



Stewardship and Abundance

Enough Love to Go Around

Jimmy Bartz

While driving my truck over Teton Pass a few years ago, a conversation with friends turned to the topic of abundance. The three of us were living in Los Angeles at the time, but we came to the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem in search of Snake River Fine Spotted Cutthroat Trout and rich conversations – like this one that began with our ascent into the Tetons. Each of us, in different ways, had invested time and energy in social-emotional or spiritual growth as we began to reach midlife. And in those days in Los Angeles, you could hardly have a conversation regarding wellbeing and human flourishing without someone bringing the word *abundance* into the conversation. Whether you were making the rounds of LA’s progressive Christian circles or following the paths of secular-spiritual, self-help gurus of Southern California, the concept of “living abundantly,” almost always in contrast to “living in scarcity,” was ever present and on trend.

As we made our way around mountain curves, I listened as my pals pledged to live out their professional careers, to embody their roles as husband and father, and to be the kind of friend that lived abundantly. It felt appropriately ambitious for our context, but it was just rubbing me wrong. Something had always bothered me about the adoption of abundance thinking, especially in light of the excess that surrounded our lives in West Los Angeles. While my pals made their pledges to abundance, I remained silent. Because of my profession and role as priest, I knew the conversation was coming my way. And it did.

The problem with abundance

“Curious to know your thinking about abundance, Padre,” came the inquiry from the back seat of my truck. These two are dear friends – each successful in his chosen area of business, each committed to the process of life-long learning and spiritual growth. You just don’t befriend a priest without that kind of commitment. We’re too much trouble. I responded with, “You know (and they didn’t), you know, I’m just trying to focus on *enough*.” I told them there was something that troubled me with the idea of seeking to live abundantly when our lives were so immersed in a culture of excess.

I told them that I struggle a bit here and that I wanted to grow into a contentment with simply having enough, rather than pursuing a life of more and more and more. I told them that’s what I wanted for my children – enough educational opportunity for my younger child, enough support and structure and care for my older, disabled child. I told them that I hoped my family would always have enough money to provide for our needs and for some of our desires. I told them I hoped for enough time to develop meaningful friendships like the ones we shared. I told them that I believe what we’re really seeking in our focus on abundance is the assurance that there’s enough love to go around. (There is.) We were quiet. I hoped my friends didn’t feel criticized.

This conversation took place several years ago, and I've taken a good deal of time with the concept of *enough* since then. Each time that I've begun to feel anxious about resources – time, money, opportunity – I've asked myself a simple question: "Jimmy, do you have enough?" And each time, I've been able to respond with "yes, more than enough."

A counter-cultural idea

While I feel like this time I've had with *enough* has helped to settle me into the Kingdom, at the same time, it feels contrary to the cultural messages for striving that came toward me at every turn as a privileged, white male. There's that famous exchange between a newspaper reporter and John D. Rockefeller. "How much money is enough?" asked the reporter. Mr. Rockefeller responded, "Just a little bit more." That's the culture I grew up in. It was a blessing. And it was a curse. It was most assuredly filled with the large measure of privilege that came my way unearned, as privilege does.

So I worry a little. I worry about what we accidentally and with the best of intentions do when we profess to our beloved, family or congregation that we are built for abundance. To be sure, abundance is not lost on me. I live in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. I am surrounded by more abundant natural beauty than any of the other places on the planet I've been privileged to visit. And there's a lot of money here, too. Some have begun to call this place a "billionaire wilderness."

Contentment and generosity

But I worry that when we say abundance, you hear "more and more and more and more, and then, even more." So, I've decided to pull back toward *enough*. I can tell you that for me, the decision is sound. It feels right. It feels simple in complicated times. And, it brings a level of contentment to my own life that felt ephemeral before. Of course, it's all a practice.

No conversation with regard to *enough* is complete without acknowledging that there are those who don't have enough, who've never had enough, who if we keep going as we are, never will have enough. Surely abundance is the problem here, not scarcity. I know in my own life, as I've adopted a practice around *enough*, my comfort with and security around generosity has flourished. I feel more comfortable sharing resources – time, money, and opportunity. There's no need to hoard, because I am content, settled, grounded.

My hope is that each of us might find ourselves there, and that the growing generosity that results would begin to heal the wounds that scarcity leaves on so many of God's beloved. So, while so many are struggling with concepts of abundance and scarcity, I'm doubling down on *enough*. Join me?

The Reverend Jimmy Bartz serves as rector of St. John's Episcopal Church in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. Prior to coming to Jackson, he was the founder and priest at Thad's, an emergent Episcopal Church in Santa Monica, California, in the Diocese of Los Angeles. He has also served as the Campus Missioner at the University of Texas in Austin, at All Saints' in Austin, Texas, and All Saints' Parish in Beverly Hills, California. He is a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin and Virginia Theological Seminary. Presently, he serves as the Chair of the Board of the Episcopal Evangelism Society, and in years past has worked with Red Bull High Performance, teaching athletes spiritual disciplines and with Naval Special Warfare working to create systems for character development within special operations teams, and was a speaker at TEDx, Venice Beach. Married to Cindy and dad to Jas and Jade, the Bartz family loves to

spend time outside mountaineering, skiing, fly-fishing, hunting and surfing. Jimmy is currently writing a book on the spirituality of risk.

Resources:

- [An Audacious Spirit of Abundance](#) by Sandy Webb, Vestry Papers, September 2019
- [Ways to Live in Abundance](#) by Sandra Montes, Vestry Papers, September 2015
- [Bountiful Abundance](#) by Peter Strimer, ECF Vital Practices blog, September 7, 2012
- [Squash Tithe](#) by Nancy Moore, ECF Vital Practices tool, 2013

Prayer and Action In a Pandemic

Yesenia (Jessie) Alejandro

When we learned that COVID-19 had hit the United States and people were dying from this deadly virus, I was heartstruck. I did not understand how this came about. I leaned to the Almighty, asking for wisdom and understanding. My first thought after the initial shock was: “How can we help others in the middle of this pandemic?” I know we can pray, and we do pray a lot. But as people of God, we needed to do more than that. We needed to act.

I felt this was a time when people needed to see a familiar face. They needed to see someone who cares for them and loves them. I saw such desperation and hopelessness in people’s eyes and their fear of being infected. I went out to the streets and began asking for donations of groceries. I felt compelled to do so, because the [majority of the people we serve](#) are undocumented. Many people are receiving help from the government, but there are big gaps for the less fortunate.

A grassroots effort to provide food and necessities takes shape

We began by finding a location where we could pack up groceries and pass them out to anyone in need. While we helped everyone who called and asked for help, my heart felt particularly drawn to the homebound elderly, the undocumented, the single mothers with babies and those home in quarantine with the virus.

I started posting on social media, asking for support. And people answered my call. We began to take groceries, diapers, formula and anything that anyone would donate to serve communities in the tristate area of New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania. We had volunteer drivers take groceries to those we couldn’t get to. We were also able to get the Police Department in Norristown, Pennsylvania, involved. They helped deliver donated groceries to the elderly and people were so grateful. Seeing the police volunteering was important for the community. Every day we had new tasks and places to deliver the groceries and other items.

A month in, I received a call from a priest friend in Guatemala asking for help, and I began asking people to adopt families in that country. Thankfully, we were able to have many families adopted. We kept posting on social media – where we were going, who we were helping and the need, and we were able to assist many in these communities. It was entirely a grassroots effort, and grew to more than one hundred volunteers.

Taking prayer out to the community

After serving many people for about a month, we realized that we needed to do more. We began to pray for the communities. With a trailer and a caravan of cars, we drove to the different communities to bring hope to the hopeless. As I began praying on the trailer with a microphone and speaker, people came out of their homes with crosses in their hands. Some were crying. Some raised their hands, asking for healing. It was moving to see such desperate need, and not only for food but for hope. So many had lost jobs, and we needed to be the light in the midst of their despair. Many were afraid to come out, but I was not, because it was time to show the love of God, whether with groceries and handmade masks or by prayers for people. Everyone needs to feel love.

Generous hands and hearts provide for a vulnerable population

I spend many days preparing, getting everything together, picking up donations. I spend hours calling and texting people, asking for their help so we can help others. We have assembled a diverse team and are up early in the morning, praying and preparing. Although we are all serving, as pastor I also have to take time to listen to the many groups that come out to help. I listen to their pain and their needs. We have to make sure that our volunteers are also taken care of, because they are also in need.

We have a group that only makes masks, and they have made hundreds so far. These masks have been given to the people we see and mailed out to people all over the United States. Many people have donated money so we could buy food items on the lists that we created. Because we did not want food to go to waste, we asked the families we serve regularly to tell us what they like to eat and cook. Our groceries are packed with rice, beans, vegetables, coffee, milk, eggs, plantains, oil, sugar, cereal and everything they need to make breakfast, lunch and dinner. They are meant to last for at least two weeks. We also receive donations from supermarkets. We were given 500 boxes of diapers of all sizes by an organization and other organizations have given us baby food, toiletries and much more.

Things seem to be starting to settle down now as people start to go back to work. The first three months were nonstop. We went from serving 30 bags of groceries to hundreds every week. One Monday morning we served over 400 bags of groceries, not including boxes of fresh vegetables. We understood the need was greater in the communities we serve, because many people do not receive any government assistance. We continue to respond to calls and emails from those still living in dire need. Overall, we have served thousands of families so far, including children. We have specific bags for children, and each child picks up their own groceries and vitamins. As a grandmother, one of my most touching moments has been to see so many children coming to pick up their little bags. The joy and gratitude in their faces are a tangible and visible sign to me that God is also smiling at us, even amidst a scary and isolating pandemic.

The Rev. Yesenia (Jessie) Alejandro, founder of Mothers Mission, has been working with communities throughout Philadelphia, its surrounding counties and Puerto Rico for over 25 years. A well-known activist in the city, Jessie's passion is to help and serve the elderly, children and families. As an outreach of St. Mary's Episcopal Church Chester, donations to Mothers Mission can be made by contacting Rev. Jessie at 856-580-7174, or visiting this [link](#). Follow her on Facebook at Jessie Alejandro or Instagram at Jessie Alejandro1.

Resources:

- [A Time for Everything](#) by Linda Buskirk, ECF Vital Practices blog, March 17, 2020

- [Support Your Parish or Favorite Episcopal Charity Now](#), ECF Vital Practices tool
- [Ministry in a Global Pandemic](#) an ECF webinar presented by Joshua Rodriguez-Hobbs June 11, 2020
- [Whatever You Do Now Will Prepare You for What You Can Do in the Future](#) by Audra Abt, ECF Vital Practices blog, July 20, 2020

12 Steps to Successful Stewardship

Caroline Moomaw Chilton

How are you managing your Annual Stewardship Campaign this fall? It's one of the major program areas of the church that is significantly impacted by the new ways we are operating in the pandemic. Your campaign takes on added significance because, let's face it, your church still needs money.

In my work in church stewardship and development, I have learned that there are some key concepts for the creation and operation of a solid and successful stewardship campaign. I consider them foundational, especially in times of transition. Here they are with some ideas that I hope will help spark your creativity and planning.

1. It's all about relationships

Strong stewardship programs are built on vibrant relationships – our relationship with God, our church and each other. People give when they are connected to each other, to the mission of the church and to God. We need to nurture these relationships all year long. Don't give people the opportunity to say, "my church only calls me when they want money." Develop a plan to touch base with all your members several times a year. This can be by phone, cards, emails and in person. Say thank you, again and again, and especially immediately after receiving a pledge. Have a phone thank-a-thon for simply checking in with people and saying thank you. (Don't ask for anything.)

2. It's about prayer, individual and collective

Write a stewardship prayer for your church. Create and distribute materials that support members' prayer lives. Set up and encourage small prayer groups online. Include families with children in these efforts.

3. Cast a vision for the upcoming year

A year from now, where do you want to be? It should be vibrant and hopeful. Keep it short so that people can remember and repeat it. Splash it on all your materials, print and digital. Donors give to causes that engage them and make them feel that their money, time and talent are being well invested.

4. Design and define your program based on your unique and compelling vision, goals and need

Add information. Donors want transparency about the finances of the church. Information builds trust. Be honest and hopeful. Include a short story about a life changed, a new program you've been able to start - share some good news! Show donors that you are a vibrant church.

5. Create materials that share your vision and invite participation

These don't have to be fancy, flashy or expensive, but they do have to be well done, visually appealing

and proofed a zillion times so there are no mistakes. Use more pictures and fewer words. Ask children to draw pictures for the materials. You're building new givers when you include children and teenagers.

6. Know your people

Not all donors are the same. As much as possible, divide your members, donors and non-donors, into giving groups. For most churches this is best done by just a few people to protect privacy. For example: who makes a significant increase in pledging each year and can be asked to do so again this year? Who hasn't increased for a year or so and can be asked to increase this year? Who does not pledge but gives regularly and can be asked to continue? Who can you ask to begin giving at whatever level is possible? Always begin by thanking people for their generosity, no matter what their level of giving. Another aspect of knowing your people is that some really appreciate a personal visit at stewardship time and others want to be left alone and will mail in their pledge card. Personal visits are preferable, but not always possible. Phone calls are the next best way to reach out.

7. Preach and teach generosity without ceasing

Some of this must come from the clergy. If you are clergy and uncomfortable with this, please read the bullet point below. (You can also contact me.)

8. Here's a don't

Stop apologizing that the church needs money. How else can we hold worship services, offer Sunday school classes, have choir practice, open our soup kitchens or pay our staff? Money is a tool. If the church is embarrassed and uncomfortable asking people to give, then people are going to be uncomfortable and embarrassed giving.

9. Make it easy for people to pledge and give

Surveys continue to find that a large gap between the ways churchgoers prefer to give and the options for giving that churches offer. The question is no longer "should we offer e-giving, but what options will we provide?"

10. Put the pledge form on your website

It can be a PDF document that people can print and return, or it can be a form that is filled out and returned online.

11. If you don't have time this fall to set up e-giving , do these two things instead

One, promote and work with members to set up recurring payments through their bank. Many people already pay their bills this way. Two, set up a group of people to start the process of e-giving in your church so that it is ready by the new year.

12. Say thank you and celebrate

Maybe you can have a "Thank You" parade and drive by people's homes with smiles and a small, inexpensive gift.

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Resources:

- [The True Meaning of Stewardship](#) by Sarah Townsend Leach, ECF Vital Practices blog, October 17, 2019
- [FRG Resources for Stewardship](#), ECF Vital Practices tool
- [Are you Ready? Preparing for Year-end Giving](#), by James Murphy, ECF Vital Practices blog, October 11, 2019
- [Funding Ministry During the Covid-19 Crisis](#) by Jason Smith, ECF Vital Practices blog, March 13, 2020

Abundant Love in Scarce Times

Gerlene Gordy

Indigenous peoples have always been considered stewards of God's creation. We are stewards of mother earth, father sky and all living things. Indigenous peoples worked the land; our culture and our existence are rooted in prayer. Coexisting with the physical creation and the spiritual creation is our foundation. Navajoland, located near the four corners, where Arizona, Utah, Colorado and New Mexico meet, was given to us by Creator. We consider the land within our four sacred mountains our motherland. It is said that when an infant's umbilical cord falls off shortly after birth, the parents bury it on the family land, so the child is tied to the area. When they become adults, they return to their homeland and never forget they are children of Diné Bikéyah (Navajoland).

In the cycle of life, we each experience birth, adolescence, adulthood, become elders and complete the life cycle in death. Throughout life, we go through ups and downs; we undergo learning and teaching moments and sometimes, the order of life becomes disturbed. We then need to contemplate our options to find what leads us astray. We meditate and pray. We are in a ceremony to try to restore balance in a world turned upside down.

COVID infections and deaths in Navajoland make the news

While many countries, cities, towns and villages continue to experience the global pandemic, COVID-19, Navajoland recently made national and international headlines. Not for our resilience, but for our high rates of infection and death due to the virus. We had the third-highest infection rate per capita in the country, behind New York and New Jersey.

Our reservation is about 27,000 square miles, roughly the size of Virginia. We are a sovereign nation with hospitals, clinics, a court system and police. Our land is beautiful, with never-ending blue skies and red rock formations full of our creation stories. But the area can also be unforgiving and rugged. Many homes do not have running water, electricity or Wi-Fi. Our hospitals do not have many specialty clinics. They have a handful of physicians and not enough Intensive Care Units. Our land only has 13 grocery stores, and the border towns, towns that sit at the border of the Navajo reservation, are not always friendly to our people.

Generosity and words of support, like a warm, firm hug

Many families were already experiencing food insecurity before the shelves at all local and non-local supermarkets ran dry. Many large news organizations featured our difficulties and our COVID-19 death

rate. The effect of COVID-19 on Navajoland showed the real picture of how impoverished many communities are. Soon friends from across the nation and the world began sending Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), basic needs items and donations to Navajoland, assisting us in creating a food box ministry for our communities. The generosity and words of support from individuals hundreds of miles away, experiencing the same pandemic, is nothing short of a miracle. It is love.

We have pored over the many notes on post-its, index cards, notebook and printer paper, each sharing a glimpse of donors' lives, family and home. The hands that wrote well wishes, prayers and hopes for good luck are, like ours, molded in clay by God and given the same breath of life. Sometimes we forget that we are made in God's image and share that bond as fellow stewards of the earth.

This year we share similar life journeys – this plague that has halted nations and the world, this global pandemic. What we do as individuals will and does influence the way this pandemic is won. By sharing, receiving and giving, we have become united at this moment that seems like a lifetime. And I must tell you that this unity feels like a warm, firm hug after tirelessly walking in the wilderness looking for a glimpse of hope – hope that seemed like a mirage. These mundane personal touches have been a boost to our morale. They are a testament to the relational stewardship that we have received.

Throughout the rugged red bluffs, white sandy ravines and dense forested areas of the mountains, small pockets of communities exist. These communities are filled with multi-generational families, living miles from busy city streets, paved roads, water lines and electricity. A handful of these communities have been hit hard by COVID and made to lockdown completely, as COVID spreads like wildfire. These lockdowns happen in communities that do not have grocery stores. No one can travel in or out of these quarantined communities. The whole reservation also sees nightly curfews weeknights from 8 pm to 5 am along with Navajo Nation-wide weekend lockdowns from 8 pm Friday to 5 am Monday. Violators of the curfews and lockdowns face stiff fines and possible jail time. What little jobs that were available on the reservation have closed, leaving many unemployed. Schools that are the primary providers of healthy food for children, have also closed. While the nation worked tirelessly to feed the quarantined communities, the rest of the reservation went unnoticed. How were the families already struggling before the pandemic going to continue?

In response to our struggle, numerous dioceses publicized our need for cloth masks, and the Episcopal body went to work sewing for us. We were able to distribute these handmade cloth masks to hundreds of families across Navajoland and to organizations working directly with individuals who have tested positive for COVID. The PPE we received went to four hospitals and clinics treating our people.

Love and care of so many for the people of Navajoland is an expression of faith

Two hundred fifty. That is the number of families we currently feed every two weeks in nine communities, and that number continues to grow daily with the donations sent for COVID Relief. Many clergy and laypeople work day and night, assembling and delivering much-needed food, hygiene items and diapers across hundreds of miles. It is a blessing to be able to provide these necessities to our people and all in need in and around our Navajoland communities. Clergy and laypeople go out to assess the needs of our elders, who are the carriers of our tradition, culture, and language. How we react today will determine our future.

Along with the nourishment of the body, there is also a need to nourish our spirit and soul. We send daily prayers, meditations and reflections in emails, text messages and on social media. Morning prayer

is live-streamed or prerecorded and edited. It isn't easy to stay in community when we cannot engage with our community in person. Lack of resources prevents us from communicating with all our people via zoom or social media. The in-person check-in is still needed, and ministry in Navajoland is vital. How we protect each other is an expression of our faith. Thank you for your generosity, for your prayers, for your donations, and your hands.

Gerlene Gordy (GJ) is Navajo from Coal Mine, New Mexico. Her clans are; One who walks around born into the Salt People. Edge Water is her maternal grandparents, and Mud People are her paternal grandparents. Clanship is essential to Navajo people for greeting and establishing relations. She is the Communication Director for the Episcopal Church in Navajoland (ECN) and a web developer for Cheii's Web, which was founded by ECN. She wants to help share our stories. She has a 5-year-old daughter and husband. She has worked with children for 12+ years and enjoys sweet tea on a hot New Mexico afternoon

Resources:

- [When You Can't Pass the Offering Plate...](#) by Ken Howard, ECF Vital Practices blog, April 7, 2020
- [Pleasant and Effective Stewardship](#) by Linda Buskirk, ECF Vital Practices blog, October 7, 2019
- [Navajo Millennial](#) by GJ Gordy, ECF Vital Practices blog, June 20, 2019
- [Ministry in a Global Pandemic](#) an ECF webinar presented by Joshua Rodriguez-Hobbs June 11, 2020

Oración y acción en una pandemia

Yesenia (Jessie) Alejandro

Cuando me enteré de que la COVID-19 ya estaba en EEUU y que gente estaba muriendo a causa de este virus mortífero, se me partió el corazón. No entendí cómo había pasado eso. Recurrí al Todopoderoso para obtener sabiduría y comprensión. Lo primero que me vino a la mente después del shock inicial fue: "¿Cómo puedo ayudar a otras personas en medio de esta pandemia?". Sé que podemos orar y oramos mucho. Pero como pueblo de Dios, teníamos que hacer más que eso. Teníamos que actuar. Sentí que éste era un momento en que la gente necesitaba ver una cara conocida. Necesitaban ver a alguien que se preocupaba por ellos y les amaba. Vi tanta desesperación y desesperanza en los ojos de la gente, y tanto miedo a la enfermedad. Salí a las calles y empecé a pedir donaciones de comestibles. Me sentí impulsada a hacerlo, porque la mayoría de aquellos a quienes servimos son indocumentados. Mucha gente está recibiendo ayuda del gobierno, pero hay grandes brechas para los menos afortunados.

Un esfuerzo de base para proporcionar alimentos y artículos necesarios cobra forma

Lo primero que hicimos fue encontrar un lugar para empaquetar comestibles y entregárselos a los necesitados. Si bien ayudábamos a todos los que venían pidiendo ayuda, mi corazón se volcó especialmente hacia los ancianos confinados en sus hogares, los indocumentados, las madres que criaban solas a sus bebés y los afectados por el virus en cuarentena en sus hogares.

Empecé a poner pedidos de apoyo en los medios sociales. Y la gente respondió a mi llamada. Empezaron a llegar alimentos, pañales, fórmula y muchas otras cosas que la gente donaba para asistir a los

necesitados en la zona triestatal de Nueva Jersey, Nueva York y Pensilvania. Voluntarios llevaron alimentos a los que no podíamos alcanzar. También conseguimos la participación del Departamento de Policía de Norristown, Pensilvania. Ellos ayudaron a entregar comestibles donados a los ancianos y todos estuvieron sumamente agradecidos. Ver a la policía prestando servicios voluntarios fue importante para la comunidad. Todos los días surgían nuevas tareas y lugares para entregar los alimentos y otras cosas. Al mes de haber empezado, recibí una llamada de un sacerdote amigo de Guatemala pidiéndome ayuda y empecé a pedirle a la gente que adoptara familias en ese país. Afortunadamente, logramos la adopción de muchas familias. Seguimos publicando nuestro cometido en medios sociales, a quiénes estábamos ayudando y lo que necesitaban, y pudimos ayudar a muchos en esas comunidades. Era un esfuerzo enteramente de base, que se expandió a más de cien voluntarios.

Llevar la oración a la comunidad

Después de haber servido a mucha gente por aproximadamente un mes, nos dimos cuenta de que teníamos que hacer más. Empezamos a orar por las comunidades. Con un remolque y una caravana de automóviles, fuimos a diferentes comunidades para llevar esperanzas a los desesperanzados. A medida que empecé a orar desde el remolque con un altoparlante y un micrófono, empezó a salir gente de sus hogares con cruces en las manos. Algunos estaban llorando. Otros elevaban los brazos al cielo pidiendo sanidad. Fue una escena conmovedora ver tanta escasez, no solo de alimentos sino también de esperanzas. Tantísimos de ellos habían perdido sus empleos y necesitábamos ser la luz en medio de su desesperación. Muchos tenían miedo de salir, pero yo no, porque era el momento de demostrar el amor de Dios, tanto con alimentos como con mascarillas hechas a mano o mediante oraciones por el pueblo. Todos necesitamos sentir amor.

Manos y corazones generosos proven para una población vulnerable

Paso muchos días preparando, reuniendo cosas, recogiendo donaciones. Paso horas llamando y enviando textos a gente, pidiéndoles su ayuda para que podamos ayudar a otras personas. Hemos reunido un equipo diverso y nos levantamos temprano por la mañana orando y preparando. Si bien todos estamos sirviendo, como pastora también tengo que dedicar tiempo a escuchar a los numerosos grupos que vienen pidiendo ayuda. Presto atención a su dolor y sus necesidades.

Tenemos un grupo que solo hace mascarillas y hasta ahora ha hecho cientos. Estas mascarillas se entregan a la gente que vemos en persona y se envían por correo a gente de todo Estados Unidos. Muchos donaron dinero para que podamos comprar los alimentos en las listas que creamos. Debido a que no queríamos que la comida se echara a perder, les pedimos a las familias a las que atendíamos regularmente que nos dijeran qué les gustaba comer y cocinar. Nuestras bolsas de comestibles contienen arroz, frijoles, vegetales, café, leche, huevos, plátanos, aceite, azúcar, cereal y todo lo necesario para preparar el desayuno, el almuerzo y la cena. Están diseñadas para que duren como mínimo dos semanas. También recibimos donaciones de supermercados. Una organización nos dio 500 cajas de pañales de todos los tamaños y otras nos dieron comida para bebé, artículos de tocador y mucho más.

Las cosas parecen estar tranquilizándose ahora que la gente está empezando a volver al trabajo. Los primeros tres meses fueron sin parar. Pasamos de entregar 30 bolsas de alimentos por semana a cientos todas las semanas. Un lunes por la mañana entregamos más de 400 bolsas de alimentos, sin contar las cajas de vegetales frescos. Entendimos que la necesidad era mayor en las comunidades que estábamos

asistiendo, porque mucha de esa gente no recibe ayuda del gobierno. Seguimos contestando llamadas y mensajes por correo electrónico de gente que sigue teniendo necesidades extremas.

En total, hasta el momento hemos asistido a miles de familias, muchas de ellas con niños. Tenemos bolsas especiales para niños y cada uno de ellos escoge sus propios alimentos y vitaminas. Como abuela, uno de mis momentos más conmovedores fue haber visto tantos niños recogiendo sus bolsitas. Para mí, la alegría y gratitud en sus caritas es un signo tangible y visible de que Dios también nos está sonriendo, incluso en medio de una pandemia que asusta y aísla.

La Rev. Yesenia (Jessie) Alejandro, fundadora de Mothers Mission, ha estado trabajando por más de 25 años con comunidades de toda la ciudad de Filadelfia, de los condados que la rodean y de Puerto Rico. La pasión de Jessie, una activista conocida en la ciudad, es ayudar y servir a ancianos, niños y familias. Como una extensión de St. Mary's Episcopal Church Chester, para realizar donaciones a Mothers Mission contactar a la Rev. Jessie en el 856-580-7174 o visitar este enlace. Sígala en Facebook: Jessie Alejandro o en Instagram: Jessie Alejandro1.

Recursos:

- [Sí, juntos podemos](#) por Jesse Velásquez y Vidal Rivas, Vestry Papers, julio 2016
- [Un espíritu audaz de abundancia](#) por Sandy Webb, Vestry Papers, septiembre 2019
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