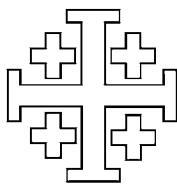


traditional
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St. Paul's Sunday Newsletter

SPECIAL SECTION: MITZVAH DAY AND MISSIONS/OUTREACH

A publication of St. Paul's

United Methodist Church, Houston

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St. Paul's Family and Friends Work Together in Community to Share God's Blessings Worldwide

More than **400 volunteers** from St. Paul's United and a variety of other groups **packaged 120,212 meals** for Stop Hunger Now on St. Paul's Mitzvah Day 2013. That far surpassed the 74,406 meals packed during the church's first Stop Hunger Now event in 2011.

Fondren Hall was packed with people of all ages — from toddlers in arms to octogenarians — working side by side toward a common goal. These Stop Hunger Now (SHN) meals comprised of vitamins, dehydrated vegetables, soy product, and rice are shipped to the most destitute places in the world.

The SHN Community Development Director for Houston, Pierce Stewart, explained that the organization is closely tied with education, shipping direct to schools and orphanages. When this food is provided at a school, he said, families do not have to decide between education and food.

"We have found that the education retention rate increases where these meals are provided," he said. "An educated community enlivens a community; the educated can — and do — 'pay back.'"

Community Connections

Thanks to these groups beyond St. Paul's and their St. Paul's connection for inviting them to help pack Stop Hunger Meals for Mitzvah Day 2013, all returning for their second or third Stop Hunger Now Mitzvah Day:



- The Lamar High School Key Club, thanks to St. Paul's Youth Meg Brigman.
- St. John's Middle School students.
- Texas Southern University's Wesley Foundation members through the United Methodist Church connection.

More St. Paul's Mission Opportunities

On Mitzvah Day, we talked about what a gift it is to serve together and work for justice in our world. Many opportunities are available all the time, but we are focusing in on three current needs.

First: Rutabaga After-School Program is a free program for elementary students. The purpose of the program is to help the children with their homework as well as support and nurture the children in their physical, emotional, social and spiritual development.

Volunteers are needed for weekly homework help and support from 3 to 5:30 p.m. (or part of that time). At this time, we are also searching for people who want to support our kids in this program but are not able to commit to weekly tutoring. These volunteers will be a cheerleading/support team for the program and will be called upon for things like field trips, parties, and other special events.

To volunteer with this program, contact Michelle Evans at mevans@stpaulshouston.org.

Second: Houston is a wonderfully diverse city, and the world is at our doorstep. We want to begin exploring what it would be like for our church to become known as a place of welcome for the immigrant community. We are not fully sure of what this will look like or what the timeline will be. If you are a dreamer, a visionary, a person concerned about justice for our immigrant neighbors, we want you to be a conversation partner with us as we move ahead.

To be involved, contact Rev. Emily Chapman at echapman@stpaulshouston.org.

Third: In the Spring of 2014 our church will devote itself to learning and remembering the Civil Rights movement, examining the Church's role in it and

The Process

Stage 1

Bags or boxes of three different foodstuffs — rice, soy, dehydrated vegetables — plus vitamins are unloaded and contents delivered to each table.



Stage 2

Individuals funnel these foods into bags. When reconstituted with hot water, the contents equal six nutritiously balanced meals.



Stage 3

Runners take the filled bags to the Weigh-and-Seal stations.

Stage 4

Individuals weigh the bags, adjusting as necessary by taking out or adding rice; others seal the bags.



Stages 5 and 6

More runners take the sealed bags to a Stop Hunger Now Bingo-card-like chart for accurate count. Others pack them into boxes, ready for shipping.

Stage 7

Boxes are tallied and loaded onto a truck.

The children in Childcare bagged rice and beans for distribution to clients of the Emergency Aid Coalition and made "care packages" for children waiting with their parents at SEARCH.



Stop Hunger Now



KP



EMM



STOP HUNGER NOW feeds spillage from the packaging to chickens. At least one of the volunteers, Tina Swch-wettmann at left, took some spillage home for her own chickens.



EMM



EMM



STOP HUNGER NOW is opening a warehouse to serve the Houston area. This will make it possible for smaller groups to hold events at their warehouse. Where the St. Paul's boxes go will be reported in our newsletter and website. For more information about **STOP HUNGER NOW**, see their website, www.stop-hungernow.org.



Key to Still Photographers:

EMM = Elaine Matte Mut

KP = Karen Peck

YCW = Yvette Casares Willis

Video: <http://bit.ly/mitzvah-day>

Thanks to Many, Abraham Station Renovations Serve Many More

St. Paul's has had an after-school program as part of its ministry in the community for many years. The program has evolved in a variety of ways and now serves a community of immigrant families, offering them after-school care and tutoring, with a particular concern for supporting second-language learners. It operates five days a week during the school year plus four weeks of summer camp.

As Rev. Nataly Negrete Lopez, the former after-school program director, began getting to know the families and the needs of the children and parents, a new community began to form. We began offering ESL, Bible studies, parenting classes, social events, and worship services for the families of the children. We have continued to grow and now meet twice



weekly for activities with this new community, now called *Fe y Esperanza* (Faith and Hope).

Great energy and enthusiasm are developing around these ministries, and having a space of hospitality to welcome and grow with our brothers and sisters is important. The recent renovations to Abraham Station provide such a space.

Some highlights:

- The new kitchen is twice the size of the previous one, providing more room for a cooking camp in the summer and community meals throughout the year.
- An additional classroom is now available.
- The updated foyer is being used to host Tuesday Tea

Time with the after-school program parents.

- A College and Career Room is open to all St. Paul's youth and is equipped with study and college preparation materials.
- The Emergency Aid Coalition has a new storage space.



Many volunteers and groups supported this project through their time and gifts. Thank you to the Young Adults, Trustees, St. Paul's Foundation, Mission Council, Parlor Committee, and the St. Paul's Maintenance Staff. Most of the work was done in-house and we are grateful for this group of talented folks!



More Mission Opportunities with St. Paul's

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what that can teach us about today's issues of racial injustice in and outside the Church.

Over Spring Break (March 16-21) we will board a bus and travel to the historic sites of the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia. Along the way, we'll discuss the history and theology of the movement and talk about its significance to today's world. All ages are welcome, though children and youth must be accompanied by a parent/guardian.

To learn more, contact Lori Chidgey at lori@stpaulshouston.org.

As our church discerns its next steps forward in our city, we want to be in the places where God's heart aches, knowing that those places are where our faith truly comes to life. We hope that you'll pray and listen for God's Spirit leading you to be part of the journey.

Working Together in Community

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- H3 (Helping Houston's Homeless) at The Village School and St. Paul's member Tina Schwettmann, who teaches there. The Village School group included many boarding students from other countries.
- Girl Scout Troop 23246 of Daisies, Brownies, and Junior Girl Scouts from East Harris County, thanks to Marisa Cisneros, Ministry Assistant to St. Paul's Children and Youth, whose daughter is a member of the troop.

Thanks also to *Fe y Esperanza*, St. Paul's Youth, all the Sunday School classes and other St. Paul's groups for their participation in the Radical Kingdom pre-Mitzvah Day study as well as their Mitzvah Day activities and donations.

"The generosity of both time and money was amazing," said Lori Chidgey, St. Paul's Missions and Outreach Director.

Mitzvah Day returned to St. Paul's in 2009, named in honor of our neighbor, Congregation Emanu El. *Mitzvah* is a Hebrew word for good deed and is a Torah commandment.