

HOW TO START A HUNGER RELIEF MINISTRY

Preparation is vital for churches that want to launch a hunger ministry, say those with expertise in feeding the needy.

“It’s a lot more than just handing out food,” says Angie Kretschmar, executive director of a thriving ministry to the hungry based at a Southern Baptist church in San Diego County.

Here are some recommendations gleaned from the North American Mission Board (NAMB) and Kretschmar for congregations considering hunger ministry:

- 1. Recognize the need.** This includes discovering which churches and organizations already are feeding the hungry. A cooperative effort with others may be best. “The key is commitment to serve others in the name of Jesus”.
- 2. Find the food.** Locate the sources of food for the ministry. Check out food for the ministry. Check out food banks. Investigate the availability of surplus food, possibly from supermarkets or government agencies. Determine how much food can be provided through the church and partnering community agencies.
- 3. Identify the volunteers.** Discover how many people are able to serve. A hunger ministry requires a “very, very reliable volunteer base,” says Kretschmar.
- 4. Select a ministry.** Decide what kind of hunger ministry the church should initiate. It might be food pantry distribution, after-school feeding, weekend backpacks for students, or another approach. Some choices require a place for storage and a plan for distribution.
- 5. Plan for the Gospel.** Resolve what the practice will be in sharing the Good News of Jesus.

It’s possible, however, that God may drop a hunger ministry on a church. That’s what happened to Trinity Church, a church plant in Portland, Oregon.

Trinity’s planter/pastor, clay Holcomb, was visiting one day in the office of the elementary school that would be home to the church’s worship services. School officials were discussing Backpack Buddies, a program to provide meals for needy children, but were uncertain who would conduct it, since the school could not.

“We hadn’t even had our first service yet, and I said, “Well, we’ll do it,” Holcomb recalls. He was NAMB’s SEND city coordinator for Portland.

Trinity provided food for the backpack ministry for three years, serving 100 to 125 students in that time.

“The ministry helped build into our church a vision for the community,” Holcomb told SBC LIFE,” and it helped us build credibility in the eyes of the people involved in the school.”

Contact the Missions Mobilization Team of the Kentucky Baptist Convention for assistance in beginning a hunger relief ministry in your church or community: 502-489-3530 or ministries@kybaptist.org.

Find more materials at www.kybaptist.org/hunger

