

MISSION MOMENT

LEAD Box Lunches Feed Our Neighbors: Together we Turned Lemons into Lemonade!

By Deacon Vicki Hanrahan, Assistant to the Bishop for Synodical Life

As many of you know, the long-anticipated LEAD event was postponed due to the Coronavirus safety precautions we needed to take. As you can imagine, with an event of this nature, we had many things to “undo” and time sensitive arrangements to address. One of those items was what to do with 300+ box lunches that would not get eaten by attendees who would not be attending!

Staff quickly put their heads together and came up with a solid plan. Two ministries would be served: **Triangle Community Ministry** would receive half the order, a beloved community of residents living in the Triangle area of Madison



who are financially, and some cognitively or physically challenged. Many of these folks are unable to sustain a living due to their circumstances. They are cared for by staff and volunteers and one of our rostered leaders, Deacon Meg Nielsen, who when called, was delighted to come in on her day off on Saturday to shepherd the distribution of the meals. Meg was somewhat relieved because of the impending possibility of having to cancel the community supper on Monday night. “We think we will have to cancel our Monday evening meal that many of our congregations help to serve and that our residents have come to rely on, so this will be a welcomed and appreciated meal.” By 4:45 pm on Saturday, the meals were delivered to the Triangle Community and were quickly picked up by residents. Meg reported, “They were so excited about the delicious meals, especially the individual pies!” As it was 3/14 (Pi day), we had ordered a surprise for LEAD attendees of individual pies in your box lunches. You will be glad to know how much they delighted our friends.

Our caterer agreed to do a split order and delivered one half to Triangle Community Ministry and the other half to Good Shepherd where they would keep them in their refrigerators until they could be delivered to Meadowridge Public Library for the children’s after school meal program on Monday. Good

Shepherd supports this ministry. That was the plan until the schools and libraries shut down today due to latest federal order for public safety. So, the volunteers and staff at Good Shepherd, nimble that they are, learned that another food pantry they serve, Badger Prairie Needs Network, could accept the meals. At 3:30 today, they were delivered. That's where I tracked them down and learned more about this unique food ministry.



Badger Prairie Needs Network

serves the Verona School District and the Madison Chavez school district area two times per month for most patrons. But, like many food pantries in our synod, they are anticipating an increase in needs due to the school closures.

According to Laura Stewart, their communications staff person, "Right now because we've had so many volunteers cancel because their kids are at home, or they are not well, we are looking for financial donations because we are anticipating that we won't have the volunteers to sort the food items and won't have as many food donations. We also do food packaging through Kitchen to Table and we recover good food from Epic and other cafeterias and it goes to Community Action Coalition, CAC, so it is very much appreciated. So we are looking for volunteers (who are healthy!) to help with repackaging. We will also start offering a drive through pick up service."



Laura Stewart of Badger Prairie Needs Network describes their unique food service.

Laura and I stand at a safe distance from each other...an interview posture that I am unfamiliar with but make work because I was anxious to learn more about this food service for families and to tell you this beautiful story of neighbors serving neighbors. We had already received emails from you that you appreciated that we could make good use of the food that would not be used by our group, so we wanted and needed to share how this all came together. I have been pondering all day how God works through adversity to bring blessings. As ever, we do our best when we do God's work together. Thanks to the hands of Good Shepherd volunteers and staff, Deacon Meg Nielsen and volunteers that helped distribute meals and Badger Prairie Needs Network for serving our brothers and sisters who are food insecure, and my colleagues here on synod staff who think creatively especially under pressure. Our theme for LEAD this year was, "We are Church Together!" And while the postponement of LEAD and not being together was disappointing, I couldn't have imagined how quickly we could activate to turn those lemons into lemonade.