



Out of the Box Ministries Trinity Presbyterian Church has served Food in the Community for over 12 Years



Twelve years ago, starting with a vision from a member in the congregation and encouraging support of the Pastor at Trinity Presbyterian Church, Out of the Box Ministries (OOTB) began serving the community in West Sacramento at 1500 Park Blvd. Their steadfast mission is simply to "Feed People Whenever Possible". Yolo County has an estimated 13% of people who are food insecure.

The Church pantry program provides a nutritious bag of groceries including bread, cheese, peanut butter, rice, beans, canned vegetables and fruit, cereal, oatmeal, and a box of produce (fresh vegetables and fruit) which is available the third Thursday of every month.

I had the opportunity to visit and meet the passionate and dedicated core volunteers on Sunday, August 16, 2020 during the packing of the grocery bags. Volunteers pick up the food items purchased from Yolo Food Bank located in Woodland about 3 times a month and deliver to the Church. Volunteers take the food items "out of the box" set up in an assembly line fashion and pack food into individual bright yellow grocery bags.

On Thursday, August 20, 2020 I returned for the distribution of food. The first food distribution took place in March 2008 starting with 12 boxes and has grown to serve up to 200 boxes a month. The community became engaged with people wanting to

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help with all ages participating. Scout troops and local school groups have joined in supporting this ministry. The Church has a café set up for people to gather, visit and have a snack and beverage together with those picking up food. Today, unfortunately, due to Covid-19 the café is closed.

Although the pandemic has posed challenges in normal operations, Jesse and his team remain committed to serving people in the community. I witnessed their passion for packaging and love for distributing food to their neighbors. At this time during pandemic volunteers are making special deliveries to people who can not pick up their food. Out of the Box Ministries has developed rooted relationships with the people they serve, and the volunteers are very dedicated. I heard some wonderful stories of devotion.

Some of the volunteers are literally raising their children to serve. Jesse who is Team Lead came to OOTB Ministries from being inspired to feed others by his Mom and Grandma. He remembers helping his Grandma at a food pantry when he was a child and his mom was a school food services manager (aka the head lunch lady). This passion for feeding people has been passed on to him. When Jesse and Lori arrived at Trinity after recently getting married, they found a group of people starting efforts to feed people in their community. The passion of the people (Team Hansen and Team Whitney) and the worthy cause of feeding our neighbors made it easy to volunteer and be helpers. Jesse's skills of logistics and use of numbers combined with Lori's passion for educating children were quickly discovered. They continued to volunteer and support the leaders and soon Jesse was asked to take on the lead role of the ministry. Along with Lori playing a support role, Jesse continues in that role today involving their two young boys who are also eager to help feed people whenever possible.

Jen Grexton and her family have been volunteers since the beginning of the ministry in 2008. Her sons were 2 and 4 years old and her daughter was 6. I saw the great teamwork of the boys last Sunday who are now 14 and 16 years old. Children of all ages can help to unpack food and bag groceries. Jen told me the best part is seeing how this ministry brings people together and builds relationships. Every year the Grexton family grew closer together serving others and has fostered amazing relationships.

In 2017 Sandy Yim was looking for something she and her 7-year-old son Andrew could do together to help others. Sandy wrote a message on Next Door Neighbor and it was Jen Grexton who answered and told her about Out of the Box Ministries. Sandy says that Jesse knows how to give jobs to children to help them "learn how to serve". Andrew loves volunteering but has had to stay home since March due to the pandemic. Sandy is committed and serves with a big smile.

About 5 years ago Karla Rasmussen and her husband got involved with OOTB. They made a great team packing the bags and restocking the food items. Karla comments "OOTB is a mission that we can have hands on experience in giving to others."

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OOTB is involved in several special events. Every August OOTB partners with the local Children's Alliance and Family Resource Center to provide a bag of back-to-school groceries with every backpack filled with school supplies. A favorite tradition in December is "Cookie-palooza" where the volunteers bake homemade cookies (about 2,000 cookies). Plates with a dozen variety cookies are assembled and given in each December food bag. Sharing Christmas spirit all month!

For more information about Out of the Box Ministries contact Trinity Presbyterian Church (916) 371-5875.

You can follow OOTB on Facebook at: @ootbwefeedpeople



Thank you all for your amazing service of bringing your community together, nurturing relationships and your extraordinary commitment to Feeding People.

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