

Shared Community Mission Group

St. Paul's is part of the Shared Mission Group of nine churches in the city. The other churches are: St Bernard's, St Henry's, Watertown Moravian, Ebenezer Moravian, United Methodist, River City Church, Immanuel Lutheran and First Congregational. Together we are able to tackle a lot more than we do separately to alleviate the problems of poverty in Watertown, which actually is a pocket of poverty within an area of poverty in the state. For both Dodge and Jefferson Counties the economic recovery has been slow. 1 out of 9 children lives at or below the federal poverty line in Jefferson county in 2012, and the poverty rate has increased in Jefferson county from 6% in 2008 to 10.4% in 2012. The typical household in Jefferson earned \$6,900 less in 2012 than it did in 2008. In the Watertown School district over 50% Of the children qualify for free or reduced lunches so this is where we decided to target our efforts as hungry children do not learn. We know there are hungry kids at the high school but we also realized kids would not admit to hunger and haul home back packs at that age so we are still working on that problem!

We targeted Kindergarten classes and we now serve the entire school district as the Shared Mission Group with nutritious back packs to Go and Grow every week of the school year. St Paul's Church is in charge of the can of fruit as we are very small. St B's has breakfast, Immanuel Lutheran has the gallon of milk coupon, St Henry's has protein, Moravian churches have the can of soup, and the other churches share the dinner menus. A sample menu would be: can of fruit, can of soup, breakfast cereal or pancake mix and syrup, can of hamburger meat, can of black beans, tortillas, can of whole tomatoes, head of fresh lettuce.

We are a part of the team that packs every Thursday at Webster School, where they have given us a room to store the food. Then we go back on Friday at 2:30 p.m. to take the bags to the classrooms, so the kids can take them home. We are currently serving 97 kids. Each school has a volunteer coordinator. It's a wonderful program. **We always need fruit and we need donations too**, because when St. Paul's packs every 8 weeks or so (we team with River City church) we have to provide the fresh fruit or veg. that week, so all donations are welcome.

We also run SOS or Save our Students, which is a brief mission during June, July and August where each church collects school supplies and then they are distributed to all families in need right before school starts. We served a huge number of families last year from all area schools including the parochial ones. I forget the actual number but it was over 200 families. This event takes place at the Congregational Church where we set up the room like a store for the parents and they are escorted around by volunteers like myself armed with the lists from each school.

Peace Alice