

## Little Pantries let us give freely

Thirteen congregations in the Northeastern Iowa Synod have now established “Little Free Food Pantries.” These are wooden boxes normally on a pole outside the church building. The object is to share a space where people can “take what they need and leave what they can.”

These Little Food Pantries are an excellent example of good stewardship. Those who can afford to donate freely take from their God-given abundance and share with those in need. There are no questions for those who need to take food, no test to see if they deserve the help — simply a gift to a recipient.

I especially like three things about the pantries:

### KINDNESS

Many people who are in need have jobs; they just don’t earn enough or they have unexpected expenses like medical bills or car repairs. Because they need to be at work, they often cannot get to the local food shelves when they are open — and yes, some people are too proud to be seen getting food. The Little Free Food Pantry is a way that people can discreetly receive a small amount of emergency help.

### EVANGELISM

The pantries demonstrate to the whole community that the congregation can identify community needs and play a role in addressing them. It shows that as Christians and as Lutherans we care about our neighbors and take Scripture seriously.

### AWARENESS

The boxes are a reminder each time we enter and leave church that there are neighbors among us who need help. The Department of Human Services reports that an average of 356,767 Iowans receive food assistance each month — that’s about one in eight Iowans. Of those who receive help, 53 percent are younger than 18 or older than 59. An average of 3,258 elderly Iowans receive commodities from the state each month.

Yes, there is poverty in Iowa and it is as prevalent in rural areas as it is in cities, and it affects mostly the young and the old.

What a blessing it is to have enough to share!

— *Pastor Mark A. Anderson*  
Assistant to the Bishop



*Teaching faith can mean finding the answers together*

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selling book of the same name.

“We pray for what we need help with, what we are thankful for and what is a wow for the day,” Bouma explains. “It’s fun to hear my four-year-old articulate those and be tuned in with the needs and hurts of others.”

At church, Grayson looks forward to his own ritual of dipping a finger in the baptismal font every time they walk by it. “He dips his finger, makes a sign on his forehead, and says, ‘God loves me,’” Bouma says. “It’s not official church language, but he still gets it that there is something powerful and holy in that ritual. I can’t guarantee that he’ll always want to do that, but the fact that he does now is significant.”

Bouma says parents can invite different prayers and rituals into their life. They can display Luther’s “Morning Prayer” on the bathroom mirror to get prayer on everyone’s mind when they are brushing their teeth. Conversation starters on apps and cards offer open-ended questions that can help families engage in conversations connected to faith. *The Small Catechism* app is another convenient resource for parents and youth to access.

“As a parent, I think about incorporating my understanding of the world theologically into conversations throughout the day and week with my son,” Bouma says. “I went camping with my son and asked him, ‘Isn’t it cool that God created all these different things?’ It’s a process to be mindful of and to know that the way I see the world and articulate that, is how he will see it too.”

## Men’s Ministry mission seeks volunteers

Lutheran Men in Mission is seeking volunteers to help 2017 hurricane victims recover in St. Croix, US Virgin Islands. All labor skills/abilities are welcome, with a real need for experienced carpenters. Volunteers who stay 15 days or more and work on homes 40 hours each of the two weeks will have their airfare, transportation, room and board paid for by the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Learn more at [www.neiasynod.org/ministries/mens-ministry](http://www.neiasynod.org/ministries/mens-ministry).