

Epworth's Good Samaritan (Good Sam) Ministry

Matthew 14:16

But Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go away; you give them something to eat!"

Every Tuesday, Thursday, and Sunday, Epworth United Methodist Church gives the hungry "something to eat." For the past 7 years, Epworth's Good Samaritan (Good Sam) program has grown into a ministry that has many parts involving hundreds of servant hands and feet. In 2025, Epworth members and other volunteers rescued 409,590 lbs. of food from 20 area grocery stores, restaurants, and farmers markets and gave it away to hungry residents, to community agencies, and to hungry cows living down Holland Glade Road. In 2025, Epworth prepared 4,530 meals in its kitchen to serve the food insecure, and Epworth's Mobile Pantry served 15,817 people. Over the years, tens of thousands have been fed. Epworth has become known as a caring congregation that feeds the hungry and serves the needy.

Six years ago, when I joined the Food Rescue portion of our Good Sam Ministry, I had a lot to learn about how to handle whatever items were inside the many banana boxes we received daily. It could be anything! Today Giant (Millville



and Rehoboth), Aldi, Panera, Chick-fill-A, Wawa, and the Delaware Food Bank (to name a few) generously donate excess items and out of date stock to Epworth drivers who pack and unload hundreds of boxes each week. Food Rescue volunteers sort through and rehab items from produce to pastries----and everything in between---and decide what goes on the food racks for Mobile Pantry; what goes in community agency boxes; what goes to the kitchen for Sunday "Food and Love" meals or for J1 foreign student dinners in the summer; what goes to the cows; and what goes to trash or recycle of plastic containers and cardboard boxes. I've learned how to "triage" lettuce, melons, corn, tomatoes, squash, bagels, grapes, strawberries, cheeses, chicken tenders---basically any item you can buy in a grocery store. I've learned what cows cannot eat and how messy removing an avocado pit can be. With each season, I've learned what people eat and what is left unpurchased. At the end of my volunteer shift, my apron is splotted red and green, but I feel good, and I am thankful for all the stores who have given, and for all the volunteers who have picked up and delivered using their own vehicles.

Proverbs 22:9

He who is generous will be blessed.

For he gives some of his food to the poor.

Matthew 15:33

The disciples said to him, “Where would we get so many loaves in this desolate place to satisfy such a large crowd?”

Each Tuesday and Thursday as food is dispersed from our east doorway, food items are donated at our west portal. Donations usually include cans or boxes from individuals or families, but occasionally Epworth receives a large gift of a single item such as chicken, cheese, drinks, bread, etc., from a generous merchant. In 2025, 52,415 lbs. of dry canned goods were donated. Whenever our food pantry becomes sparse and Epworth puts out a call for food or volunteers, the response always comes, usually quickly. In addition to Epworth members, volunteers are Jewish, Catholic, of other faiths, or non-religious. I imagine they volunteer, like me, because at the end of their day, they feel closer to God, or more spiritual.

Isaiah 58:10

*And if you give yourself to the hungry,
And satisfy the desire of the afflicted,
Then your light will rise in darkness,
And your gloom will become like midday.*

Volunteers who staff the Epworth produce tables and racks on Tuesday, Thursdays and Sundays have the best opportunity to experience the truth of the adage that it is “better to give than to receive.” People drive their cars and enter our east entrance where they select whatever food they need. No identification is required, but people are asked to provide their Zip Code and how many people they are shopping for. Some come with a list, and volunteers help them fill a box or bags. Some people do not have a car and arrive on a bicycle or on foot with a cart (most likely a homeless person). Everyone is treated with care and respect. On any given winter day, approximately 80-100 people are served, and in the summer the number grows to approximately 200 + individuals. Patrons know that Epworth will offer a large variety of food---fresh and canned. The distribution process is quiet and orderly, as the hands and feet of Jesus would be.

Leviticus 23:22

When you reap the harvest of your land, moreover, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field nor gather the gleaning of your harvest; you are to leave them for the needy and the alien. I am the Lord your God.

From olden times, Leviticus tells us not to reap the edges of the field in harvest but to leave the edges for “the needy and the alien.” Epworth’s Food Rescue/ Good Samaritan ministry is the



modern-day equivalent of the Leviticus harvest---using the leftover “edges” to feed all of us. Those of us who hunger for food; and those of us who hunger for justice and righteousness. Each volunteer helps to “glean the edges,” and it takes a village to harvest the field. Those harvesters who gain the most are the ones who lug the “slop” bags into their car then drive the bags to the cows. Or the volunteers who routinely pick up 15-20 banana boxes from Giant, smashing them into their vehicles. Or the person who arranges the tall Epworth food racks and pushes them to the east entrance. Or the harvesters who lift the heavy food boxes that are stored in our outside walk-in refrigerator. Or the person who mops the floor after each food rescue work session.

Luke 6:21

Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied.

Matthew Chapter 15:32-39 tells us that Jesus fed 4,000 followers with just seven loaves of bread and two fish, after delivering the Sermon on the Mount. Epworth’s Good Sam programs of Food Rescue, Mobile Pantry, Food and Love, and J1 Dinners, multiply the left over “edges of the field” in the same miraculous way. If you are hungry to help, volunteer in the Epworth kitchen for Food and Love Sundays, or volunteer to pick up Food Rescue items from a local merchant. *Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. ---Luke:6:21*

Carol Psaros
Food Rescue Volunteer
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