

**"IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO BE COMPASSIONATE. YOU MUST ACT."
-Tenzin Gyatso, 14th Dalai Lama, 1992**

'First Sunday Food Sharing':

**Increasing Your Congregation's Harvest
For Your Local Food Bank**

**Community Outreach
Grosse Pointe Unitarian Church
Larry and Janet Peplin**



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“IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO BE COMPASSIONATE. YOU MUST ACT.”

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‘First Sunday Food Sharing’: Increasing Your Congregation’s Harvest For Your Local Food Bank

Grosse Pointe Unitarian Church’s Recipe For Success!

This pamphlet will explain how a relatively small congregation (164 members) went from donating less than a ton of food to over 12,000 pounds per year. Our church has established a long-term relationship with Crossroads East, located on the far eastern edge of Detroit. There are interesting differences in how food banks operate to serve their specific clientele. In addition, there are many ways that congregational awareness can be raised to better understand and target the needs of their nearby food bank. Once a ‘good fit’ has been established, the opportunity that exists for a congregation to make a significant contribution can be greatly increased. Ultimately, this improves the impact for not only its ‘neighbors in need’, but also those generous hearts and helping hands doing their best to make a difference.

Here’s how we did it in Grosse Pointe, where, once again, for the 6th year in a row, we will top the previous year’s food donation poundage total. To begin:

1

Find out what, if anything, your congregation is already doing.

- **Who are the key people for whom this is a passion?**
- **When, where & how do they do what they do?**
- **What are they accomplishing now?**



2

We’re doing something to stock the shelves of our local food bank!

- **How can we expand and support our current efforts to promote a greater return in these tough, tough times?**
- **What kind of assistance is needed to increase our congregation’s ‘harvest’?**



3

We have no program in place to support our local food bank!

- **How do we begin to make a difference?**

People & Necessary Resources- Ultimately your 'Food Bank Staff': Inspiring /Locating them

1. You will need to seek out people who might be interested in participating in this process. You might make an announcement verbally or written in the weekly bulletin or newsletter stating that you are looking for interested people to join in on this project. Networking can be done in numerous ways to make initial contacts within your congregation. Most people will have some idea of what works best in their church community.
2. If you know or discover that you already have people working at this, you will want to talk with them and find out what they do and how they could use more assistance. If you do NOT have something already in motion, a great way to begin is to print an article in your church newsletter informing people about the current increased need for beginning a food bank collection. Even if you do have something going on, but wish to *increase* what you have currently, this initial letter can really help. (See sample provided.) An accompanying sign-up sheet for interested people to record names and contact information for an organizational meeting would be helpful.
3. Provide a follow-up meeting for interested people to come together and talk about how to organize. Figure out who is interested and what they are willing and/or able to do.
4. Volunteers who can perform tasks on a regular basis will be needed. Access to a vehicle with a larger capacity will be important (mini-van, SUV, or good-sized car trunk). These don't always have to be the same people; a regular schedule is best, but different people can take turns performing scheduled jobs.
5. It's great to have a person or two willing to write up newsletter articles, reminders, website updates and thank you notes. This might also be the person who makes sure that your food-sharing Sunday dates are posted on the main calendar, (avoiding holidays, low-turnout days, or special collection Sundays if possible) to further insure that these dates are included in whatever form of congregation event reminders your church uses.
6. You'll want a couple people who are willing to make calls and/or do a little research for 'food networking'— finding businesses in your locality that will donate free food to you if you pick it up will be needed. In fact, these might be 'temporary' positions...needed only in the beginning stages of setting up your program.

Tasks of Collecting and Delivering Foods

1. Being on site and visible at a designated date, time and 'drop' location to collect contributions as they walk in on a Sunday morning is critical. This also involves organizing the day's collection for transport to the food bank. (consolidating into bags or boxes and loading into the transport vehicle for the delivery trip to the food bank)
2. Picking up food (example: surplus bread/baked goods) on a given day each week from a local bakery, grocery store or retail business like a bagel shop (if you make this a part of your program) will be necessary.
3. Shopping for 'high need' items at food stores (if you make collecting funds a part of your program).
4. Transporting everything to the food bank regularly.

Educating your congregation about who your local food bank(s) is and how they work

1. It's a great idea to seek out local food banks and send a small group to explore them. This means calling and making an appointment to talk with the director. In addition, speaking with volunteers or staff who work on site can provide you with great information. This enables you to develop a good working relationship. Your organizers will want to know answers to these questions and share them with your congregation:
 - What are their 'intake' procedures? For instance, must clients make appointments, and go through a questioning or a screening procedure?
 - Are there limits to how frequently people may come to this location?
 - What types of services does your local food bank provide? Is it solely food distribution, or are other goods and services available such as employment counseling and assistance, securing legal identification, clothing, funds for public transportation, bill payment or medical services?

- Do they have other locations that specialize in additional services, such as serving meals, summer meal programs for children or sheltering?
 - Do they have the capability to take frozen foods or foods that need refrigeration? If so, how much?
 - Do they weigh the food you bring in and provide you with total poundage?
 - Do they service more families, single people who are struggling, or homeless people who may or may not live in shelters?
 - Do they need more on-site volunteers? (Your church may have people who would rather donate some time directly to working at the food bank in any of the other areas it provides services.)
 - What kinds of jobs do those volunteers do?
2. Finding out the answers to these questions enables you to better pair up your resources with the needs of the food bank. At the very least we can collect food, drive it there and drop it off; but with a little more communication and interaction between church and food bank, we can learn about additional needs and help we might provide and facilitate a 'good fit' between the two. It becomes apparent that once you provide targeted foods regularly, a food bank will rely on you as a source for certain items. They will then allocate their funds for other items they need. The answers to the above questions were written up in a three-part series printed in our church newsletter in order to better educate members about the food bank we work with and their 'wish list' food items. (See a copy of this three-part series at the back of this packet.)

Communicating with your congregation members

1. You will want to communicate a lot of information as you begin. Brief but detailed newsletter articles that tell about your food bank help people to know what actually goes on there. In the beginning of working with our local food bank, I went in and met with the director, toured the facility and then wrote a three-part series that told about it. (See samples.) I had received a lot of feedback that most people had no idea what went on at Crossroads East, and they were glad to know that job counseling and other forms of assistance were provided. Periodically, we will write up a short article to give an intermittent progress report as to how our contribution total is climbing, and we make it known regularly how grateful the staff at the food bank is to see us arrive.
2. As time went on, we had several people frustrated that they kept forgetting it was going to be First Sunday Food Sharing. We were asked if there was any way we could send out a friendly reminder for food sharing Sunday. Working with our office secretary for new member updates and email changes, we developed a group emailing list. Thursday or Friday before FSFS, we write up a friendly reminder that food sharing Sunday is approaching. It has helped immensely. Our church also sends out a weekly email to members entitled, "This Weekend at GPUC". It contains a short synopsis of the upcoming Minister's sermon and then a listing of events that fall either side of the weekend. Food Sharing Sunday is one of those events listed.
3. Obtain some true short personal vignettes about people who have come to your food bank to include in your email reminder. In other words, personalize the people you are helping—make them REAL. I have a volunteer who will email me short stories about clients she has worked with. Sharing these stories with the congregation members informs them of the diverse types of individuals who need help from the food bank. Our contributions increase every time I am able to include a short story about someone we were able to help. (See samples.)
4. We also post signs outside that say, "Food Sharing Sunday". This helps people to remember to carry in what they have brought from their car. If they have forgotten altogether, they still have time to search their pockets or write a check. We also post a large sign next to our drop-off shelf that is visible the minute they enter the building.

Making it as easy and as efficient as possible to participate

1. Monetary contributions including checks for tax deduction: As time has gone on, and we've given a lot of feedback to our members about how far we are able to stretch dollars and target specific needs the Crossroads staff has named, many people have decided to give money rather than purchase food and carry it in. We provide a container for dropping money and checks into on First Sunday Food Sharing day—it's called the "Yes, you CAN can". (See photo) Working through our office, we tell people to make checks out to 'GPUC' and write

'food sharing' in the memo line. Checks are next passed through the office so that donors will have a record of their charitable contribution for taxes.

2. Provide a permanent shelf for making contributions any time. This has really helped a great deal. In our coatroom, we have a small shelf that people may leave donations on any time they are in the building. Sometimes, people know they will be absent on FSFS day, so they may bring something prior to that day, or following that date. We visit our food bank each week because of the Saturday bread runs we do, so anything donated during the month goes to the food bank that month. On food sharing Sundays, the shelf is immediately visible as people walk into church. We are always right there, with a smile and a thank you as contributions are left.
3. Pay attention to the calendar! Flexibility is necessary in donation dates; sometimes you may have to move the collection day, or schedule other events around it. For instance, experience has taught us that some Sundays are not the best collection days. Some of the ones we have learned to be less desirable: A regular break time when attendance might be lower due to families away on vacation (such as holiday breaks, midwinter break, Spring break), or sometimes those Sundays when a 'guest' speaker is present. Another event that can cause contributions to fall off is special plate collections. Obviously you don't want to overwhelm people with too many worthy causes on any given day. It is also critically important that you publicize changes in collection day routines in your reminders. (See our example of how we handle that in reminders.)
4. If you would prefer doing 'one-shot' food collection events, you can easily do a google search (see '**Locating Food Banks**' at the end of this document) and, by clicking on individual food banks they will post on their sites specific events or food collections your congregation may participate in.

Positive feedback that we are making an impact

1. Each time we bring food to Crossroads, it is weighed and recorded. We keep track of the number of pounds we bring in as well, and include that in updates and also in our 'End of the year summary' (see 2008 summary). If your food bank does not weigh and record food poundage totals, it would be a good idea for you to somehow do it yourself. It provides good positive feedback to your members.
2. We have a permanent article of information on our website that explains how the program works, and shows our results for the years we have been doing this. This is a great resource to direct new members to as an explanation of the program. (Take a look: <http://GPU.C.US> - then, go to 'Our Church Community', next to 'Community Outreach' at the top of the page, which directs visitors to scroll down to the more detailed article at the bottom of the page entitled: "**Want to know more about First Sunday Food Sharing? Keep Reading!**")
3. Write personal thank you notes to people who have made large personal contributions. Sometimes, I list what was purchased with their check. Every dollar = 1.5 to 2.0 pounds of food.
4. We bake cookies or fill a platter with some treat, and a note that reads: "Thank You For Participating in Food Sharing" (see photo)

Targeting 'wish list' foods

1. We learned from our food bank what the most needed/desirable food items were. We printed up a small wish list on cardstock and glued a magnet on the back, and made these available to our members so that it could be displayed on a refrigerator as a reminder. (See wish list illustration. We also wrote about this and WHY these foods are preferred by our food bank in one of the initial articles we publicized—you will find that information in the article '**Part 1: Cross-Sectioning Crossroads**' at the back of this packet.)
2. If collecting monetary donations is a part of your program, whoever spends those dollars will want to look at the flyers that come in for the week to follow. For us, the best bargains currently are found at the following locations: Meijer's (They run sales of 10 for \$10, the 11th item free. Many of our priority items are available in these sales.) Kroger's (They also run sales of 10 for \$10) Aldi (Their regular prices on pork and beans 1/lb. can=\$.49, milk and eggs, and canned tuna tend to be lower on a regular basis. They also carry canned green beans and corn for \$.49/can. These were listed as preferred vegetables. Their hot dogs and bologna are the best regular price.) We never buy bread because we transport it from a free source weekly; ours is Kroger. We buy fresh Michigan potatoes from Randazzo's on Gratiot. Sometimes they have also had great buys on large quantities of fruit or sweet potatoes, and we will take advantage of that. Crossroads will spread out potatoes on the same trays as bread so that people may take 2 or 3 rather than carry a whole bag.

Stretching those donated dollars

It's important to emphasize that what we view as the single most significant factor that enabled us to really boost the quantity of food we donated was the inclusion of money contributions to our program. Each month, we keep a record of the number of pounds of food that are either donated or **purchased**. Purchased includes only those food goods we buy with the actual dollars donated. For us, these have become the 'staples' named by our particular food bank. By having someone willing to shop on a regular basis, stretch dollars during sales, and transport, we've REALLY boosted our harvest.

Here are some eye-opening statistics for our program for January through October of 2011, the printing date of this packet:

1,450 pounds carried in by members (donated)

2,970 pounds of breads & baked goods (donated by Kroger), picked up and delivered by us to the food bank

5,590 pounds **purchased** with congregation dollar donations.

10,010 = TOTAL the end of October 2011.

Talking to people directly; explaining how dollars were stretched made a big difference. Eventually, more and more individuals decided it was easier to write a check (AND earn a tax deduction), and let someone else shop the bargains and do the legwork.

'Donated' foods: what is included?

This includes actual canned or boxed goods carried in by congregation members, plus the number of pounds of breads and baked goods that we collect from Kroger's each week, as well as those pounds of food from 'special' donations. An example of a special donation would be the participation by the Grosse Pointe Music Academy. Twice each year, they use our facility for recitals. The director requests canned goods for admission; his audience fills a table with bags and boxes of food, and we transport them to the food bank. We always write a thank-you letter to the director of the Grosse Pointe Music Academy.

Networking to locate free food sources

Many places are willing to donate breads and baked goods that are in surplus or barely out of date. A congregation may make a large amount of food available to people in need **by simply supplying the pick-up and transport service necessary to move it to the food bank!** We've worked out a one-day/week pickup of breads and baked goods from our Kroger store. Panera will donate, but someone has to pick it up and transport to the food bank. Some Einstein Bagel shops will do the same, as well as many other businesses run by people who would rather provide food to people in need than throw it away...they just don't have the time or means to transport it. You will need to make calls or walk in to speak with managers to work these things out; have a card ready with your name and contact information to leave with them.

Other ways to involve more members and RE classes

1. In the beginning of our food bank work, our RE Director had students carry in food donations and weigh them separately in the RE wing. A log of each child's poundage was kept for the year, and some sort of recognition given at the conclusion of the year.
2. This year, our RE students are bringing in toiletries (travel sized). We are considering a project where we would have students assemble hygiene 'kits' for the homeless. These would be zip lock bags containing small soaps, toothpaste, toothbrush, floss, shampoo, body wash, deodorant, etc. They would be delivered to the food bank.
3. Hold a "Canstruction" contest with teams of RE children similar to the one Gleaners runs. (See website below.)

Special requests from our food bank and 'extras if we have extra dollars' (food is our #1 priority)

1. Toothpaste and toothbrushes are always in demand. Full tubes of toothpaste are great, if they are for people who are living in a shelter or have their own home. If they are homeless, the smaller travel sized tubes are best, since they just can't carry all that much with them. Last year, we had an abundance of contributions at holiday time, and we shopped Ebay for travel-sized toothpaste and toothbrushes. We bought a bulk quantity and provide Crossroads with over 200 sets of small toothpaste/brushes for a cost of about \$.40/set.
2. For homeless people, socks and used, clean underwear is needed.
3. Used eyeglasses –I was surprised, then saddened to hear that used eyeglasses, no matter the style or prescription are needed and welcomed by our food bank. Volunteers told me and showed me a box of old well-worn prescription glasses that are treated like gold! People will rummage through them, and try them on, and if they help them to see better, they take them! I've been looking on line where it is possible to purchase 'cheap readers' in lots of dozens for low prices. Dollar stores are also a good source of cheap readers. I mentioned the Lion's Club for glasses to the volunteer, but she was quick to tell me though that's true, it's a long, drawn-out process.
4. Used or new backpacks are highly desired by homeless people for obvious reasons.

Bookkeeping

1. If you collect and spend money for food or other needs that are donated to your food bank, you will need to keep your receipts and turn them in at the end of the year to your bookkeeper, accountant or treasurer.

Locating food banks

It's EASY! If you don't know of a food bank close to your congregation, simply Google 'Detroit Food Banks' and begin looking. Explore these websites...many food bank websites will list specific and special collection programs or locations that your congregation might decide to target periodically throughout the year.

Gleaners is an especially good example: www.gcfb.org

Their website is full of special events and opportunities; your congregation could simply target one to support, or several throughout the year.

THAT 'MAGICAL' SOMETHING – that comes into play!

We've learned that there are lots of good hearts out there who love doing a good thing, given a chance. We've had many interesting and heart-warming experiences during these years of collecting and shopping for food. It's funny how curiosity gets the best of people when they see you pull a shopping cart up to the check-out that has 100 pounds of potatoes in it. Here are some of the comments we've heard: "You must be making potato salad for a BIG reunion" or, "You must LOVE French fries"! 20 dozen eggs nearly always brings comments; "You makin' a BIG omelet"? We generally say, "No, this food is all headed for a food bank." When people hear that, they will usually say something like, "Oh, that is so nice...or...bless you!" Occasionally, we've even had people immediately dig down in their purses and hand over as much as a 10 dollar bill. Another time, we had a very nice man whose company was doing some work at our house. We were loading a large amount of food into the trunk of our car to deliver during the holiday season. When he realized that we were taking it out of our garage and away from our home, he asked us what we were doing, did we need help, and where were we taking all this food? We explained GPUC's food bank project, and he said, "How can I help"? A few days later, the work was finished at our house. He then took out a checkbook and wrote us a very generous check for the food bank...saying something about believing in 'giving back'. All year, as he would finish other jobs, he would stop by our home, leaving an envelope with a generous donation and brief note; 'For your ministry' through the mail slot for the food bank. Single-handedly he boosted our contributions by nearly a ton. Good Samaritans are everywhere!

SAMPLES OF EMAIL REMINDERS – PAGE 1

April 1st, 2011 Subject: FSFS Email Reminder

Dear GPUC Members and Friends,

First Sunday Food Sharing is off to a great beginning for 2011! We have resumed weekly pickups of outdated breads and bakery goods from the new Kroger on Kercheval. This, along with your relentless generosity has enabled us to have a total of over 3,000 pounds of food delivered to Crossroads food bank as of March 31st.

I'd like to share another true life story of a client who came to Crossroads for assistance. Earlier this week, our friend (volunteer at Crossroads) Janet T. wrote:

"Thought I would share some information about my client Lawrence. He is in his 50's and came to me for help finding a job. I was able to send him to our Job Shop. He could not leave without telling me about his avocation as a member of the Detroit 300. He explained that this group of Detroit citizens work with the Detroit Police to get criminals off the street. He feels the members have a special ability to find people who will give tips to them. They then forward these to the Detroit police. He said he is most proud of helping find the serial rapist who had prowled the east side over the winter. I did a little research and found out this was absolutely true. He was pleased to be able to receive food to share with his 8 year old son. He rather made my day!" -- Janet T.

This and other stories that have been shared clearly show the diversity of people needing help from Crossroads. Lawrence is an interesting man, because even though he needs help, he is 'giving back' to his community in a very needed and special way.

Janet has told me numerous times of people who have come to Crossroads for help in tough times; then, when they are back on their feet, they have walked in to donate food as a thank you!

So once again, here's a reminder to put our best selves forward by bringing donations of non-perishable foods, cash or checks on this very special First Sunday Food Sharing, April 3rd.

We thank you in advance,

Larry and Janet Peplin, on behalf of Crossroads Foodbank and GPUC Outreach

June 30, 2011 Email reminder: Subject: Help Us Fight the 'Summer Slow Down'!

Dear Friends,

Summer is off and running, and we continue to make our monthly purchases/deliveries of needed foods and other supplies to Crossroads.

Here is a recent report from our long-time friend who works at Crossroads, Janet T.:

"Crossroads is rolling along this summer. Our shelves are wonderfully full due in great part to Unitarian generosity. We are not always so fortunate in the summer.

Stephanie is a short lady-about 50 years old. She is nicely dressed and new to Crossroads. After she lost her job, she could no longer keep up the \$150.00 monthly house payments. She had been making regular payments but could not pay the accumulated amount of \$756.00. Crossroads cannot help with rent so Stephanie and her daughter will be evicted soon.

Stephanie is a trained cook and is looking for a job. Another client happened to ask me to post an ad he brought in from a restaurant looking for a COOK. Stephanie was so excited by the flyer she left quickly to change her clothes and apply for the job. Help us pray she is hired."

While it's great that the shelves at Crossroads were full as of June 20th, the date of Janet's T.'s note, the bulk of summer is still ahead of us, and contributions do slow down. With your help, we can make a positive impact on the levels of food and supplies they are able to maintain... the goal being to keep them well-stocked!

Thank you in advance for anything you are able to contribute to offset the slow days of summer.
See you this Sunday with some treats for coffee time!

-- Janet and Larry Peplin for Crossroads East Outreach

EMAIL REMINDERS - PAGE 2

Sept. 8, 2011 Email reminder for Crossroads First Sunday Food Sharing Sept. 11, 2011

Dear Members and Friends of GPUC;

We've thrown another curve ball at you this month, since we are calling the second Sunday in September "First Sunday" Food Sharing day. Thanks need to go to all those who already dropped off their monthly donations last Sunday. We have already delivered those bags to Crossroads East, totaling 47 pounds. This switch of official First Sundays occurs when a holiday weekend coincides with the first Sunday of the month, and a smaller-than-expected turnout is predicted. Thus, this coming Sunday, September 11, is not only the first Sunday of the new church year, but is also the official collection day for non-perishable foods that we deliver to Crossroads East Food bank.

It should be noted that donations can be dropped off on any given Sunday, even weekdays, and we monitor the shelves (in the cloakroom) closely since we now make weekly deliveries to the Food bank, instead of monthly.

What has made a tremendous difference in our ability to deliver larger quantities of foods is the cash and checks dropped into the "Yes You Can" can (a jar, actually). Every penny of your monetary donations goes toward actual food purchases, including fresh eggs and milk. Checks should be made out to GPUC, with "food sharing" written on the note line. This way, you have a supplement to your tax-deductible contributions.

Volunteer Janet T. at Crossroads East sent us this client anecdote recently:

A crashing noise in the lobby announced that Rufus had arrived. He was a new client who carried a lot of his belongings with him, a sure sign of a shelter person. Rufus is 65, over 6 feet tall and weighs about 140 lbs. His enormous jeans were held up with a pink and white sash. He is on disability and receives a monthly check. Just today he moved into a house he will rent. Life is not easy because he has no stove, furniture or refrigerator. Still, he is delighted to be sleeping by himself after years in shelters. It's a huge step up for someone like him.

We supplied him with food that was easy to prepare and sheets and blankets to use on the floor. Hygiene items and clothes were added. Also, three pieces of silverware, a china plate and cup completed his new house equipment.

Rufus needed 2 trips to get his new items to his home. He has no fingers----eight lost to frostbite last winter. When I asked him about his health he replied, "I am a paranoid-schizophrenic. Other than that, I am fine!"

We'll be looking for you on Sunday!

Larry and Janet Peplin - on behalf of Crossroads East Food bank and GPUC Outreach

Sept. 29, 2011 email reminder for Crossroads

Dear Friends,

Fall is upon us, and even though there's a new chill in the air, our hearts are warm and giving.

Neighbors in need keep coming through the doors at Crossroads as Janet T. tells us once again:

...He was my first client on Monday morning. Will is a lean man with a smile and eye contact. He was a bit upset because he does not like to ask for help. Will has a daughter with 3 children under 5. The father of the children does not contribute time or money to the family. Will says he will find a way to make him become involved. Currently the children spend a lot of time at the grand parent's home and food is expensive. We sent him home with 3 bags of food. Will was especially happy with the books and puzzles we had available. He and his wife limit TV and insist that the children spend time with games and reading.

We know your helping hands will be there this Sunday for people like Will and his daughter who need assistance.

We'll be there waiting with a special treat!

--

Janet and Larry Peplin for Crossroads East and GPUC Outreach

Three-Part Series on Crossroads East Food Bank (Printed in our newsletter)

Cross-Sectioning Crossroads...Part 1

Mid-winter break was last week, and on an extra 'food drop' to Crossroads, I was able to spend a little more time talking to some of the staff. As a result, I've written these pieces to share what I've learned, so that we may better understand what goes on at this interesting, obscure, yet vitally important place just down the road from where we live.

I met Mary Hansel, who is the executive director of Crossroads. That day, the shelves seemed to be pretty full, and as I walked over to take a closer look, I asked her what types of foods might be in short supply. Mary's answer was 'meat'; canned meats or foods with meat in them, such as ravioli, beef stew, hash, or tuna fish. I asked how most clients arrive at Crossroads and then, how do they manage to transport food home? She answered that some people walk, and some have a friend with a car who will drive them over and back... many ride a bus. She then went on to make a point to me: "Imagine that you can only carry two grocery bags back home by bus. What would you want in them? Canned vegetables are nice, but items like pasta with meat or beef stew or chili are virtually a meal by themselves."

I mentioned that GPUC is the group that donates eggs, and that we have been told to bring no more than 8-10 dozen at a time due to the shortage of refrigerator space. I brought up something I had wondered about; whether hot dogs and bologna are possible sources of meat we can bring...given the shortage of refrigerator space. She said, "Yes, we can freeze those items; and pointed to a large chest type freezer across the room. Our clients love hotdogs and bologna. Hot dogs can be cut and put into pork and beans or combined with macaroni and cheese to extend it into a meal. The same thing goes for tuna fish, which, by the way, we are out of now."

I asked how many of their clients are able to actually cook or prepare food...and do they have stoves or microwaves? She told me that many of the people who come there for help are pretty creative. For instance, one mother uses a kerosene heater for warmth in the center of the room--her children all sleep around it. She has a frying pan that she puts on top of it to warm food.

Following this visit, I went home, gathered up the last of the cash collected for February on our first Sunday food sharing, and purchased seven packages of hot dogs on sale, 14 pounds of bologna and six cans of tuna (again, on sale). I returned the next day to drop off just over 23 pounds of meat.

I met Dawn Massad; volunteer coordinator, who gave me a tour of the rest of Crossroads. My next article will be about that tour and services they offer as well as needs they have.

In case you're interested, they are short on 'counselors' ---these are not social workers in the professional sense. They are people like you and I who give time to counsel others in resources and problem-solving. There will be a training session on Saturday, March 15th from 9-3 for anyone who would like to volunteer some time.

Janet Peplin

Cross-Sectioning Crossroads -- Second in a Series

Touring Crossroads East with Dawn Massad, their Volunteer Coordinator, was enlightening.

First, you enter the basic pantry room where food is housed. It contains a wall of shelving, a refrigerator, a large chest freezer, a table and some cupboards. To your left (and facing the front of the

building)are several desks and file cabinets—an office space for staff. Moving on towards the front of the building, you come to the waiting room or lobby. This is the client entrance. This room is bordered with chairs, and along the inside wall, are several large bread trays—the kind you see in the supermarket when bread is being stocked on the shelves. The trays at Crossroads contain large bags of day-old bagels and loaves of breads. Both the Village Kroger and Panera donate unsold breads daily. These breads are kept in plain sight for clients to take. In addition, when we donate potatoes, the bags are opened, and potatoes are laid out in these trays as well. People may take just what they need.

A right turn takes you into the counseling area, but first, you pass a modest shelving unit where children’s clothing is stored. Only a few types of items are kept there...I saw jeans and shirts, mittens and boots and was told that school uniforms are also stocked when they can get them. Dawn told me that the Detroit Schools require uniforms for students, and even though they are not supposed to turn children away from school who are unable to afford a uniform, she said, “They do try.”

The counseling area is divided into a few walled sections each having a large desk and a few chairs. Anyone who visits Crossroads to pick up food has to make an appointment and speak with a counselor. Need must be determined at every visit. Clients must state the ‘emergency’ that brought them in on any given day. I asked Dawn if anyone is ever turned away and her answer was no. She did say, however, that people cannot come every day, and that many people come about once a month. Counselors determine if they have an income, and what kinds of help would be beneficial beyond the immediate food. Counseling help could be in the form of ‘making a plan for the future’. This doesn't necessarily mean future in terms of years ahead...at times it's more about budgeting and making it through the next month with enough of the bare necessities.

Just beyond the counseling sector, you see three computers housed in the ‘Employment Resource Room’. Locating employment is one more way that counselors are able to provide assistance.

Dawn also mentioned that if a client finds employment, Crossroads may provide a few days’ worth of bus fare to help them through to their first paycheck.

Cross-Sectioning Crossroads - Food Security - Part Three

Food security is defined by the United States Department of Agriculture as: access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.

Food security, at a minimum: is the ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods; is an assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.

Here’s an example of how we stretch our dollars to help accomplish food security:

This past month, there were some very good bargains available for the preferred foods Crossroads requests. Here’s how our collected money for April was spent, along with \$20.00 that remained from March:

Kroger:	60	1-lb. cans of Hormel chili for \$.50/can	Meijer’s:	10	Dozen Large Eggs (1.5 lbs each) \$1.69dz.
	31	1-lb. cans of Kroger brand pasta with meat \$.59/can		24	1-lb. pkgs. Hot Dogs \$1.12 each
	10	Dozen Large Eggs @ \$1.00 dz. (1 week special)		10	1-lb. pkgs. Hot Dogs \$1.00 each
				12	Cans of Tuna @ \$.65/can
Randazzo’s	100	lbs. Potatoes \$19.91			

These items (mainly high protein foods) were purchased at different times, during different sales and at different locations throughout the month of April. When added to the food donations collected on first Sunday, our total equaled 427 pounds of food for the month. Our total donated for 2008 so far is 2,117.

GPUC has topped a TON in the first four months of the year!

End of Year Newsletter Article Reporting Food Bank Totals:

Crossroads...A Perspective: 2008 (and more!)

As we look back at 2008, most of us had some new struggles. At the very least, we all had to cope with high costs of fuel and the rising prices of food. STILL we were able to do more with less and hit a new record for pounds of food donated to our neighbors in need at Crossroads East.

Here is a breakdown of our food purchases of 'high-demand staples' made in 2008 from your cash donations:

167 Dozen Eggs
516 Cans of Pasta w/meat, stew, hash or chili
421 Pounds of Baked Beans
126 Cans of Tuna
267 Pounds of Hot Dogs
168 Pounds of Bologna
1111 Pounds of Potatoes

This, added to the carried-in foods on First Sundays totaled 5,354 Pounds or 2.68 TONS of food.

Wait! There's more! Here's a riddle for you to ponder:
What surpassed the weight of each of the following: 16 Polar Bears; 24 Adult Gray Seals or 2 Full-grown Elephants?

ANSWER:

The total number of pounds of food that were donated by GPUC to Crossroads East over the last four years (2005 – 2008)!

That number is: 14,710 pounds, or 7.36 TONS

Collectively, we continue to create good and meaningful results. Your generosity continues to make a wonderful difference for others. Thank you!

Janet and Larry Peplin for Crossroads East Outreach

End of Year Newsletter article:

2010 – A very good year – Over **Five Tons** Provided to *Crossroads East Food Bank*

Thanks to the continuing generosity of GPUC members and friends, Crossroads East Food Bank received our most bountiful harvest of food ever! The total provided to Crossroads in the calendar year of 2010 was 10,204 pounds.

We've used the term 'provided' to Crossroads, because our service to them expanded during the rebuilding of the Village Kroger. That store had always delivered surplus and "day old" breads and baked goods to Crossroads several times each week. Soon after its closing, the volunteers at Crossroads gave us an 'SOS' plea. They were desperately in need for a new source of bread.

Paul Stavali, Manager of the Kroger on Mack near Vernier, heeded our plea with an opportunity to pick up his store's leftover bread and rolls weekly, on Saturday mornings. Beginning in April, we made a total of 27 pickups, which were then delivered on the following Monday. This accounts for 2,330 pounds of bread that would not otherwise have made its way to Crossroads East. Paul is now the manager of the newly opened Village Kroger. He still calls us periodically when the store has a carload of goods to give away, but seems to have recently arranged for resuming direct deliveries to Crossroads East.

In addition to the bread runs, we have had a generous donor (not a member of GPUC) provide us with funds for food purchases. When he learned what we do, he immediately inquired how he could help. Throughout the past year he has donated a significant amount of money that we purchased additional food with.

Meanwhile, our First Sunday Food Sharing collections of non-perishable foods and monetary donations have been phenomenal. In fact, it's the cash and checks that have had the biggest impact on our totals. For example, we made a bulk purchase of over 200 toothbrushes and small tubes of toothpaste. These have been items on Crossroads' permanent "wish list" for as long as we have been working with them, and are always in short supply. They assemble small 'hygiene kits' for homeless patrons and clients who have emergency needs. By buying in bulk on Ebay, the cost of the combination of a new toothbrush and a travel-size tooth paste was only 40 cents, which is obviously an excellent value. Volunteers were beside themselves when they saw how many we had for them.

Our donations have made a significant impact on the lives of those who go to Crossroads East for the helping hand they need so much. We're back at it in 2011, and are looking forward to continuing our effort to give OUTREACH real meaning to real people in need. Thank you, GPUC, for all you have contributed. Please continue to do so; we will be looking for you every First Sunday in 2011!

Janet and Larry Peplin, on behalf of Crossroads East and GPUC Outreach

Possible initial letter to inspire & enlist volunteers in your congregation:

Your Help is Needed!

A new state law passed in July limits welfare cash assistance to 48 months. The impact is huge; about 41,000 people statewide lost cash assistance payments as of November 1st. Reeling from this hit, and anticipating the increased need to come, some of the best known food distributors in the Detroit area are trying to come up with ways to survive it. For instance, Gleaners Community Food Bank will be working at fund-raising to replace lost monies. For over 10 years, Friendship House in Hamtramck has received an annual grant of \$12,240.00 which it used to buy food; that has been taken away. Friendship house helps 1,100 to 1,500 people a month with food, clothing and utilities.

William Long, interim executive director of the Food Bank Council of Michigan, said there has been an overall 30% decline in food help from major sources—federal, state and private. These cuts go deep. (For more information, read the Sunday, October 16th Detroit Free Press article: “Those that help others now need help” at <http://www.freep.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2011110160496> . Another riveting article appeared in the Wall Street Journal regarding Michigan’s middle class food issues: <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124718194179420129.html>).

As you may already know, several area churches joined together to hold a workshop entitled, “Standing up for Families & Kids” - How can Metro-Detroit Respond to the needs of Families Cut Off Food & Public Assistance?”

Many great minds came together and lots ideas were shared.

One idea was for each congregation to set a goal to boost their “Harvest” of food contributions to their local food bank. We were given a helpful guide with many ideas at the workshop.

This letter to is our first step in trying to (*enhance what our congregation is already doing* or *organize a new task force*) in order to better help those people in need of food assistance.

This note is a call to those among us who would be interested and willing to work towards that end. A sign-up sheet will be placed in the (*location in your church*) with a couple of meeting time choices for interested people to come together. Please list your name and the time you could attend. We will choose a date and time that accommodates the majority for meeting to discuss how we can begin to make a positive difference for our neighbors in this very difficult time of need.

Thank you,



Signs placed at driveways and in parking lot...



Our "Yes You Can" can for checks and cash



Cookies to reward participants

Reminder cards – printed on cardstock, with small magnet bar glued to the back to adhere to refrigerator.



toothbrushes and mini toothpaste bought in bulk on ebay

CROSSROADS EAST Food Bank
(A wish list of most needed foods)

- Canned meats:**
tuna, chicken, salmon
- Canned pastas with meat:**
ravioli, spaghetti & meatballs, etc.
- Beef stew**
- Chili and soups with meat**
- Corned or roast beef hash**
- Pork & beans**
- Peanut butter**
- Powdered milk**
- Rice**

Cash donations are used to purchase canned goods at bulk prices, as well as perishables: eggs, hot dogs, bologna & fresh potatoes.

Non-perishable food donations of any kind are welcomed.



dropoff point immediately inside entry doors; donations met with a smile and big thank-you...