



Feeding the Hungry

During the Pandemic

At Community of Faith United Methodist Church



How is distribution done during the Pandemic

Since March 2020, we have moved to a touchless distribution where (1) cars line up in the parking lot and a registration person moves from car to car to check persons in. (2) Cars then drive to the loading zone in front of church where volunteers load several boxes of groceries. (3) Clients then depart. Each Tuesday we distribute between 4PM and 5:30PM.



A difference from the pre-pandemic method

Boxes of food are prepacked rather than clients choosing what they desire. While not as desirable, this method allows the distribution to be touchless. Clients do not need to wait for a number to be called, nor need to congregate around distribution tables. This keeps folks physically distanced – both clients and volunteers.

What kind of food is provided?

Produce, bakery items, non-perishable foods from canned goods to cooking oil, frozen meats of all kinds and salads are the most frequent items provided. Occasionally we have baby diapers and other items depending on the donors of the previous week.

Where do you get the food?

Because of the generosity of the **Franklin Farm Giant**, **Food Lion at Centerville & McLearen Roads**, **Trader Joe's of Reston**, and **Mom's Organic Market**, we can receive and distribute baked goods, dairy items, deli products, and meats. Items from over 15 local restaurants make possible lots of other items. During the pandemic, several neighborhoods have held canned good collections and brought them to church. It's been a wonderful outpouring of generosity. Because of the high demand of clients, we now also must buy food from several sources to supplement what is available



from our donors. Donations to the food pantry at www.cofumc.org (see "donate" at the top of the page) help make possible our purchases. The annual "Scouting for Food" neighborhood solicitation in November along with several Boy Scout food drives through the year provide 85% of our canned goods.



Who is eligible to receive food?

Anyone who needs food is eligible. People may visit the pantry weekly as long as they are in need. Often area social service agencies and local elementary schools refer clients.

Where is the food stored?

COF has 12 household and commercial freezers and refrigerators to store perishable items and our neighbor, Epiphany Episcopal Church has a commercial walk-in fridge and freezer that is used. On a few occasions, we've borrowed capacity from other neighboring churches and church families. Non-perishable items are kept in our 1200 square foot storage "barn" on our campus.

How does food get to COF?

Volunteers, coordinated by Kathy Spaine, pick up food someplace daily to bring to church and sort and store. During the pre-pandemic era, St. Joseph's, a day program for intellectually challenged adults, would collect food from **Giant** and **Food Lion** and transport it to COF where it is sorted by volunteers but they are not active when public school are not in session.

Is there any food left over?

Simply, no. However, food that is received Wednesday through Saturday and is more time-sensitive such as breads and some refrigerated items are shared with other distribution programs.



Can I help?

Absolutely! We can accept non-perishable items on Monday & Tuesday mornings as well as in the bins by the front doors. Most needed items are:

Dry beans	Crackers	Tomato sauce, stewed and diced tomatoes
White rice	Nuts and healthy snacks	Dry pasta
Canned meat	Canned fruit	Cooking oil
Pasta sauce	Tea / coffee	
Cereal	Ramen	

Volunteers are always needed to assist with pickups. To volunteer or find out more, contact Hannah Godfrey at Food@cofumc.org. **Contributions** can also be made online at www.cofumc.org and are tax deductible!

We are especially grateful for the help of the *Service League of Oakton* and the Bluebells who have been regular volunteers this season. They assist clients, pick up food, prepare it for distribution and help to give it away on Tuesday nights. We always welcome assistance. Youth find this to be a good program to earn service credits for school.

Where are we?

Community of Faith is at the corner of the Fairfax County Parkway and Franklin Farm Road sharing the same driveway as KinderCare.

How long has this been going on?

The pandemic – way too long. The program? Since 1999 Community of Faith United Methodist Church (CoF) has offered a food distribution program for the hungry of Fairfax County. The high cost of living here means a missed paycheck or an expensive health crisis can create financial peril, including a loss of housing.

What began as a group of 12-20 families during 1999 has now become a gathering of 120-200 families most Tuesday afternoons during the pandemic. Thanks to a partnership with **Epiphany Episcopal Church**, (www.coe.org), the Service League of Oakton, the BlueBells and others, The Food Pantry

served over 30,000 individuals last year. Over the last several pre-pandemic years, we would serve from 80-185 families each week with an average of 100 families weekly.

Our clients are persons who need food – what they receive in groceries means there is money to pay for rent or utilities or gas to get to one of multiple jobs. As one client said, *"The food I received each week saved my life. I was able to focus on getting my life together, not worrying about eating."* Some families are in need because they have recently been unhoused, some have been victims of domestic violence and some have experienced a health crisis without insurance. A few are new to the U.S.; many are single parents but 95% are employed in one or multiple jobs.

Some of our restaurant partners include:

KFC – Kentucky Fried Chicken

45960 Denizen Plaza Road, Sterling



Longhorn Steak House

14056 Thunderbolt Pl, Chantilly, VA 20151

Chipotle

South Lakes Shopping Center
Franklin Farm Road, Herndon



Famous Dave's

Chantilly Crossing Shopping Center



Nando's

20556 Easthampton Plaza, Ashburn

In 2017, we've become a partner in the Capitol Area Food Bank which offers numerous resources and bulk purchases of food.



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