

The Well

We Share Food!

November 2020

YOUR MINISTRY AT WORK!

In this Issue

Your Ministry at work, p. 1

Holiday Food Distribution,
pp. 2-3

Message from Executive
Director, pp. 2-3

How does our Garden Grow?
p 3-4

Thoughts on Food, p. 4

Urgent Needs, p. 5

Covid by the Numbers, p 5

Be Part of the Solution, pp. 6

Community News, p.7

Now that several of the church food pantries have opened again, we are serving fewer people, from 30-40 households a day to 18-20 households daily. In 2019 we had an average of 200 neighbors per month at the pantry. Since March 2020 we saw an average of 500 people per month, although that last week of March and the first week of April, the number was closer to 500 households a week. The average household is 2.5 people. We have distributed well over 90,000 pounds of food in the first three quarters of the year, and 60% of it is fresh food. Fresh food from the grocery stores and the Food Bank is near the end of its edible life, and we have also composted over 3,000 pounds of spoiled produce. Composting food waste helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The compost we make is used to grow food locally.

At the end of 2018 we redefined our service area. It includes all of Wilkinsburg (15221), all of Edgewood and Swissvale, and parts of East Homewood. Basically, if you create a circle following Braddock to Bennett to Frankstown Road, to Laketon to Graham, cross under 376, bordered on the south by Woodstock, back to Braddock Ave. The service area was created using similar census tracts. Although clearly there are populations in that area that we would not expect to need a food pantry, it is surprising who is living on the edge of food security. Basically, our zip codes are 15221, 15218, and parts of 15208 and 15235 that are adjacent to Wilkinsburg. This also reflects the populations of the Congregations that offer regular and sustaining support for WCM.

WCM will be closed on November 9 in honor of Veterans Day (Armistice Day). We will also close at noon on November 25 for our Thanksgiving holiday, and will reopen at 9 am on Monday, November 30.

HOLIDAY FOOD DISTRIBUTION

Is this your idea of a Thanksgiving (or Christmas) dinner? Turkey, cranberry sauce, mashed potatoes, sweet potatoes, lots of gravy and a pie?

If you are living on food benefits provided by SNAP, this meal is unaffordable. SNAP benefits provide approximately \$3.90 a day per family. The average Thanksgiving meal costs at least \$5-7 per person. According to the American Farm Bureau Federation, the basic components of a full Thanksgiving meal for a small family (2-3 people) is around \$50, and at least half of that is the cost of a turkey. If you're interested in how your food is produced, you might also like to know that about 8 cents of every Thanksgiving dollar spent at a grocery store goes to farmers.



Every year WCM shares at least 100 turkeys plus the trimmings to our neighbors at Thanksgiving and again at Christmas. We try to include a dozen eggs per family, plus a variety of dessert items. The volume of trimmings is commensurate with the size of the family and what we have available. If you wish to donate to this project, please send us either gift cards (Giant Eagle) or a check. If your congregation would like to collect, these are the items we usually distribute. Please let us know!

Families sign up in advance for either Thanksgiving or Christmas. Sign up for the Thanksgiving Distribution of Turkey cards plus the Trimmings will start October 24 (United Nations Day) and continue until we have 100 families or November 1 (All Saints Day), which ever happens soonest. Sign up for Christmas will start after Thanksgiving.

The Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank and the KDKA Turkey fund usually provide us with enough Giant Eagle gift cards for turkeys, but the 6-8 big families (5-8 people) can usually need a second gift card (because they need a larger turkey). We are discouraging large get-togethers this holiday season, but we also want to help families maintain their cohesion.

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPLIERS FOR THEIR SUPPORT OF THE FOOD PROGRAM.



And the Wood Street Baking Company!

Holiday Boxes

250 boxes of stuffing mix
300 cans of turkey or chicken broth
300 cans of green beans
300 cans of corn
200 cans of cranberry sauce
130 cans of yams or sweet potatoes
300 boxes of corn bread mix
Assorted dessert mixes (this can be a variety
Assorted boxes of oatmeal and cereal

The Thanksgiving distribution will occur at 704 Wood Street on Monday-Wednesday, November 23, 24, and 25, but will end promptly at 11:30 on the 25th so WCM staff can leave at noon to prep for their own holidays. If you wish to donate to this project, please send us either gift cards (Giant Eagle) or a check. If your congregation would like to collect, these are the items we usually distribute. Please let us know!

MESSAGE FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Heinz Endowments sponsored an online conference on equity, anti-racism, and culture. The keynote speaker, Isabel Wilkerson, is an award-winning historian. (I am reading her first book, the *Warmth of Other Sun* (2010) now). This award-winning work examines the great migration (1915-1970) of African Americans from the South to the west and north in search of a better life. This book is a fascinating study of how racism *and caste* created the painful divisions in the American social and cultural fabric. If you don't know much about the history of racism in the United States, this is an informative starter book. Even if you think you do know, this is a good book to read.

Her 2020 book, *Caste: The Origins of our Discontents*, is a powerful social history and was one of Oprah's Book Club choices. Although we lament the sad chapter of slavery in our nation, it took 22 generations of slavery to lay the framework of who is free and who is not free in our country. Since the so-called "end" of slavery, another six to eight generations of Jim Crow and segregation cemented the division, creating a subordinate caste of people who are most likely to be doing the essential labor that holds the current United States economy together.

According to Wilkerson, "caste gives us new language to understand these divisions in a different way than we are accustomed to." We're not dealing with the classical racism of our forefathers, but a system of perception based on one's skin color. Caste is different from class: if changing how you behave (act, or work) allows you to break free of a system of perceptions, it is a class. If you cannot change perceptions, it is caste. Caste divisions are immutable. The poverty we see around us—ramshackle neighborhoods, struggling education systems, limited or non-existent opportunities—are the results. Caste divisions reflect reflects the power of monied interest, the will of the few and not the many, the will of the minority over the majority, contradictory to the fundamental concept of democracy.

Monied and corporate interests owe a massive debt to those who have been exploited. One of the last speakers at the conference, Stephen B. Heintz, president of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, a family foundation with an endowment of \$1.2 billion, seeks to advance social change for a more just, sustainable, and peaceful world. He recognized that the system of philanthropy has anti-democratic roots, that it was built on systemic economic inequality and the generations of exploitation that has brought us to our current situation and recognizes a massive debt to society. Effective philanthropy depends on an inclusive, effective and functioning democracy. You can read the position paper found at [Common Purpose Report...](#)

How has this conference and reading shaped my perception of what we do at Wilksburg Community Ministry? Many of our neighbors who use the pantry are locked in a system that undervalues their labor, pays less, and requires more. While some of us stayed home to protect ourselves from the pandemic, our Wilksburg-Edgewood-Swissvale and Homewood neighbors went to their essential jobs as cleaners, stockers, nursing aides, nurses, and caregivers. Those who couldn't, or didn't, were laid off from their jobs.

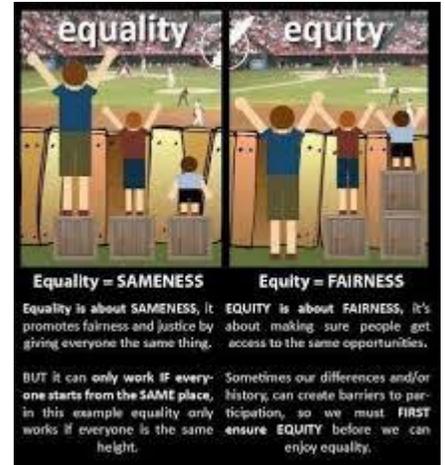
In May one of our neighbors, overwhelmed with grief and frustration, had a meltdown in front of the pantry. As I talked with her, she said "I'm oppressed." She was weeping as she said it. We were simply out of food. And now she was about to lose her apartment and had nothing to feed her kids. How does a woman like her end up crying on the sidewalk in front of WCM?

A childhood playmate, recently in touch via Facebook, told me that she didn't want to share her hard-earned money, resources, etc., with anyone. "I worked hard for this," she said. "Others can do the same. They don't because they are lazy" I asked her how she would approach this woman. She said she wouldn't help a lazy person and I was a sucker. This mindset ignores the basic inequities of our system and, more importantly, it denies our obligations to each other...

Truly there is wickedness in a world that ignores the plight of people like our neighbors. Mark Roth pointed this out the other day, citing from [Proverbs 6:16-19](#): "There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to him:¹⁷haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood,¹⁸a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil,¹⁹a false witness who pours out lies, and a person who stirs up conflict in the community."

We all have people from our past who have haughty eyes and who, in their ignorance, speak lies. Even if they don't shed the blood through their direct actions, still their hands are covered with it, as much because of what they do as what they don't do. Is it detestable to describe injustice, even if that stirs up conflict? Is it detestable to insist that we all treat our brothers and sisters with love and compassion? Is it detestable to fight injustice?

Ruth A. Kittner



HOW DOES OUR GARDEN GROW!

We are preparing the garden for its winter sleep. Thank you to all our volunteers who helped to weed and maintain the garden, to the firemen who filled our water barrels, to Kate, who loaned us the property, to our painters, and to Kyrie Bushaw at [Meshworks Press](#) for making our cool sign.

Next year in March, we will be planting new herbs, garlic, onions, and veggies at the Pitt and Rebecca lot, and in a second lot. If you are interested in helping, please reach out to the office. We have three master gardeners who will help to coordinate our efforts and

we will also collaborate with Nicole Santella at Sleeping Octopus. (the old Yingling Mansion). You can send a note to the office or

send an email to volunteers@wcm15221.org and put GARDENING in the subject line. We will be looking for folks who can weed, feed and sort! Also, if you are interested in collaborating with us using your own garden, please let us

Editor's note: The Meshwork Press operates at 315 S. Trenton Ave, in Wilkinsburg. It was founded by artist and teacher Haylee Ebersole in 2018 to create a space to teach her love of printmaking to kids in her neighborhood. Kyrie Bushaw, who has a background in and business management, joined the venture in June 2019. They are currently partnered with the Wilkinsburg Youth Project (WYP) to teach screen printing. They print cards and post cards that are for sale at the East End Food Coop and other stores. They also do special orders for clients

THOUGHTS ON FOOD

Judith Dodd, MS, RDN, LDN

Switch things up from a traditional ground beef chili. Chicken chili takes only 10 minutes to prep and then slowly cooks in an Instapot or pressure cookers. It develops depth of flavor and just the right amount of heat from chipotle peppers. Corn, green peppers and cannellini beans compliment the flavors and add texture.

Slow Cooker Chicken and Corn Chili Serves 6 (less than \$2 per serving)

Ingredients

- 1 1/4 pounds skinless, boneless chicken breast halves
- 1 can (10 1/2 ounces) Campbell's® Condensed Cream of Chicken Soup or homemade cream of chicken
- 2 medium green peppers, diced (about 1 1/2 cups)
- 2 cups frozen whole kernel corn, thawed
- 1 tablespoon minced chipotle peppers in adobo sauce
- 1 can (about 15 ounces) white cannellini beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 6 lime wedge (optional)
- 2 tablespoons chopped cilantro (optional)

Instructions

1. Wash your hands
2. Season the chicken as desired. Stir the soup, green peppers, corn, chipotle chilis, beans and cumin in a six-quart slow cooker. Add the chicken and turn to coat.
3. Cover and cook on LOW for 6 to 7 hours or until the chicken is cooked through and fork-tender
4. Remove the chicken to a cutting board. Using 2 forks, shred the chicken. Stir the shredded chicken back into the cooker.



Season to taste. Serve with the lime wedges and cilantro, if desired. Top with sour cream, and/or grated cheese! Try serving over rice or wrap it up in a tortilla for a heartier meal. Add a side salad of garden greens!

Calories per serving 316
Nutritional information: 7.6 grams fat, 542 milligrams sodium, 25.9 grams carbohydrate, 4.2 grams fiber 35.2 grams protein

Notes: This recipe uses condensed canned cream of chicken soup, but sodium could be lowered by using soup with a lower sodium value. You can also make your own cream of chicken soup using chicken broth, milk, and flour or corn starch. Using your own cream of chicken soup changes the fat and sodium content.

To make your own cream of chicken soup, you need 3 T salted butter, 3 T of all-purpose flour (or 1.5 T of corn starch), ½ cup chicken stock or broth, ½ cup of any milk, ½ t of garlic salt, and ¼ t of black pepper. Melt butter, whisk in flour or cornstarch, add stock and milk, and add salt and pepper. Whisk together. Simmer until mixture thickens, about 2-3 minutes. Presto: basic condensed soup.

Meatless?? Omit the chicken and it is still a protein meal. Alternatively, add a can of rinsed and drained black or red beans, or add Tofu at the end of the cooking. Or serve on quinoa. A super protein meal.

Editor's note: Judy Dodd is a registered dietitian/nutritionist (RDN) who is an Assistant Professor in Dietetics and Nutrition at Pitt. Some of us may know her as a frequent guest on KDKA television and other media. The recipe is from the [Campbell's Soup website](#)

URGENTLY NEEDED



Many of the fruits and vegetables we receive are donated at peak ripeness. If we cannot distribute them quickly enough, Chef Chuck Kerber, owner of *Chaz Catering* and former executive chef at Allegheny HYP Club and Euphoria Post, processes fruits and veggies for WCM to distribute to our neighbors.

WCM is looking for donations of canning jars and new rings and lids. Half pint and pint jars. New Rings and lids for small mouth jars, especially. Used, unchipped jars are welcome. We will also take cases of new canning jars and rings/lids, of course.

COVID BY THE NUMBERS

Wilkesburg neighbors continue to get sick from the Covid as well, although not in the volume of the early days. Upticks in the numbers occur at intervals related to community events: primary day in June, July 4 holiday, Labor Day. Increased numbers of sick occurred within 14-18 days of each event, reflecting the medical assessment of community transmission. We can expect surges in cases after Election Day, and after Thanksgiving. Please remember this Thanksgiving to practice all the physical distancing and health and safety precautions recommended by the CDC and the state health authorities:

Covid is increasing among the younger age groups, particularly 19-24-year-olds. In southwest PA, approximately five percent of the cases in April were in this age group; in October, that number is 13%. It is a marked difference in the north central region: approximately seven percent in April were in the 19-24-year-old age group, but by mid-October, that rose to 32 percent.

Despite some claims, there is no cure for Covid. It is easily transmissible, even among and between people who do not appear to be sick. These are asymptomatic individuals who still carry the virus but show no ill effects themselves. Furthermore, people may have the Corona virus (or any virus) and not know it. Viral shedding occurs when a virus replicates inside the body and is released into the environment. At that point, it may be contagious. For the coronavirus that causes COVID-19, it's not known exactly when this occurs after someone is infected. Evidence suggests that the novel coronavirus is most contagious when symptoms are worse and viral shedding is high. However, it appears that someone is contagious prior to developing symptoms, suggesting that viral shedding is occurring even early in the infection. For more information, see [WEBMD](#)

All information on the Corona Virus in Allegheny County can be found on [Allegheny Health Department COVID Resources](#).

Anyone can be a COVID carrier. The CDC ranks the "traditional" Thanksgiving gatherings as high risk. Please use common sense and caution.

1. **Low Risk:** a meal with people in the same household; no contact delivery of meal to a household.
2. **Moderate Risk:** outdoor gatherings at which people maintain physical distance and wear masks
3. **High Risk:** Indoor gatherings of any number of people who are not part of the household

Remember, even small household gatherings are helping to drive the surge of coronavirus cases.

CDC's Recommended Practices

1. Avoid close contact
2. Wear a mask
3. Cover coughs and sneezes
4. Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces often

JOIN THE MINISTRY: BE PART OF THE SOLUTION!

And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner [Leviticus 19:10](#)

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me. [Matthew 25:35](#)

The best of you are those who feed others. [Musnad Ahmad 23408](#)

The instruction is clear: we are all enjoined to feed the hungry. We invite you to join our ministry by making a gift for the cause. The easiest way to give is to mail a check to us at 702 Wood Street, Pittsburgh PA 15221

Network for Good: The link also is available on the WCM website. Network for Good (N4G) is an easy way to send regular support to Wilkinsburg Community Ministry. Please note that N4G deducts a 5% fee for processing your gift. Gifts are sent to us on the 15th of the month *after* you make your gift.

Monthly Gifts: You can set up your bank account to send WCM a monthly gift. It's easy. Most checking accounts offer this service as part of their bill payment option. Add WCM to your automatic payment options, and enter the address: 702 Wood Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15221. Select an amount and monthly. Your bank will send us a check every month in the amount you request. This saves *you* postage and the post office will still receive the business.

United Way. Most major employers offer a United Way campaign. Again, United Way takes a percentage of the gift; WCM is paid quarterly.

AmazonSmile is operated by Amazon with the same products, prices, and shopping features as Amazon.com. The difference is that when you shop on AmazonSmile, the AmazonSmile Foundation donates 0.5% of the purchase price of eligible products to the charitable organization of your choice. Every item available for purchase on www.amazon.com is also available on AmazonSmile at the same price. Eligible products are marked "Eligible for AmazonSmile donation" on their product detail pages. Your shopping cart, Wish List, wedding or baby registry, and other account settings are also the same. On your first visit to AmazonSmile (smile.amazon.com), you select a charitable organization to receive donations from eligible purchases before you begin shopping on the SMILE.AMAZON.COM portion of the site. Amazon remembers your selection, and then every eligible purchase you make at smile.amazon.com will result in a donation. Be sure to remember to go to smile.amazon.com when you're ready to shop. Items purchased through the regular amazon.com website do not qualify.

RMD Charitable Giving: If your retirement finances consist of an individual retirement account (IRA), then starting at age 72 you are required to take minimum distributions from your IRA. Because of the coronavirus, the government is allowing people of any age to tap their IRA funds this way; this provision will probably change later in this year, but the increase to 72 will probably remain. You may want to consider making an IRA Qualified Charitable Deduction (QCD) to benefit WCM. As always, please consult your financial advisors!

Bequests. If you'd like to add Wilkinsburg Community Ministry to your estate, please contact the office. We can send you a simple codicil that you can attach to your plans.

Facebook Fundraisers. If you use Facebook, you can encourage your friends to join our ministry. Simply use an event (like a birthday, a special day, anniversary, or a commemoration) to set up a fundraiser. Select Wilkinsburg Community Ministry as the recipient. Invite your friends. Facebook links with Network for Good, but there is no fee or charge. Your friends won't get mailings from us: Facebook doesn't tell us who they are. WCM gets the entire amount on the 15th of the month *following* the end of the fundraiser. If you need help for this, ask your children or grandchildren, or call the office and we will walk you through the process.

COMMUNITY NEWS
WILKINSBURG BOROUGH CLOSES THE BUILDING

All Police EMERGENCY – Dial 911 for Allegheny County Dispatch Police NON-EMERGENCY: 412-244-2919

Any other Police Business (Walk-In Reports, PFA Drop-Off): Please use “RED” 911 phone located in the front door entrance for an Officer assistance*

All Administrative Department Calls – Dial 412-244-2900 All Code Enforcement Department Calls – Dial 412-244-2923

All Finance Department Calls – Dial 412-242-7251 (Parking Ticket Payments (Over the phone for debit and credit card payments; Otherwise you can mail your payment). Please Do Not place cash payments in the front door entrance.

All Library Department Calls – Dial 412-244-2940 to speak with Library staff for service and/or visit the Wilkinsburg Library website for all Library services information.

All Public Works Department Calls – Dial 412-244-2959 for all non-emergency Public Works assistance.

October 27 marks the second anniversary of the shooting of our Brothers and Sisters at the Tree of Life in Squirrel Hill.

**CMU HISTORY DEPARTMENT COLLECTING READING DONATIONS
FOR ALLEGHENY COUNTY JAIL INMATES**



Men and women at the Allegheny County jail have expressed an interest in reading materials. The jail collection there is exclusively donated, and all donations must be pre-approved, and it is simply too small to accommodate the number of inmates. Alex Tabor, a graduate student at CMU, and his partner, a social worker for Allegheny County, are working to expand the reading resources of the jail. Mystery novels, science-fiction, general fiction, and periodicals like *National Geographic* are of interest, as are magazines like *People* or *Essence* that highlight contemporary social events and issues. ONLY softcover books are allowed. Magazines, comics, and other similar materials must be held together with adhesives or glue and not with staples. If you have questions, you can contact Alex Tabor at Carnegie Mellon History department: atabor@andrew.cmu.edu, who is happy to answer questions and arrange for donations to be collected.

COMMUNITY GROUPS HELPING NEIGHBORS

Wednesday Evening Knitting Club usually meets at the C. C. Mellor Library—now Zooming on the second and fourth Wednesdays at 6 p.m. The group is making hats, mittens and scarves for our neighbors. Adult hats and scarves will be distributed at the pantry upon request! The Zoom meeting is [here](#). You can contact the library at 412-731-0909 or email at cccmellor@einetnetwork.net for more information! CC Mellors Memorial Library has an array of online programs. See the event tab at the library website. The Wilkinsburg Library offers a **Story Time with Ms. Rachel**. This is a play list of recorded readings from Rachel Moore, the Children’s librarian and some other guest readers that you can access on at the [Library's Facebook page](#).

The Well:

Editor: Ruth Kittner
Contributors: Roger Schneider, Tom Ochs, Judy Dodd
Proofreaders Vivian Lovingood, Michael Rucker, Mary Zubrow
Photographs: Carlos Gasca Yanez
Logistics: Marsha Morris
Printer: Calvary Church Book Store

