

# Let love flow.

Week of  
**Compassion**

Week of Compassion Special Offering  
**FEBRUARY 21-28**

## Action Update- February 9

### God's Pantry: Feeding Neighbors in Parkersburg, West Virginia



*By: Jennifer Allen*

*God sent the message: feed the masses.*

In the community surrounding First Christian Church of Parkersburg, West Virginia, the number of unhoused and underfed neighbors has increased due to COVID-19. Restrictions on housing facilities and illness among volunteers who typically feed the hungry have led to less availability of sheltered beds and fewer food pantries disseminating sustenance to those in need. These

dynamics have caused a compound crisis in the community.

In the past, those sleeping in shelters received food during their stay. Now, diminished access to these programs means that a higher number of neighbors are homeless and hungry. As in so many other places, the pandemic has also led to unprecedented unemployment numbers. Though some have retained their housing due to moratoriums placed on evictions, they have no means to supply food for themselves. Whereas the school system would normally help fill in the gaps for children who lacked food supplies at home, WV students have now been out of the classroom since March 2020. The public education system has been offering food for those who can get to the schools, but the school transportation network has not been operating. Therefore, students who do not live

within walking distance of a feeding site cannot receive food.

In November 2020, with doors of the church building closed, the calls of need continued to ring on the phone of First Christian Parkersburg. Members recognized that, while their structure may be empty, their outreach to the community should not stop.

The congregation met virtually to ask what could be done as a coordinated response, and God sent the message to feed the masses.

With a stairwell platform housing doors to the inside and outside, members recognized that a 24/7 feeding ministry could be easily built within the current church facility. Exterior doors could remain open, providing access to the pantry, while locked interior doors would restrict access to the rest of the church building. With a grant from Week of Compassion, they installed shelving and signage to point people in need toward the building. Members donated money and items to distribute to those seeking help. With great pride and with God's guidance, the doors were opened. The ministry named "God's Pantry" has been open 24/7 since its installation in early November 2020.

For the first 2 weeks, the pantry was operating on \$100 worth of staples. Thanksgiving arrived and the holidays rolled in. Many shelters and local cupboards closed because of resource deficits and the inability to staff programs safely. God's Pantry, not requiring a staff, continued feeding the community.

Over the last 2 months the cost of filling the pantry has grown to \$400-500 weekly. In January 2021, The church applied for further support from Week of Compassion to help sustain the growing needs.

Once again, Week of Compassion dollars have helped bridge the gap between community need and fulfillment of a much-needed outreach mission. God's pantry continues to be utilized, and FCC Parkersburg volunteers continue to provide the structure, supplies and prayers to those who seek support. With God's help, and the help of other Disciples through Week of Compassion, God's Pantry is available 24/7.

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Responses Since Feb. 2

Mozambique  
Cyclone Relief

For an interactive map of responses, [visit our website](#).

## Let love flow.

Nobody hungry, nobody thirsty,  
shade from the sun, shelter from the wind,  
For the Compassionate One guides them,  
takes them to the best springs.  
~Isaiah 49:10

*Week of Compassion is the relief, refugee and development mission fund of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada.*

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