

# Feeding the Hungry at Community of Faith United Methodist Church



Since 1999 Community of Faith United Methodist Church (COF) has offered a food distribution program for the hungry of Fairfax County. The high cost of living here means a missed paycheck or an expensive health crisis can create financial peril, including a loss of housing.

What began as a group of 12-20 families during 1999 has now become a gathering of 90-120 families on Tuesday evenings. Thanks to a partnership with **Epiphany Episcopal Church**, ([www.coee.org](http://www.coee.org)) the food ministry now serves over 6,000 families annually over the past few years.

Our clients are persons who need food – what they receive in groceries means there is money to pay for rent or utilities or gas to get to one of multiple jobs. As one client said, *"The food I received each week saved my life. I was able to focus on getting my life together, not worrying about eating."* Some families are in need because they have recently been homeless, some have been victims of domestic violence and some have experienced a health crisis without insurance. A few are new to the U.S., many are single parents but 95% are employed in one or multiple jobs.

## Where do you get the food?

Because of the generosity of the **Franklin Farm Giant**, **Food Lion at Centerville & McLearen Roads**, and **Mom's Organic Market** in Herndon and **Trader Joe's**, we can receive and distribute baked goods, dairy items, deli products, and meats. Items from over 15 local restaurants make possible lots of others items. For example, one fast-food vendor does not sell food an hour after its cooked (to maximize flavor); so they will freeze what has not been sold and donate to the food pantry. All of the food served in 2017 to over 25,000 individuals is food that would have ended up in the dump! Most of the canned goods items come from the annual **"Scouting for Food"** solicitation, community group collections, and individual contributions. We are **totally dependent** on community groups for non-perishable items. November 2017's **"Scouting for Food"** program provided over 450 cases of food, the majority of our non-perishable stock for most of the year. Eagle Scout projects have built storage facilities and provided other food collections throughout the years making more food available.



Local eating places that have been an incredible blessing by contributing weekly include:



**KFC**

45960 Denizen Plaza Road, Sterling



**Chipotle**

Chantilly Crossing, 14416 Chantilly Crossing Lane, Chantilly  
Reston Town Center, Reston  
Franklin Farm Road, Herndon



**Starbucks**

South Lakes Shopping Center, Reston

**Famous Dave's** - Cascade's Shopping Center, Sterling &  
Chantilly Crossing Shopping Center, Chantilly



**Bob Evans** – Chantilly  
**HMSHost** / Dulles Airport  
**Nando's** – Sterling



In 2017, we've become a partner in the Capitol Area Food Bank which offers numerous resources and bulk purchases of food.



## **Who is eligible to receive food?**

Anyone who needs food is eligible. People may visit the pantry weekly as long as they are in need. Often area social service agencies refer clients and occasionally FACETS and Cornerstone provide transportation for some of their clients to pick up food.

## **Where is the food stored?**

COF has household and commercial freezers and refrigerators to store perishable items and Epiphany has a commercial walk-in fridge and freezer that is used. On a few occasions, we've borrowed capacity from other neighboring churches and church families. Non-perishable items like canned goods are kept in our recently build 1200 square foot storage "barn."

## **How does food get to COF?**

On weekdays, St. Joseph's, a day program for intellectually challenged adults, collects food from **Giant** and **Food Lion** and transport it to COF where it is sorted by volunteers. On Saturdays, volunteers pick up items from **Giant** and stock them at COF. During the week, volunteers pick up food from **KFC**, **Chipotle**, **Starbucks**, **Bob Evans**, **Mom's**, **Famous Dave's**, **Nando's of Sterling** and others.

## **What happens on food distribution evenings?**

COF is fortunate to have a core of volunteers who arrive on Mondays and Tuesdays to set up the church and organize the food for distribution. We often have youth and others assisting on Tuesday evening too! Among other tasks -- they help elderly and clients with small children needing assistance in "shopping" and taking food to their cars. We also have neighboring churches and school groups to volunteer with the distribution program as they learn about conditions which place persons in need.

Each Tuesday our volunteers determine how much food is available to serve the families who are present and apportion frozen meats and other items to insure all will receive. Food distribution begins at 5 PM. When persons arrive, they pick up a numbered ticket and drop it a basket – numbers are then called randomly for persons to begin collecting food – first through a produce area, then through bakery and breads and finally through canned goods, dairy and meats. The process seeks to insure a way everyone has equal access to limited items.

We usually are able to provide nursery care for clients with small children.

## **Is there any food left over?**

Not usually. When there are leftovers we share with Emery Rucker Shelter in Reston and monthly we share our bread supply with Floris United Methodist Church for their distribution efforts.

## **Can I help?**

Absolutely! We can accept non-perishable items – pasta, canned meats and other infant-related items are always especially needed. We occasionally have clients who live in their auto or in the woods, so food which does not need refrigeration and single serve items are especially appreciated. We particularly appreciate money for bulk or dairy items. Checks may be made payable to “Community of Faith UMC” and mark the memo line “food pantry.” Contributions can also be made online at [www.cofumc.org](http://www.cofumc.org) and are tax deductible!

Volunteers are always welcome to join us. We are grateful for the help of the *Service League of Oakton* and other groups who volunteer regularly. They assist clients, pick up food, prepare it for distribution and help to give it away on Tuesday nights – you can too. We always welcome assistance. Youth find this to be a good program to earn service credits for school.

## **Where are we?**

Community of Faith is at the corner of the Fairfax County Parkway and Franklin Farm Road sharing the same driveway as KinderCare.

### ***Community of Faith United Methodist Church***

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