



## 2020-2021 Food Pantry @ Ascension - the Rev. Deacon Charles Farrell

This has been a very challenging year for everyone. At the beginning of the year we continued our traditional program of a sack lunch and a grocery bag of groceries for 156 guests. In March the City moved into lock down as the pandemic took hold. In response during the April pantry we distributed 156 Jewel gift cards. This was very popular but allowed guests to buy anything and was a good one off way to buy time to look at options. Beginning with the May pantry we worked with Chicago Shares to begin to distribute these to our guests. The Shares program is very good and allows guests to purchase food at some Jewels and subways using paper coupons. This program grew from 160 to 175 with the blessing of the Vestry in the autumn. We ended the Chicago Shares program after October as it became clear that we could not stop people from selling these to others, there were numerous threats when we did not have enough for everyone who showed up and we had to hire a security guard to keep us safe as well as keep the crowd in check. During all of this Dan Pillar, who is a friend of mine, has helped order and manage this program since before, and now during, the pandemic.



Below is a provisional timeline for 2020:

- Jan-March Traditional lunch/grocery bags
- April: Jewel gift cards
- May-Nov. Chicago Shares vouchers
- Dec.-present Toiletries + some food

Moving forward I am recommending that we alter our program. In the past we have given people a bag of groceries that is worth about \$22 plus the bag lunch which consists of a bologna/cheese sandwich, chips, little Debbie oatmeal cream sandwich cookie & a banana. WE also with some regularity gave some toiletries. I am recommending that we continue the lunch, although make it healthier, we offer a much smaller amount of food and increase the amount of toiletries.

Why? Food and food assistance is widely available from a variety of sources. Government sponsored programs, other food pantries etc. Personal care items like TP, deodorant, toothpaste, socks, etc. which are very popular, are not covered by food stamps and are often difficult for people with lower incomes to afford. People who are struggling to find food are also struggling to buy soap, shampoo and laundry detergent. I believe we could be more helpful and fill a niche that exists and is not being fulfilled by making personal care items the primary mission of the Church of the Ascension pantry!

This is our opportunity to renew our important outreach as The Pantry @ Ascension! An up-dated version of our longstanding commitment to those in need. Our current guests have given us a very positive response to the personal care items that we have been distributing.

On February 14 I will attend our virtual coffee hour to elicit input from the parish community. I want us to consider who we want to be and how we can serve the people of our community best. What do our guests need and can we provide what is needed?

Your servant in Christ,  
Deacon Charles, *Pantry @ Ascension Coordinator*

