

Grateful to Give During the Pandemic

My mother gets by on what's commonly called a "fixed income." What a blessing to live on a fixed income during a pandemic and economic downturn! It means she won't have her hours cut, be furloughed, laid off or fired. Her income is guaranteed, and since she can't have guests or get her hair done, her weekly expenses will actually go down. So when her stimulus check arrives she wants not to hoard the windfall, but to find ways to share it with those who are in need.

My wife and I are in a similar situation, so we will be sharing our stimulus with our congregation, synod and food bank. For us, sharing is just a part of being grateful.

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



Mark Anderson and his mother, Ruth

Creative ministries bring people together
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The Almost Home men's shelter operated by St. John's, Dubuque, closed early this season due to COVID-19, but all the men were successfully housed elsewhere. The ministry shared its extra supplies where needed most, including providing gallons of hand sanitizer to the Dubuque Police Department at the onset of the virus.

The coordinator for the ministry's Open Closet has been supplying clothing by appointment for people in need who are referred from partner agencies. "They call ahead and one member of the family comes and enters through the back door, with all social distancing rules applied," said Gwen Kirchhof, executive director of Almost Home.

First, McGregor, helped kick-start a volunteer initiative to provide meals for anyone who needs assistance. A community meal site in nearby Prairie du Chien had temporarily quit serving meals, so congregation member Gary Brooks asked Pastor Gary Hatcher about serving meals, and they decided to run with it.

Local businesses have donated food, and volunteers hand out packaged meals curbside from Pocket City Pub or deliver them to people's homes. More than a thousand meals have been served since the program started on March 20.

OPEN DOORS TO RENEWED MINISTRY

When the church doors open again, worship may be different, such as no handshakes and increased distance in seating — and someone may even have to sit up front. What is likely to shine through, however, is the strengthened relationships, compassion for one another, and love of God that ministers and congregation leaders helped nurture during this unprecedented time apart. Even without their buildings, congregations have shown that they are a crucial part of their members' lives and of the larger community.

"I am inspired by the new and creative ways that the roster and congregations have been proclaiming the Gospel," said Bishop Steven Ullestad. "Thank you for your commitment."

MISSION & SERVICE

- Local food pantries have adapted to meet increased demand. The Mobile Food Pantry at Trinity, Belmond, has waived income guidelines during this time, and Our Savior's Food Pantry in Leland switched to a drive-through service to hand out prepackaged bags.
- Volunteers from Lord of Life, Dubuque, continue each day to fill their Little Food Pantry, which is often empty in the mornings. Volunteers also offer to shop for those who can't.
- The Servant-Hearted Response Team from Nazareth, Cedar Falls, has been delivering groceries, making masks and working with local missions partners.
- American, Grundy Center, set out a basket of donated material for people to use for sewing face masks.

