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Prayer



Self-denial

Giving

Devotional Guide for Lent



Lent is a season of forty days, excluding Sundays, which begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday.

It is a time in which Christians are invited to reflect upon the suffering and sacrifice of Jesus as we prepare for the joy of Easter. We are called to prayer, self-denial and giving as acts of repentance so that we may offer ourselves fully to Christ in response to his gracious gift of salvation.

There is much suffering and hardship in the world around us and we often turn away, closing our ears and hiding our eyes, because we feel there is so little we can do. Yet together, as the hands and feet of Christ, we can make a difference in the lives of those around us. Sometimes, a small act of caring and our prayers, combined with the Spirit's power, can work in miraculous ways..

Each day of this devotional guide contains lectionary scriptures and the story of someone who has been touched in some way by acts of compassion in our outreach ministry. We rarely know where they go or the course of their lives after we meet them - but we can continue to pray for them. This guide invites those prayers. It also invites you to give thanks for blessings you may take for granted and to give in response so that someone's **hunger** - be it physical and/or spiritual - may be fed by the love of Christ.

Special thanks to Holley Morris for compiling the stories that have been shared here and for her faithful work in the Bread of Life ministries.



Holy Saturday

March 30, 2013

Scripture Reading: John 19:16b-42

Merciful and everliving God, Creator of heaven and earth,

*The crucified body of your Son was laid in the tomb
and rested on this holy day.*

*Grant that we may await with him
the dawning of the third day
and rise in newness of life,
through Jesus Christ our Redeemer.*

Amen.

(The Book of Common Prayer, U.S.A., 20th century)



Ash Wednesday

February 13, 2013

Scripture Reading: Psalm 51:1-17

A woman came to the church for help. She had stayed on the street the night before because she had no place to go except back to a trailer in Mason where her abusive boyfriend and their three children live. She had recently been released from jail. She now has no custody rights to her children. Her only family is in California. She had only the clothes on her back. She had lost her apartment due to finances and had been living in her truck, which was repossessed while she was in jail containing all her clothing and possessions. She had not eaten in over 24 hours. She is pregnant with another child by the same man.

She was taken to Goodwill where a few basic clothing items were purchased. Two nights at a local motel and emergency food items were provided. Resources for prenatal care and food through the WIC program were also provided to her. Pray for this woman and her children and others like her who suffer from domestic abuse and extreme poverty.



Think back to your childhood. Who were the important people in your life who loved and cared for you each day? Give thanks for them and place an offering in your Lenten Hunger box which honors them.

Thursday

February 14, 2013

Scripture Reading: II Corinthians 5:20b - 6:10

Anne Thornton met a 66 year-old woman who is battling cancer while qualifying her to receive food at the food pantry. She shared with Anne that she had surgery to remove a large tumor and now had to take daily radiation treatments in Memphis. Since she has no car, she was spending 10-12 hours each day on the Delta van getting to and from her treatments. She said how exhausting those daily trips were and that she was always cold on the van.

Anne shared her concern for this woman with her Sunday School class and the group purchased a small blanket to help keep her warm on the van ride. But as more folks learned of her situation, people stepped forward who were willing to take her to her treatments. Eight different persons from this church and the community provided transportation in their personal vehicles stretching over the remaining three weeks of treatments. Pray for her continued healing and her need for better housing.



Count Your Blessings...

If you have reliable transportation that allows you to go anywhere you may need to go, give thanks! Place a quarter in your Lenten Hunger box for each tire on any vehicles you may own.

Good Friday

March 29, 2013

Scripture Reading: John 18:1-27

No matter how much we want to follow Jesus, sometimes it is difficult to be his disciple. If we follow where he leads us - to the poor, the sick, to those who are sometimes hard to love because we don't agree with their choices or the way they live their lives, sometimes we react like Peter did, turning away when we feel too much is being required of us.

At the beginning of his public ministry when he stood to read from the scroll of Isaiah in his hometown synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus clearly identified his ministry:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

because he has anointed me to speak good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives

and recovery of sight to the blind,

to let the oppressed go free,

to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

That was Jesus' mission and ministry. If we are his disciples, it becomes our mission and ministry. We can deny him... or we can take up our cross and follow him.



Holy Thursday

March 28, 2013

Scripture Reading: John 13:1-17

A couple in their eighties who are faithful members of our church contribute food to Bread of Life. They still grow a big garden each year. In 2012, they contributed several hundred pounds of squash, turnips, and pecans (already cracked and picked out) to go in food bags.

Members of Tabernacle United Methodist Church also contributed from their gardens. Hundreds of pounds of tomatoes, squash, cucumbers, eggplant, okra, purple hull peas came from those families on a weekly basis during the growing season in 2012. A farmer in their congregation planted two acres of sweet corn on his property which yielded enough sweet corn to supply food bags for two months.

Two retired men, one a member of our church, one a member at Poplar Grove Baptist Church, planted a 1/2 acre of sweet potatoes which produced thousands of pounds for food bags.

Give thanks for time, money, and hard possible!



those who invested their work to make this bounty

Count Your Blessings...

Fresh vegetables used to be on every table in the south years ago. Folks knew how to grow their food and how to can or freeze it for the winter months. If you can afford to purchase fresh, canned and frozen vegetables, give thanks! For each package or can of vegetables in your pantry, refrigerator or freezer, give a quarter to your hunger offering box.

Friday

February 15, 2013

Scripture Reading: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Each Saturday, food pantry patrons are invited to share prayer requests they may have. Prayers are offered by our Sunday morning prayer teams and the requests are added to our email prayer listing.

One of the requests was that her landlord would repair the heating unit for her house. The weather was cold and she had asked repeatedly for the repair. She lives alone and is in her 70's.

She was contacted and offered an electric space heater purchased under the Operation Round-Up program. Her daughter picked up the heater from our church office and a short time later her mother called expressing what a blessing the heater was and that she was "praising God" for that gift of warmth.

Pray for this woman and others like her who live in housing that does not meet their basic needs of shelter and warmth.



Count Your Blessings...

If you have heat in your house that keeps you warm in the winter months, give thanks! Place a dime in your Lenten hunger box for every vent or heating unit in your home.

Saturday

February 16, 2013

Scripture Reading: Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

A single mother of three children came to the church asking for help with her utility bill. She had been working for a local manufacturer which was shut down during the Christmas holidays, so she had not received a paycheck during that time. She had a portion of the amount needed and between our church and one other here in town, she received the balance she needed.

However, when she arrived home that day, she had a notification from Delta Human Resources in the mail indicating approval for utility assistance under their low income energy program. She returned our check the next day because she no longer needed the assistance and shared that she had been recalled to her job on a day shift assignment which was much better for her family than the night shift she had been working previously.

Give thanks for this hardworking, honest woman and pray for her continued employment and support of her family.



Count Your Blessings...

If you have gainful employment or retirement benefits to meet your needs, give thanks! For every regular bill you must pay to maintain your household that is covered by your income, place a quarter in your Lenten hunger box.

Wednesday

March 27, 2013

Scripture Reading: Philippians 2:5-11

As part of their recognition of National Nurses' Week, the nursing staff at Baptist Hospital Tipton conducted a food drive for the Bread of Life food pantry. They delivered several large boxes of food to the church the week following their drive.

Persons who come to the church who are homeless or transient often have different food needs than those who have home. They are often living out of a backpack in motel rooms or their vehicle with only a microwave (or nothing) to cook in or no dishes to eat from. For these folks, the food pantry maintains a separate stock of single-serve, non-perishable items - vienna sausages, Spam, beanie weenies, pop top fruits and vegetables, soup, Easy Mac, ramen noodles, cereal, and similar items.

When the nurses' donations arrived, our transient / homeless food supply was very low. The boxes they brought contained those exact types of items, completely replenishing the shelves. The nurses had no way of knowing those items were needed - again, a beautiful example of providence working



God's loving guidance and through kind and generous folks.

Pray for those who are without a place to stay and must rely on the kindness of strangers.

Count Your Blessings...

If you have never in your life been without a place to stay and food on your table, give thanks! Then check your pantry. For each item you have that matches with our transient / homeless food list, put a dime in your Lenten hunger donation box.

Tuesday

March 26, 2013

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 50:4-9a

Marlyn Seagrave shares this story. In the summer of 2012, a local woman named Marilyn Barbee, who works full-time for DHS, had a dream of starting a Saturday morning reading tutoring program in the housing project in Covington. Marlyn tutors students at CIAA as a volunteer each week and began working as a tutor when Ms. Barbee started the program. Peggy Watson also works as a tutor there.

More and more children have come, and currently there are around 30 children who live in the north housing project who come every Saturday morning. The children receive a baseline reading screening when they start coming and all those participating are behind grade level in some way in their reading skills. They spend the entire 90 minutes they are there on Saturdays reading with an adult tutor!

Pray for Ms. Barbee, those who serve as tutors, and for the children who participate in this much needed program.



Count Your Blessings...

Reading is such an important life skill. Who were the people in your life who first helped you learn to read - a parent or grandparent or a special teacher or friend? Give thanks for them and contribute to your Lenten hunger box in their honor.

Monday

February 18, 2013

Scripture Reading: Luke 4:1-13

Tim Wallace, who works two Saturdays a month as Pantry Coordinator at the Brighton food pantry, shared this story. One Saturday just as the pantry was opening, he was making announcements and distributing sheets to patrons. An elderly woman who is a regular patron kept trying to get his attention. Tim confessed that he initially ignored her because he was busy. But she was insistent, so he came over and spoke to her.

She proudly presented him with a "neck pillow" she had made herself in appreciation for his work at the pantry and asked that he present a similar pillow to George Patton, who also works as Pantry Coordinator at Brighton and happened not to be there that day. She said to tell George that, "Mama Mattie made it for him." Tim confessed, "I was humbled. I didn't remember her name and was amazed that she thought enough of George and me to make us a gift." He says that pillow reminds him daily of Mama Mattie and her kindness. Give thanks for Mama Mattie and all those who offer simple acts of kindness and appreciation.



Count Your Blessings...

Pay special attention today to the words and actions of those you encounter. Who offered you kindness or encouragement? What simple acts let you know you are loved? Make an offering to your Lenten hunger box that honors those persons.

Tuesday

February 19, 2013

Scripture Reading: Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16

A father, mother and mentally disabled 19-year old daughter came to the church seeking utility assistance. The father has rheumatoid arthritis and can no longer work. The mom cannot work because the daughter requires constant care; she becomes agitated and combative easily. The father has applied for Social Security disability, but the process is lengthy. Their utilities had been disconnected for almost two months. Their only income is their daughter's disability benefit. With help from the Samaritan fund and Ministerial Alliance, their utilities were restored.

Six months later, the father returned again seeking utility assistance. Since their previous visit, their daughter was raped by a family member whom they trusted, has been removed from their home by DCS, and placed in a group home. He still has not been approved for disability; his wife is job hunting, but has not found work. Again, their utilities have been off for several weeks. Their families are helping them as they can. Samaritan funds were committed and a food allotment was provided. Pray for this family.



Count Your Blessings...

If you have healthy children and grandchildren who live in a safe, warm home with enough to eat, give thanks! Make a donation to your Lenten hunger box which honors them.

Monday

March 25, 2013

Scripture Reading: Luke 19:28-40

A woman in her mid-60's came to the church for help. Her adult son was killed in an accident 15 years ago. He had two small sons and their mother, a drug addict, abandoned them. The boys have been raised by their grandparents, who are both disabled, and are now 19 and 16 years old. The elder grandson is mentally disabled, but graduated from high school last year.

Two months ago, their mother got out of rehab in Foley, AL and called asking the boys to come live with her. The elder grandson went, got a job working on a shrimp boat, and moved in with his mother. But things changed - his mother returned to drugs and had stolen over \$500 he had saved. He called his grandmother asking to come home because he did not want to be part of that lifestyle, but he had no money to make the trip.

His grandmother, a regular food patron, had \$200 that she hoped might cover the cost of gas to make the trip. She asked for help with a motel room and food en route which was provided in a gift card from the Samaritan Fund. Pray for this family.



Count Your Blessings...

Is there someone in your family or circle of friends who has struggled with addiction of some kind? If they have overcome that addiction, give thanks to God and make a gift to your Lenten hunger box which honors that positive change of life.

Saturday

March 23, 2013

Scripture Reading: Psalm 118:19-29

Two sisters who are food pantry patrons have nine children between them. One receives \$954 a month in food stamps; the other \$1,010. They both live in public housing rent-free, but have no regular income since neither is employed and both have exhausted their five years of Families First benefits. Neither woman finished high school or has a GED, which is necessary for most types of even entry level jobs. Neither receives any child support, although it has been ordered by the court; the fathers cannot be located, are in jail or are not working.

Both women have returned to the food pantry more than one time before the 30 day waiting period claiming they have no food in the house for their children. When declined for a food distribution, both became angry and disruptive. It is likely the women are selling their food stamps to pay bills.

Both have been barred from further Samaritan assistance due to repeated requests, but continue to be eligible for food once every 30 days because of the needs of their children. Pray for their children that they may break out of that cycle of poverty and entitlement.



Count Your Blessings...

If you were raised with a strong work ethic and a sense of personal responsibility, give thanks! Your prayers for those who grow up and live in a cycle of poverty are your offering today.

Wednesday

February 20, 2013

Scripture Reading: Deuteronomy 26:1-5

At the Covington food pantry, a food patron was given an information sheet about the Operation Round-Up utility assistance. She told her qualifier that she was unable to read and Nancy Lindsey took her aside to read it to her. She had her young son with her who spied a bible in the Sunday School room where they were and asked if he could have it. Nancy learned from his mother that he was developmentally delayed and told her she would get him a bible that would be appropriate for his age and reading skills.

A bible was identified and purchased for him and was given to his mother the next time she returned to the food pantry. Although his mother cannot read, her son is learning and now has a bible of his own.

Pray for Dylan and his mother and give thanks for the kindness of Nancy and so many folks like her who offer their time and attention to help others.



Count Your Blessings...

If you can read and have a bible of your own at home, give thanks! For each bible in your home, place a quarter in your Lenten hunger box.

Thursday

February 21, 2013

Scripture Reading: Deuteronomy 26:6-11

A man who was homeless came to the church asking for lodging. He had made similar requests on several occasions previously. He had some mental and emotional disabilities, but had no income of any kind.

Tim Carpenter determined in talking with him that he had family living near Nashville. A call was placed to his family who agreed to take him in if he could get there. A bus ticket was purchased from Samaritan funds and Tim provided him a ride to the bus terminal in Memphis.

Later that day, Tim got a call from the man's mother. When he took the call, he was concerned that she had changed her mind about allowing him to come. Happily, the mother was calling to express her appreciation for helping her son to come home.

Pray for that mother and her son and all those who are caregivers to persons with disabilities.



Count Your Blessings...

If you have a safe, warm place to sleep each night and food on your table, offer a prayer of thanksgiving, for many people do not. For each pillow in your home, place an offering of a quarter in your Lenten Hunger box.

Friday

March 22, 2013

Scripture Reading: Philippians 3:10-14

A regular food pantry patron who lives alone in Covington called the church one Sunday morning asking if she could get a ride to church since she had no car. Martha Brasfield offered to pick her up. She is mentally disabled and in very poor health. She came to church several Sundays with Martha and others providing her transportation. One Sunday, she told Grace Phelps that she wanted to continue to come to church, but felt that she did not have the right kind of clothes to wear when she came and no money to buy something better.

Grace shared that concern with her Sunday School class and Martha with the Hope class. Both classes provided funds and Kendy Erwin took the woman shopping, helping her to find a couple of outfits which fit her, plus new undergarments and shoes.

The woman continues to come to church when she is able. In recent months, her health has been very poor and she has been in and out of the hospital. She has kept in regular touch with the church office advising of her health situation. Pray for healing and wholeness for this woman.



Count Your Blessings...

If you have good clothing to wear, give thanks! Many of us feel we should wear our very best when we come to worship, but for someone whose clothing is not in good condition, they may be reluctant to come to worship with us because of that. For each article of clothing in your closet which you would wear to church, give a penny to your hunger offering box.

Thursday

March 21, 2013

Scripture Reading: Philippians 3:4b-9

George Patton shares this story. On more than one occasion, George noticed a thin, dirty middle-aged man outside the grocery store who appeared to be looking for a ride. George approached and he was indeed in need of a ride home. As George drove him home, the man told him he either walked or caught a ride to the grocery store and returned home the same way. He and his brother lived together in a home they inherited from their grandmother out on Highway 179, but they had no income other than food stamps. Their sister had received disability benefits, but she had passed away a few months earlier.

George noticed that the man had several cardboard boxes with him. The man said that they had no utilities in the house and they burned the boxes when it was cold to try to keep warm. They carry water from a neighbor's house which has a well. George shared this with FUMC staff and it was reported to Adult Protective Services. The need was also shared with Bill Franklin who is clearing trees on his farm.

of wood and delivered it to the brothers. Please pray for these men who are both mentally and physically disabled with no other family to help them.



Count Your Blessings...

If you have running water and electricity in your home, give thanks! Most of us consider that an issue only in third world countries, but it exists in many households throughout Tipton county. For every faucet in your household, place a dime in your hunger donation box.

Friday

February 22, 2013

Scripture Reading: Romans 10:8b-10

Kathy Wallace shares this story. Over recent months, she has developed a special bond with one of our food pantry clients named Annie, who is a devoted mother, grandmother and daughter. Annie had to quit her job about 7 months ago to care for her elderly father. She has siblings, but they do not help with her father's care. She is also taking care of her grandchildren while her children are working in Florida (couldn't find work around here, but didn't want to pull the children out of school.) Annie has confided in Kathy that she is so very tired and has no time for herself. Kathy has shared some of her experiences and feelings of caring for an elderly parent with her. They take care of her qualifying for the food quickly and then sit and talk. Kathy says they have shared tears, laughter, prayers, hugs and "I love you."

Please pray for Annie, her father, and her family in this tough time and give thanks for Kathy and others like her who provide comfort and strength to others drawn from their experience of God's provision in their own time of suffering.



Count Your Blessings...

Think back to a difficult period in your life. Who offered you comfort, encouragement and support during that time? Give thanks for those persons and make a gift to your Lenten hunger box which honors their kindness.

Saturday

February 23, 2013

Scripture Reading: Romans 10:11-13

A mother and her daughter-in-law traveled here from Kingsport, TN to visit an adult relative in prison at Ft. Pillow. The mother comes once every 3-4 years to see her son. Both women live on disability income. After they got here, their car stopped running - bad battery and alternator. Their funds were exhausted from additional nights at a motel they had not planned on and buying a new battery which did not get the car running again.

Through the generosity of a FUMC church member who owns an auto repair shop (who wishes to remain anonymous) and his supplier, their alternator was repaired free of charge. An additional night at the motel, emergency food, and money for gas was provided through the Samaritan fund and food pantry and the women were able to return to Kingsport the following day.

Pray for these women and their relative who is serving a long jail sentence and give thanks for the kindness of those who made the car repair so they could return home.



Count Your Blessings...

Can you remember a time when you were stranded in a strange place with no one to help? Did God provide the help you needed in some way through the kindness of strangers, family or friends? If so, make a donation to your hunger box that honors them.

Wednesday

March 20, 2013

Scripture Reading: Psalm 126:1-6

Kendy Erwin shares this story. She was one of several people who provided transportation to Memphis for the elderly food pantry patron to take cancer treatments, and she was disturbed by the condition of that woman's apartment. Kendy became determined to help her and her disabled daughter find a better place to live. The small apartment, which is in a public housing project, had one bedroom, a tiny kitchen, and mold covered large areas of the walls. Repeated requests had been made to the landlord to get rid of the mold, but nothing had been done. The daughter had been sleeping on a couch for over a year because there was no room for another bed.

After several weeks of searching, they identified a small house with much more room and in good condition. Between the elderly woman's social security and the daughter's disability benefit, they could afford the rent and utilities, but did not have enough for the deposit on the house. With the help of several FUMC individuals and two Sunday School classes, the deposit was paid and they were able to move to a better place. Please pray for this woman in recovering from her cancer and that they can continue to maintain this new home.



If you have a comfortable home that meets your needs, give thanks! Many folks in our community do not and have great difficulty finding safe, well-maintained housing they can afford. For each outside door in your home, place a quarter in your hunger offering box.

Tuesday

March 19, 2013

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 43:16-21

Tim Wallace shares this story. On rainy Saturday as the Brighton food pantry had just finished up their distribution, Tim noticed a man standing just inside the door just watching. Since most of the volunteers were already gone and the food was largely exhausted, Tim approached him anticipating that he might have to turn him away empty-handed.

But he didn't ask for food - he wanted to know on what basis people who came qualified to receive the food. Tim explained that people can qualify based any one of five different criteria established by the Mid-South Food Bank, one of which is total household income. The man shared with Tim that his wife had come to the food pantry previously and gotten food, but that she had only given her income to the qualifier when her sheet was completed - they both receive some social security and retirement benefits and make too much to receive food stamps. He provided Tim the amount of their total income which did exceed the guideline to receive food.

The man said what his wife did was wrong and it did not want to take food from someone else who had a greater need. Tim and the man went on



The man said what his wife had bothered him. He did not want to take food from someone else who had a greater need. Tim and the man went on

Count Your Blessings...

Knowing right from wrong and doing what is right, even if it's hard. If you were raised understanding this, give thanks! Who were the persons in your life who taught you this through their words and actions? Make a contribution to your hunger box that honors them.

Monday

February 25, 2013

Scripture Reading: Luke 13:31-35

A single mom with three teenaged children came to the church for utility assistance. She was working cleaning houses and did receive some child support from the father of the children, but her work had been slow and she needed some help.

A year later, she returned to apply for help through Operation Round-Up. She had been working at a local manufacturer through a temp service and had to purchase a used car in order to get to work. That purchase plus insurance had left her short on her bills that month.

Six months later, she applied for Round-Up assistance again when her employer shut down for the Christmas holidays. Temp service employees do not receive holiday pay. She had no money for her bills or to get Christmas gifts for her children. A Sunday School class helped with gifts. A few days after Christmas, she came in to share the good news that she had accepted a full-time position with benefits where she had been working! Pray for this family.



Count Your Blessings...

Can you remember a time in your life when money was very tight in your household and you worried about how the bills would get paid? How did God provide for you during that time? To celebrate that provision, for each can of food in your pantry, place a nickel in your Lenten hunger box.

Tuesday

February 26, 2013

Scripture Reading: Genesis 15:1-18

A young boy named Hunter who came with his grandmother to the Brighton food pantry shared with volunteers that that day was his birthday - he was turning four! When George Patton learned of it, he put Hunter in the center of the room on top of a table where everyone could see him and invited volunteers and patrons to sing "Happy Birthday" to him.

It so happened that included in the food items that week were several beautifully decorated cakes which were donated by a local grocery store and Hunter was invited to pick out a birthday cake for himself. He and his grandmother were clearly delighted.

Please pray for Hunter and his grandmother.



Count Your Blessings...

That day was something special for a little boy who may not have had much of a birthday celebration otherwise. What a blessing that a community of people of all different races and backgrounds could come together at that moment to celebrate the life of a little boy! How many candles will be on your next birthday cake? Place a dime in your Lenten hunger box for each candle.

Monday

March 18, 2013

Scripture Reading: John 12:1-8

A regular food pantry family was assisted by the New Beginnings Sunday School class in providing Christmas gifts in 2012. They have three children, ages 15, 11 and 7 and the mom keeps her two grandchildren, ages 2 and 1, during the week so her adult daughter can work. The mom arrives at our church at 6 a.m. on the 3rd Saturday of each month and circulates the sign-up list to other patrons until pantry coordinator Carol Daniel arrives at 8 a.m. Their family has one car, which her husband uses to get to his work at Lowe's in Millington, so she normally walks to the pantry and carries her food back with her in a little red wagon.

In the fall of 2012, her husband was injured at work and had to have surgery to repair his shoulder. He was off work for several weeks drawing only a portion of his regular pay in worker's compensation, so they got behind on their bills. Henry Glass, Sr. called her on behalf of the class to find out what the children needed or wanted for Christmas. Henry shared how much joy that conversation brought him. Because of that woman's happiness and gracious spirit, he said HE was one who received the blessing from that experience. Pray for this family who is just barely making ends meet.



Count Your Blessings...

Helping needy families at Christmas is a wonderful expression of care. But through the caring ministries of Bread of Life, we have the chance to help families who are hurting or in need in some way all year long. Thanks be to God! For each gift you received at Christmas, give a dime to your hunger offering box.

Saturday

March 16, 2013

Scripture Reading: II Corinthians 5:20-21

The week before Thanksgiving 2012, there was no meat of any kind that our pantry could get from the Mid-South Food Bank. They made massive appeals for turkeys to be donated, but there were not enough to supply all the agencies they serve.

Purchasing enough meat at retail to supply all the patrons who would come that Saturday would cost nearly \$1,000 (five pound hens at 99 cents per pound).

A local businessman in the Brighton area who already makes a quarterly donation to Bread of Life stopped by the church that week. He said that he felt led to make an extra donation to help us during the holidays in response to news stories he had seen on TV and in the paper about food shortages at the Mid-South Food Bank. He left a check for \$2,000 which more than covered the cost of the meat needed for the food bags!

Give thanks for this man and so many like him in our church and community who respond with generosity to leading of the Holy Spirit.



Count Your Blessings...

We live in a community where people care about their needy neighbors and want to do something to help. Food is a simple, basic way to help. When you've had a death in the family or a serious illness, it's likely that friends and neighbors brought you food - it is a way to say, "We care." For each meal you eat today, donate a dollar to your Lenten hunger offering box.

Wednesday

February 27, 2013

Scripture Reading: Psalm 27:1-6

One week in October 2012, we were unable to get any food at all from the Mid-South Food Bank. Word went out via our email prayer message and quickly spread throughout the community. Oak Grove Baptist, Holly Grove Cumberland Presbyterian, and Tabernacle United Methodist Churches put an appeal out on their email distributions. Donations of food began to pour in from other churches, individuals, school groups, and organizations.

That Saturday, over 120 families came for food to the church and all received a fully stocked food distribution because of the incredible compassion and generosity of this and other churches and the community at large.

God provided through ordinary people who understood that when we come together, as God's people, loaves and fishes are still multiplied so that all may be fed. Give thanks to God for his abundance.



Count Your Blessings...

If you can remember a time in your life when God provided for your needs in some unexpected or remarkable way, give thanks! Make a contribution to your hunger offering box which honors that experience of God's grace in your life.

Thursday

February 28, 2013

Scripture Reading: Psalm 27:7-14

In May 2011, a young woman came to the church with no place to stay and nothing to eat. She had family in the area, but said they would not help her. We provided her a couple of nights at a motel and emergency food.

In September 2011, she returned asking for help with a small utility bill. She had found an apartment and had enrolled in school at TN Technology Center in their business program using a Pell grant. She was walking to school from her apartment on Hill Street.

In June 2012, she came by the church to let us know that she was close to graduation from the program, but did not have money for the book required for one remaining class. That money was provided to her by a couple of Sunday School classes who responded to the need.

In September 2012, she took the state insurance board exam to begin a job with a local insurance company. She also brought her mom by the church to introduce her and shared that she has reconciled with her family. Pray for her and her family.



Count Your Blessings...

Education is the surest way out of poverty. If you had the opportunity to get a good education, give thanks! For each year of formal education you had in your life, place a quarter in your Lenten hunger box.

Friday

March 15, 2013

Scripture Reading: II Corinthians 5:16-19

A single father of two children came to the church to apply for utility assistance through Operation Round-Up. He has sole custody of his children and recently moved back in his with father who was bedridden and dying of cancer; his mentally disabled younger brother also lives with them. He had been working for one of the local cotton gin operations, but had been laid off. His unemployment benefits had not started yet, so he needed some help. Both electric and gas and water bills were covered under the Round-Up program.

Six months later, he returned to apply for Round-Up assistance again. His father had just passed away and the funeral expenses had caused them to need some help once again. But he was excited to share that he had just gotten a full-time job at the new Goodwill store in Covington and that he hoped he would not have come again for the utility assistance. Pray for this family.



Count Your Blessings...

What a difference a good, steady job can make! If you or your spouse have had regular employment that provided for your needs, give thanks! Many folks in our community with limited education and work skills struggle to remain employed. Place a dime in your offering box for each year you have been employed.

Thursday

March 14, 2013

Scripture Reading: Psalm 32:7-11

A woman who receives food from Bread of Life has begun attending worship at our church. She is in her early sixties, lives alone, and is disabled from a serious automobile accident more than ten years ago. The repair that was made to her right knee at that time has deteriorated and her doctor recommended total knee replacement.

She had the surgery done at Baptist Tipton. Her only family member is her brother who is also seriously disabled and is basically confined to his home. Her doctor recommended an eight day stay in the hospital due to complications and adverse reaction to anesthesia; then for her to be moved to a nursing facility for rehab. Yet because her insurance is TennCare, she was released from the hospital to go home alone four days after the surgery with home health nurses to check on her once a day because that is all that was covered by the insurance.

Several folks from FUMC visited her in the hospital and at home, helped her get her medications, and provided meals for her as she recovered. Pray for her healing and a positive outcome from the surgery.



Count Your Blessings...

If you have health insurance coverage that provides for a high quality of medical care when you need it, give thanks! Many in our community have minimal insurance coverage or none at all. How many doctor visits have you made in 2013? Give a quarter to your hunger offering for each of those visits.

Friday

March 1, 2013

Scripture Reading: Philippians 3:17-21

JoAnn Anderson shares this story. One Saturday when she was working as a qualifier in the food pantry, she worked with a middle-aged man who was quite disabled. He shared with JoAnn that he would not have had anything to eat the day before had it not been for his neighbor who fed him. He told JoAnn how embarrassed he was to be in that situation, but he just receives a very small amount of food stamps, barely enough to provide him food for a week. He lives alone.

JoAnn said how very glad she was at that moment that we were able to provide him with food and how very blessed she is to have food on her table.

Please pray for this man and many elderly and disabled folks like him in our community to live with hunger on a daily basis.



Count Your Blessings...

If you have never had to wonder where your next meal would come from, give thanks for that blessing. For each meal you eat today, place a dollar in your Lenten hunger box.

Saturday

March 2, 2013

Scripture Reading: Philippians 4:1-7

A woman with two small sons and her boyfriend came to the church for food. Both adults had grown up in Tipton county but no longer had in family in the area. The woman was mentally and emotionally disabled; the man had once worked as a truck driver but had lost his license; the children were dirty and malnourished. They had been staying at the local motel; their only income was the mother's disability check. We assisted them with food, clothing, and additional nights at the motel.

Over the course of the next two weeks, they returned to the church several times seeking various kinds of help. It became clear that there was abuse and neglect of the children. At one point, the mom suffered an emotional breakdown, had to be hospitalized, and we contacted Children's Services to take the boys. They were taken in as foster children by Hutch and Ashley Hutchison (daughter of Phil and Susan Huffman) and after a lengthy process, were adopted by them this year. They are now healthy, happy little boys with a wonderful family who loves them. Pray for the Hutchison family, and who remains transient, battling mental illness.



for their biological mother living in poverty, and

Count Your Blessings...

For those who answer God's call to open their hearts and homes to a child or children, give thanks! So many children have been given a chance for a better life. Contribute to your Lenten hunger box in honor of someone you know whose life has been changed for the better through adoption.

Wednesday

March 13, 2013

Scripture Reading: Psalm 32:1-6

An 85 year-old man who was living in his vehicle came to the church looking for help. He had traveled to Covington from somewhere in the northwest to be closer to his family. When he arrived, he found that there was no room for him even temporarily at his daughter's home and he was shifted to his granddaughter's home. He was afraid to stay there because of all kinds of illegal activity taking place there. So, for four or five nights and days, he stayed in his car in various public parking lots around town because he did not have funds for a motel room. Someone suggested that he come to the church for help.

He was provided a room at a local motel for two nights and Tipton County Adult Protective Services was contacted to help him secure appropriate housing using his monthly Social Security check. Emergency food items were also provided.

Pray for this man and his extended family.



Count Your Blessings...

If you have loving family and a roof over your head, give thanks. Many persons in our community, particularly elderly folks, are lonely and isolated. Take the opportunity today to send a card, make a phone call or visit to someone who is alone.

Tuesday

March 12, 2013

Scripture Reading: Joshua 5:9-12

A woman who comes to the church often for help – usually for food or utility assistance – came with a different request. She is 53 years old and has had several strokes which have left her physically and mentally disabled. She is difficult to understand since her speech was impacted by the stroke. Her husband is also disabled, but much of their limited income is consumed paying fines incurred by his multiple DUP's. They have one son in middle school. They have great difficulty in managing their money.

Her request on that day was for shoes. Her older sister had died suddenly and she had no shoes other than a worn pair of tennis shoes. She was ashamed to wear them to her sister's funeral, but had no money to buy something better. They had taken in her husband's teenaged daughter by a previous relationship because she was pregnant and had no place to go, which had further taxed their already stressed financial situation. A gift card was provided which would allow her to purchase decent shoes to wear to her sister's funeral service. Pray for this woman and her family.



Count Your Blessings...

Shoes. Many of us have so many shoes we cannot get them all in our closet. Can you imagine having just one pair of shoes? Check your closet and for each pair of shoes you have, place a dime in your Lenten hunger box.

Monday

March 4, 2013

Scripture Reading: Luke 13:1-9

A retired woman who is a member of a small Baptist church in Tipton county learned of the food ministry and visited the Brighton food pantry several times to see how the food distribution was organized. She knew many people who came to the pantry and enjoyed visiting with them while they waited for their food. She shared that she and others at her church were interested in doing something similar, but did not have enough folks in their small, mainly older congregation to do it on their own. George and Tim invited her and friends from her congregation to come anytime and volunteer.

Several weeks later, the woman dropped by the church office and said she'd like to make a contribution to the feeding ministry and left an envelope with a check. She said her late husband always had a soft spot in his heart for anybody who was going hungry. The check she dropped off that day was for \$10,000 and she has since returned with another for \$5,000. Give thanks for this woman's kind heart and for all who give to and serve in the caring ministries of Bread of Life.



Count Your Blessings...

Not all of us have the financial resources to give as this woman did, but we all have something to give – plastic bags, unneeded coats, electric skillet, fresh eggs, turnips or pecans! We give from the abundance with which God has blessed us!

Tuesday

March 5, 2013

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 55:1-9

Peggy Watson shares this story. Peggy was working one Saturday as a qualifier at the Covington food pantry and a young man accompanied by a female relative came to her station. She said he sat with his head bowed and his face sad and she could feel a strong sense of hopelessness about him. He brought a statement from DHS that indicated he had just applied for food stamps the day before.

Peggy filled out his paperwork and inquired if they had prayer requests that we could lift up for them. She also offered them a listing of available jobs in the area that comes to us each week via CHS Assistant Principal Ellen Clark. Peggy asked if they knew someone looking for work and the man replied, "I am!"

After looking through the list, he looked at his companion and said, "This is it!" Peggy said she asked if that list was an answer to prayer and he replied, "Oh yes, you just don't know!" Peggy said it was a remarkable experience of God's grace, offering these folks just a little bit of hope. Pray for this man and his family.



Count Your Blessings...

Hope and encouragement. We all need it and we all have the ability to share it with others who need it. Is there someone in your life who offered you hope and encouragement at a really low times in your life. Add to your offering box in their honor.

Monday

March 11, 2013

Scripture Reading: Luke 15:1-3, 11 b - 32

In the summer of 2012, food pantry patrons were invited to bring their children to participate in Vacation Bible School. Some of the children did not have transportation and volunteers picked them up and took them home each day.

One volunteer driver who picked up a group of five children realized from their conversation on the way that none of them had eaten breakfast and they were hungry. She placed a quick call to the VBS kitchen staff who pulled cereal, milk, and canned fruit from the transient / homeless food section of the food pantry and the children had breakfast when they arrived.

Later that day, an adult male who claimed to be a "friend of the family" came to the church to pick up those children. Because their mother had not authorized anyone other than herself or the designated volunteer driver to pick up the children, that person was turned away. Their mother was contacted and she acknowledged knowing the man, but that she had not asked him to pick up the children. The children were taken home by their volunteer driver. The church's Safe Sanctuary program guidelines worked well in this instance in keeping the children safe. Pray for this family.



Count Your Blessings...

Was Vacation Bible School an important part of your Christian education as a child? If so, give thanks and for each box of cereal, container of milk, and can of fruit in your pantry, place a quarter in your Lenten hunger donation box.

Saturday

March 9, 2013

Scripture Reading: I Corinthians 10:12-17

The folks who qualify for utility assistance under the Operation Round-Up program are those who, under normal circumstances can cover all their expenses, but have had something unusual beyond their control to happen that causes them to need help. One such person was a woman with two children who was in her last semester of college, working part-time, and going through a difficult divorce. Child support benefits had been ordered by the court, but her ex-husband was contesting the ruling. She received help one month with both electric and gas and water bills.

Three months later, she and Grace Phelps saw each other in the grocery store. They spoke and then the woman turned and said to Grace, "I know this is wildly inappropriate, but I just need to give you a hug!" They hugged and the woman shared with her that since she received the Round-Up assistance, she finished her degree and now has a full-time job with full benefits; she is now receiving regular child support which has enabled her and her daughters to move into a three bedroom house. She spoke of how good and gracious

that tough time and the help that was this woman and her



God had been to her during how much she appreciated provided to her. Pray for family!

Count Your Blessings...

God's provision for us is so remarkable! He works in ways we cannot foresee or sometimes even understand until years later. How has God provided for you in your tough times? Give thanks and return an offering of gratitude in your offering box.

Wednesday

March 6, 2013

Scripture Reading: Psalm 63:1-4

A man with a disabled wife and twelve children came to apply for utility assistance through the Operation Round-Up program. (His wife had seven children when they married, he has custody of his four boys and they have one child together.) He drove a long haul truck for fourteen years and also worked as a prison guard at Ft. Pillow, but had to stop working to care for his wife and smallest children because his wife can no longer do it physically. He does all the cooking, cleaning, laundry and shopping for the household. They lived on their savings for several months but those were exhausted.

His wife had just been approved for disability benefits as had one of their sons who also has a physical disability, but they had not begun receiving those benefits and needed some help with their utilities. His love for his wife and children were apparent as he shared their circumstances. As he was waiting for his application to be processed, he began talking with a two year-old boy who was also waiting with his mom for assistance. The boy was wiggly and restless.

had the little boy and sitting still for his tired husband and



Within minutes, this man engaged in conversation mom. Pray for this committed father and his big family.

Count Your Blessings...

Fathers who are committed and actively involved with their families make a tremendous difference. If you had one of those dads, give thanks and contribute to your Lenten box in honor of your Dad.

Thursday

March 7, 2013

Scripture Reading: Psalm 63:5-8

Offering young people the chance to serve those in need teaches them valuable lessons early on about kindness, compassion, and generosity. Both scout troops that meet at our church serve every month in the food pantry, and numerous school groups have also served.

Two young women in our congregation also work regularly in the food pantry and take seriously the importance of that work. This winter, Mary Catherine Turner shot her first deer and asked her parents, Michael and Hope, if the meat could be processed and donated to the food pantry. Mary Catherine and Michael delivered over 50 pounds of ground venison with big smiles.

Her older sister Neely worked in the coat closet recently assisting patrons in finding the right coat. She helped a single, working mother of four children to find a beautiful coat, hat, and gloves. The woman then went next door to get food and was sent to Hope to qualify. Hope complimented her on how good her coat looked and the woman shared with her how kind the young lady was who helped her proudly and said, "That's my daughter!" to find it! Hope smiled "That's my daughter!" mom and her children.



Count Your Blessings...

Mary Catherine and Neely experienced the joy of helping others who cannot repay them. Can you remember a time in your life when some did something so kind for you for which you can never repay them? If so, donate to your box in their honor!

Friday

March 8, 2013

Scripture Reading: I Corinthians 10:1-11

Relationships are often built between those who serve in the food pantry and those who come for food. One woman who is in her sixties, disabled and in very poor health is a regular patron at the Brighton pantry. She would often arrive at 5 a.m. on food pantry days and handle sign-up of patrons until volunteers arrived. Several months ago, the church received a call from one of her family members to let us know that this woman had been hospitalized and was on life support at Methodist North. They asked specifically that "Brother George (Patton)" and "Brother Tim (Wallace)" be notified.

George and Tim both stopped by the hospital to check on her and Tim took a prayer shawl for her made by someone in our church's prayer shawl ministry. Although the woman was unconscious, they visited with her family members.

Several weeks later, the woman herself called the church to report that she had been released from the hospital and was much better. She said she would be undergoing some physical therapy but planned to be back at the food pantry as soon as she was able. She was very appreciative of the visits and the prayer shawl. She was very appreciative of the visits and the woman and her family.



Count Your Blessings...

Can you remember a time in your life when a call or visit or some expression of care meant so much to you? Give thanks for those who reached out to you in that difficult time and make an offering which honors their love and compassion.