PEOPLE ARE STILL HUNGRY

Advent Lutheran Church, Morgan Hill, is committed to being a Matthew 25 community of Jesus’ followers, and they are particularly passionate about feeding hungry people. Their passion and commitment has become a catalyst spurring other congregations to take up similar ministries, and has promoted significant interchurch cooperation in their community.

Community Table started at Advent in 2006, on the Tuesday after Easter. It is a hot meal served in their fellowship hall to anyone who wants one, no questions asked. Martha’s Kitchen, a nonprofit in San Jose, provides the food. For years a volunteer from Advent picked up the food at Martha’s Kitchen and brought it to the church, where another team of volunteers prepared and served it. This meal was and is served weekly each Tuesday night. They encouraged other congregations in the community to do the same on other nights of the week, but for 5 years they were the only ones to serve a weekly hot meal. Now the Non-denominational, Methodist and Catholic churches each serve weekly on a different night, and a Presbyterian congregation serves a hot meal twice each month. These days Rotary Club provides a van and driver to bring the food from Martha’s Kitchen to the various churches. Advent serves about 40 people each week. Since mid-March they have been serving only “to go” meals, using even more careful sanitation and distancing protocols.

On the first and third Thursday of each month Advent is a distribution site for Second Harvest Food Bank’s Senior Food Distribution. About 100 people pick up groceries from Second Harvest, now in pandemic time in pre-packed boxes. In addition, a volunteer team gathers bread and other baked goods from local
supermarkets and distributes them every Thursday at Advent.

Advent collects food items year-round for **Reach Out**, an ecumenical food pantry housed at St. Catherine’s Catholic Church. An Advent volunteer takes the food items to St. Catherine’s each week. Some Advent members also volunteer there. Once a year the participating congregations hold a gospel and bluegrass concert to raise funds for Reach Out.

Advent member Janet Franklin saw in an ELCA email the invitation to apply for a matching grant from ELCA World Hunger. The terms of the ELCA Daily Bread grant seemed to address their situation perfectly. She contacted Pastor Anita Warner to get her feedback on pursuing this grant. Janet felt that getting the $500 matching funds from the congregation would be no problem, as they have always been generous in supporting specific ministries. As soon as the request went out donations began to come in, often from the same people who volunteered with the various feeding ministries. They exceeded their goal. Janet enlisted Lina Loftesness and other Advent members, and together they completed the grant application. They were delighted (ecstatic!) to learn they had been approved for a grant, which provides funds to cover all the boxes, bags, paper goods and utensils they supply with every Community Table meal.

All congregations and individuals who contribute to ELCA World Hunger can celebrate that through this matching grant we are partners with the Christ-followers at Advent, Morgan Hill. Each Tuesday night as Community Table meals are distributed at Advent Church, we are there supporting, being **church together**. Community Table leaders also are glad that the matching grant process highlighted this ministry for the entire congregation, and reminded everyone that this work continues even during this time when much is shut down. As one volunteer said, “Despite all the other changes in our lives, people are still hungry.”

By Carl Wilfrid
Do you have a story that you would like to share? Send any Church Together story requests to mic@spselca.org.