

Boldly Addressing Hunger: First Presbyterian, Chili with Foodlink

2022 Mission Collaboration Grant Report

What were you hoping to accomplish?

When we applied for the Collaborative Ministry Presbytery Grant, we were in hopes of receiving money that would allow us to purchase equipment to help us remodel a Sunday School room into a larger Food Cupboard. The previous room housing our food supplies had become too small for us to conveniently serve the number of people receiving our services. This grant gave us the needed money to purchase strong shelving units for better food storage. The arrangement of these units has also allowed us to conveniently package grocery bags. Below are pictures of the shelving units we purchased for our new Cupboard. You will also notice in these pictures how clean and bright our Food Cupboard appears. The Presbytery Grant also allowed us to purchase new paint to give the room a fresh look.

This grant has let us purchase shelving with wheels that we can use to move our supplies closer to the church entry way for easy access on our distribution days. Frequently, bags of eggs and/or meat for our clients are housed on these shelves.



Who was touched by your project or program?

When we submitted the Collaborative Ministry Presbytery Grant in June of 2022, our Food Cupboard was serving a total of 30 households and feeding 120 people. Since that time, our Cupboard has substantially grown. In February of this year, we serviced 76 households and fed 260 people. Our largest Food Cupboard statistics were in November of 2022 when we served 84 families and fed over 302 people. Each month new families seem to discover our Cupboard and cars are usually lined up in our parking lot at least 30 to 40 minutes before our Food Cupboard doors are open. Although many of the families are from the Chili area, we do have clients that drive to our Food Cupboard from surrounding communities such as Scottsville, Brockport, Hamlin, the City of Rochester, etc. Attached to the email accompanying this report are letters of “thanks” that we have received from Food Cupboard clients.

How did this grant energize or transform your congregation or community?

Our congregation is very invested in the Food Cupboard. Each month, new people approach us about helping in the Cupboard. We even now have people who normally do not come to church wanting to assist us. One lady who seldom comes to church is bringing her grandchildren to help with the Cupboard. People from other church denominations are also volunteering their time to our Food Cupboard. The Lions Club of Churchville, area Boy Scout Troops, and the Churchville-Chili School District have supported our Food Cupboard through sponsoring local food drives. People from our congregation continue to donate food and money to the Food Cupboard. Their donations supply us with food items that we cannot always secure through Foodlink.

Below is a picture of all the grocery bags we pack for our distribution day. It takes devoted congregational and community members to assemble these bags. We are now preparing 70 bags prior to distribution. Our area Target store has graciously supplied us with free bags. Our congregation has also brought in many grocery bags that we use to insert into the Target bags for added support.



What did you learn from this project and what obstacles did you experience?

When we started our Food Cupboard, we knew very little about how to manage such a service. We first visited Food Cupboards in several area churches to research how one would go about establishing such a facility. The Cupboards we visited included Grace's Table in Scottsville, the Food Cupboard at the Grace of the Nazarene Church in North Chili, the North Bergen Presbyterian Food Cupboard, and the Union Congregational Food Cupboard in Churchville. Once we had gathered enough information about Food Cupboards, we then wrote a proposal to our Session for setting up a Food Cupboard in our church. After the Session gave us their approval, we went about trying to find a space in the church for the Cupboard. Our first Food Cupboard was a very small closet area that served our purposes when our clients were small in

number. As we began to grow, we knew we would require more space to store and package food. This is when our church was willing to help us renovate one of our Sunday School rooms to be used to house food. The Collaborative Ministry Presbytery Grant helped us a great deal to be able to equip this new facility with needed equipment (new shelving units, moveable shelving units) for food mobility and storage.

When we first started to set up our Food Cupboard, gaining access to needed food was also a concern. We started by having our own Food Drive and asking our congregation to donate food to the Cupboard. A local business owner, whose family is a member of our church, also gave us a generous donation to be able to purchase food not always easily available through donations. In March of last year, we decided to become a member of Foodlink so that we could acquire necessary food items at little or no cost. Our relationship with Foodlink has made it possible for us to meet the needs of the ever-growing number of households using our Cupboard.

Another obstacle that we have had to overcome is that of storage of frozen and perishable foods such as meat, eggs, cheese, yogurt, etc. Through our partnership with Foodlink, we were able to apply for a grant that has allowed us to purchase both an industrial refrigerator and freezer. These appliances are set-up in our new Food Cupboard facility for easy access to food items.



What are your next steps?

Our next steps are to renovate the stairs that lead into our Food Cupboard and to continue to find ways to acquire money for the purchase of food and further equipment. We hope to make the steps on our stairs even wider so that helpers can easily pick up grocery bags for delivery to clients' vehicles. Unfortunately, we do not have the space in this area to construct a legal sized ramp. We also feel we need to purchase a stronger cart for moving heavier food items from pallets into our Cupboard. We are spending close to \$800 to \$1,000 dollars each month to purchase groceries for the number of families who come to our Food Cupboard. We will need to continue to look for revenue sources for the purchasing of food. We hope to do this by holding fundraisers and by applying for additional grants. Our small congregation alone cannot support the growing size of our Cupboard.



Please share a story of where you saw God in this project.

Our overall vision of establishing a Food Cupboard was to follow Matthew 25:35 – “I was hungry, and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me drink.” We feel our Food Cupboard is accomplishing this mission. The number of households we are helping has grown. The congregation and our community are both enthusiastic to share what they have and extend a helping hand to others. We are also asking families on our distribution days to express their “Joys and Concerns” with us so that we can pray for them. Attached to our email are copies of various notes we have received from our clients expressing their gratitude for our Food Cupboard. These notes serve as evidence that God is at work in this project.

Respectively submitted by,
Susan Johnson
The First Presbyterian Church of Chili Food Cupboard
(585) 615-7085