



MEETING EMERGENCY NEEDS WITH DIGNITY

An Interfaith Emergency Food Network

Quarterly Newsletter

Spring 2011

*"We are the light of God's kindness to the poor... Give them not only your care, but also your heart."
—Mother Teresa*

MEND Mission

An interfaith organization meeting the emergency needs of the disadvantaged of Essex County, working to support and facilitate their growth as self-sufficient individuals; assisting them in obtaining benefits to which they are entitled; and advocating for policies that will improve the quality of their lives.

The SOUPER Bowl of Caring

This year, the Senior High Youth of Prospect Presbyterian Church of Maplewood raised over \$400 from fellow church members on Super Bowl Sunday and donated the proceeds to MEND.



Sharon Reilly-Tobin, left, accepting a check for \$400 from Linne Thomson, representing the Senior High Youth of Prospect Presbyterian Church of Maplewood

The concept of Souper Bowl Sunday arose from a simple prayer delivered in 1990 by Brad Smith, then a seminary intern serving at Spring Valley Presbyterian Church in Columbia, SC: "Lord, even as we enjoy the Super Bowl football game, help us be mindful of those who are without a bowl of soup to eat." This simple prayer has inspired a youth-led movement to help hungry and hurting people around the world. The idea, Why not use Super Bowl weekend, a time when people come together for football and fun, to also unify the nation for a higher good, collecting dollars and canned goods for the needy? From these humble beginnings

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WALK TO END HUNGER

On Friday, May 6, 2011, Essex County food pantries, religious and community organizations will join together for the **Eighth Annual Essex County Walk To End Hunger**. Sponsored by Catholic Charities and Meeting Emergency Needs with Dignity (MEND), the walk will begin at 12 noon in Washington Park in Newark with a recognition of the participating pantries and donors. It will then proceed down Broad Street to the corner of 50 Walnut Street and back to Washington Park.

The purpose of the walk is to increase awareness about the increasing problem of hunger in Essex County and raise funds for hungry families who come to the pantries for help. Proceeds from the walk will be used solely for the purchase of food to stock participating pantries.

Those who are unable to join the walk but who wish to support this worthy cause may send donations payable to MEND Hunger Walk, c/o Emergency Food and Nutrition Network of Catholic Charities, 37 Evergreen Pl., East Orange, NJ 07018-2154, or contact Sharon Reilly-Tobin at 973-266-7941, or visit www.mendnj.org for information.

*A Message From ...
The Reverend Rodwell G. Thom
Pastor
Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
East Orange*



John 3: 1–21 is arguably one of the most profound texts of scripture in the New Testament. For many people, it may be famous if only for that verse that is known around the world in all languages and cultures: “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that whoever believes in Him may not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3¹⁶). This verse tells of the love of God – a love that comes to us with no strings attached, a love which human beings cannot control or direct it, or vote on who should be the recipients of such love’s embrace. That love is beyond our ability to control. God loves the world...and there is nothing we can do about that.

I often see John 3¹⁶ on banners. Even athletes, movie stars, and politicians are attracted to John 3¹⁶ presumably because it’s about love. But a closer look at this attraction to John 3¹⁶ raises questions. For often, what we see in public persons who quote John 3¹⁶ is self promotion of personal brands and lifestyles, or just advocacy for pure consumerism. Similarly many congregations are afflicted with the illness of navel gazing, more concerned about their own well being than with the plight of the hungry and needy in the neighborhood. Where is the love of God for the world in such an individual focus?

The verse tells us that God loves “the world” and yet we attempt to narrow it to an individualism that ignores everyone else. When our focus on John 3¹⁶ is personal, then the exclusive concern is about personal or individual salvation. Our society seems to have made a radical shift from a community oriented focus to a quest for personal salvation. The watchwords are “me,” “myself” and “I.” The reigning theology is “Jesus and me alone.” It is not surprising that for the most part this personal focus comes from those who have bread, and whose bread is well buttered.

Nicodemus came to Jesus because he was attracted by the acts of love and care Jesus demonstrated for human beings. He told Jesus, “No one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God” (John 3²). That’s powerful! Nicodemus was attracted because Jesus was healing the sick, opening blind eyes, strengthening feeble limbs, and feeding those who were hungry. One time, Jesus was teaching the people about God and at the end everyone was hungry. Jesus asked the disciples to provide bread for the hungry people but the disciples admitted to their lack of resources. As it happened, there was a boy who had five loaves and two fish. Jesus blessed the bread and gave it to the people to eat. The crowd numbered in excess of five thousand but there was enough for everyone to eat. The scriptures tell us they were satisfied. Satisfaction comes from being touched by God’s presence and having a full stomach. It is about wholeness that is inside out, physical as well as spiritual.

The sad reality is that too many people do not experience satisfaction. The sad reality is that while God is not willing that any should perish many people are in fact perishing. Read the newspapers or listen to the evening newscasts! Individualism has replaced community. The rich run over the poor. The well-fed ignore the hungry. The least among us suffer the most because they are the most vulnerable and because they have meager resources to sustain them. We, who profess faith in Jesus and talk about the love of God, need to avoid spiritualizing the love of God and instead consider seriously the impact on human beings due to lack of food, health care and jobs. It does not mean that the church can solve all the problems of the world, but we are to be “salt” and “light” for the world; we are to make a difference.

So, may I say we can see the love of God in a food pantry which serves the needs of the hungry just as we can see the love of God at the church’s altar? John 3¹⁶ calls us to open our hearts to people in need and to respond out of the resources God has already given us. We can all support our local food pantries, we can advocate with our legislators and encourage them to continue State funding for local food emergency needs, and we can respond with compassion to those whom God sends our way.

God’s love is for everyone. In the name of that love, let’s help to stop people from perishing. Let’s keep our food pantries and our hearts open so God’s love can touch our lives and the lives of the people we serve.

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church and East Orange General Hospital

Partners in Service to Those in Need

In carrying out our ministry of meeting the emergency needs of the poor, particularly their food needs, our MEND food pantries often find themselves struggling to keep up with an ever increasing demand. Sometimes we ask ourselves whether or not the citizenry at large really cares as people go about deeply involved in their own daily concerns. And from time to time, we get a glorious answer to this question, one that helps to allay our fears and doubts. Such an answer came from East Orange General Hospital in response to the needs of the food pantry at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church of East Orange.

The Holy Trinity food pantry has been in operation for over 20 years under the capable leadership of Julie Brooks, who is also a member and treasurer of the MEND Board of Directors. The pantry, which is open the fourth Tuesday of each month, serves 30 to 35 needy families and individuals; it operates under the same strains as do our other food pantries with respect to obtaining enough food and other assistance to meet the needs of its clients.

About a year ago, a group of angels, in the form of volunteers from East Orange General Hospital, arrived at Holy Trinity. Since then they have come back the last Monday and Tuesday of each month, delivering and packaging food items

on Mondays and assisting in the distribution of food parcels on Tuesdays. On a recent Monday,



Anita Miller, Antoinette Anderson, Elizabeth Wilson Lee, and Lynette Massey (pictured left to right, above) arrived about 10 a.m. bearing packages of food items and exuding enthusiasm. These ladies, from East Orange General's Patient Accounts Department, immediately went to work preparing food parcels to be distributed the following day.

Leslie Eaddy, Director, Community Outreach/Volunteer Services and Public Relations and Marketing,

for the hospital explained that the Patient Accounts Department has adopted the food pantry under the hospital's PLUNGE program, initiated by its president, Kevin J. Slavin, as a vehicle for encouraging community outreach during the holidays. Ms. Eaddy added that 25 to 28 employees of the Patient Accounts Department take turns in groups of 4 to 5 coming to assist at the Holy Trinity food pantry each month. Many of the East Orange Hospital volunteers are pictured here.



These volunteers contribute their own time, including weekends and lunch hours to support the Holy Trinity food pantry and other organizations. Most are local residents either of East Orange or of other areas within commuting distance of the hospital.

Ms. Eaddy explained that, under the PLUNGE program, volunteers from the hospital are free to select the organizations they wish to work with, and the Patient Accounts Department chose the Holy Trinity food pantry and supports it enthusiastically.



Leslie Eaddy and Julie Brooks

The Holy Trinity food pantry is most grateful for the support provided by East Orange General Hospital and looks forward to a long-continuing relationship. It is important to note that we are only one of the beneficiaries of the hospital's extended PLUNGE program which also sponsors 2 free hospital-based annual health fairs offering a variety of on-site services; Project SOUP (Screening and Outreach Unified Program)- free health screenings in partnership with church food pantries and soup kitchens, and other health-based programs.

With Appreciation to Our 2010 Contributors and Supporters

Individuals

Michaela Alves	Robert Cooney	William R Keenan	Mary Anne Miller	Rosanne S Scriffignano
Jane R Ballinger	Michelle Delsordi	Patricia Kennedy	Camelia Miller	Thomas D Sheehan
Ellen Bargaona	Maryann K Fairnet	Elaine Lane	Ronald H Neill	Gary S Shumlich
Michele Berto	Vicenza M Fairco	Ida Lee	Michael O'Shea	Carol Spina
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Alison V Bryant	Vinnie Galasso	E R Longo	Andrew Quirk	Arthur J Torre
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Grace Ciccone	Jeanne Iuliani	Nancy E Mendes	Patricia G Schloser	

Faith-Based Organizations

Bloomfield Presbyterian Church	Macedonian Orthodox Church, Cedar Grove
Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, Mid-Atlantic Region	Morrow Memorial Methodist Church, Maplewood
Central Presbyterian Church, Montclair	Notre Dame Church, North Caldwell
Community Church of Cedar Grove	Prospect Presbyterian Church
Discipleship Team of East Orange	St. Aloysius Church, Caldwell
Episcopal Church of St. James	St. Catherine of Siena Church, Cedar Grove
First Lutheran Church, Montclair	St. Thomas Church, Bloomfield
First Presbyterian Church, Caldwell	Temple Shalom, Cedar Grove
Glen Ridge Congregational Church	United Presbyterian Church, Cedar Grove
Grace Presbyterian Church	

Foundations

Feed the Children	Shop Rite Partner in Caring
North Jersey Media Group Foundation	

Businesses

Matthew Bender Inc.	Shop Rite of Livingston
Shop Rite of Kearny	Shop Rite of West Caldwell

Community Organizations & Schools

Bloomfield Tech Vocational School	Little Learners Pre-School, Livingston
Good Shepherd School, Irvington	Truist

SPRING GROCERY GIFT CARD PROJECT

This Spring, thanks to our generous donors, the 16 MEND food pantries were each given \$ 300.00 to purchase food for their pantry or to give to client families to supplement their food packages. With layoffs and foreclosures forcing many families to seek food assistance, MEND is grateful for this much-needed financial support.

Many of our clients cannot afford to buy produce, meat, poultry, milk or eggs for their families. When pantries can offer clients a \$10.00 grocery gift card with their food package, the clients are able to go to the market and buy some of these perishable items for their family. Alternatively, some MEND pantries prefer to purchase for their pantry items that are in short supply but for which there is a high demand, like peanut butter, cereal and shelf stable milk.

Our pantries are very grateful to our contributors for their help in providing a healthy food package for families and seniors in need.

MEND UPCOMING EVENTS

April 12th – June 4th

Hunger Doesn't Take A Vacation Food Drive

May 6th, 2011

8th Annual Walk to End Hunger
in Downtown Newark

Summer 2011

Share The Harvest

For details and promotional materials about these events, please contact the MEND Central Office at (973) 266-7941

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in 1990, this nationwide effort has raised over \$70 million to feed the hungry.

In early February, many youth groups across the country organize their efforts to raise money and food for the many hungry people in America at the same time as people are gathering nationwide for a major sports spectacular. This has become a major fund raising event to fight hunger, and the youth of Prospect Presbyterian have joined in enthusiastically. As done at Prospect Presbyterian, youth groups collect donations at their schools and churches in soup pots and then send every dollar directly to a local charity of **their** choice.

MEND is very pleased that the Prospect Presbyterian Senior High Youth group has selected it as the charity of its choice this year.

MEND Board of Directors

Jamie Anthony, Chairman of the Board & President
Sharon Reilly-Tobin, Executive Director
Julie Brooks, Treasurer
Helen Brooks, Secretary
Garrett Gray, Assistant Secretary

SHARE THE HARVEST

A MEND Summer Project

MEND, an interfaith anti-hunger network serving Essex County for over 30 years, is collecting surplus summer produce in order to provide fresh fruits and vegetables to the needy.

Attention Gardeners!!

There's a Growing Concern!

Are you finding yourself stuck with too many tomatoes, a lot of lettuce, a cache of carrots? We need your help to bring fresh fruits and vegetables to the hungry of Essex County. During the summer months, many food pantries are desperately under-stocked. **SHARE THE HARVEST** with people in need by bringing in your extra produce. Please contact the MEND office at 908-266-7941 for more information.

Help Fight Hunger in Essex County!

The MEND Board of Directors is pleased to announce that **Sharon Reilly-Tobin** has been elected to the board and appointed to the position of Executive Director. In this position, Ms. Reilly-Tobin will continue the responsibilities she currently has as MEND Coordinator and assume such other responsibilities as required under the MEND By-laws.

In addition, the board appointed Garrett Gray to the position of Assistant Secretary.

PLEASE JOIN OUR EFFORT

MEND is a local non-profit food assistance network serving communities throughout Essex County. We have many opportunities available for houses of worship, youth groups, schools, service organizations and individuals to help those in need. For information, contacts us:

MEND Central Office
37 Evergreen Place
East Orange, NJ 07018
(973) 266 7941
Fax #: (973) 675-6935
Email: info@mendnj.org
Website: www.mendnj.org

Meeting Emergency Needs With Dignity, Inc.
37 Evergreen Place
East Orange, New Jersey 07018



*An interfaith anti-hunger
coalition serving the needy for
nearly 30 years*

Contact us at:
info@mendnj.org
973-266-7941

TO:

Advisory Board 2010

Jamie Anthony
Prospect Presbyterian Church
Maplewood

Helen Brooks
Blessed Sacrament Church
Newark

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Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
East Orange

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