us to feed even our enemies. The widow of Zarephath was rewarded with food during a famine and the restoration of life to her son because she shared whatever little food she had with the prophet, Elijah (1 Kings 17:7-24).

Natural Disasters Are Deadly

An 1896 drought in China killed as many as 13 million people. Other disasters, such as tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis and floods, also produce death thru starvation. Hunger, however, is produced not only by natural disasters. It also results from economic and social conditions. The US Division of Agriculture issued startling statistics for 2008-09 ... "14.6% of US households (49 million people) struggle to put food on the table; nearly one in four children is at risk of hunger." Yes, there is much Christian stewards of the hungry can do!

Congregational Food Drives

Congregations are responding to meet hunger needs with food drives. One was recently held at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Parma, OH. As part of a Thanksgiving Service celebration, worshipers placed multicolored paper leaves on

a sanctuary "Thanksgiving Tree" and non-perishable food beneath it. The event was so successful, members will have the opportunity to donate food in the narthex any Sunday.



Hunger Centers

The donated food at Holy Trinity was in turn given to the Parma Hunger Center located at Parma Lutheran Church, Parma. Chartered by the Hunger Network of Greater Cleveland, the center serves four communities offering free food to approximately 3,500 families per year. Churches, schools, clubs, stores and businesses contribute food as well as money which is used to purchase reduced-price food from the Cleveland Food Bank, a network distributor of various government and community food sources. The church provides the space and utilities free; 45 individuals donate their time.



Parma Hunger Center Volunteers
Arch Stevenson, Dir., Eric Zitney, Dale Kraemer

LCMS World Relief & Human Care

On an international level, Missouri Synod's World Relief & Human Care provides food as well as many other services to meet human needs domestically and internationally. Financial gifts from individuals, congregations and other sources enable grants to assist the needy - especially during disasters. For example, funds were given to centers in Haiti established by missionaries to help meet monumental disaster needs. Contributions may be sent to : LCMS World Relief & Human Care, P.O. Box 66861, St. Louis, MO 63166. (888-930-4438) Visit <http://givenowlcms.org>.