

Alternate Ways to FEED THEM

Community Gardens

“A community garden is a single piece of land gardened collectively by a group of people. Community gardens provide fresh produce and plants as well as satisfying labor, neighborhood improvement, a sense of community, and connection to the environment. They are publicly functioning in terms of ownership, access, and management, as well as typically owned in trust by local governments or not for profit associations.” —*Wikipedia.com*

Salt of the Earth (SOTE)

For seven years Angela Greene has developed a community garden on the outskirts of Kansas City, Kansas. She uses this garden as a ministry and as an educational tool for the youth in her area. The program is called Salt of the Earth (SOTE): Youth Market Garden and Training Farm. It is based on Matthew 5:13 where Jesus says “*You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.*” Although Angela’s program has been successful as it reaches more than two hundred people in her community each year, Angela herself admits, she did not start out with a “green thumb.” Angela and a team of volunteers work with the youth in the area to develop and grow a bountiful garden that is shared by many in the community. However, with SOTE, it doesn’t stop there. Along with feeding the community through the garden, she also uses it as an educational opportunity for the youth and volunteers who work alongside her. This is done as they work together, improve cooperation, develop work ethics, incorporate skills of entrepreneurship, and learn how to cook with what they are growing in the garden.

At SOTE they also harvest their own bees (for honey) and worms (for cultivation). Nothing is wasted either as they have a compost pile that they keep up with as well. All of this is done on about a quarter of an acre of land. One thing that Angela loves most about the aspect of a community garden is that it is a great “visual” for the public eye.

Sherman Street Church of God

Thomas Barr manages the community garden at Sherman Street Church of God in Anderson, Indiana. The garden is approximately seventy feet wide and one hundred and twenty feet long. Barr states, “The cost to start and maintain depends on who is going to do the hard work it takes to have a successful garden. The ground has to be prepared and maintained by tilling, fertilizing, planting, and keeping the weeds out.” He also comments that the most important tool you will need is a hoe and these can be purchased for around fifteen dollars. When asked about the effect of the garden on the community Barr said, “***It is hard to measure the effect that it has had on the church and the community. The way that I measure it is by seeing all of the food that it produces disappear, nothing is wasted.***”

Community Dinners

Community dinners are meals that are planned, prepared, and served by the church for the community outside of the church. This can be done in various ways and each congregation can do what will work best for it. What is most essential for this type of event is that you do a lot of advertising to your community to let them know about the dinners. Find out where you can advertise for free. Local radio stations perhaps, local newspapers, supermarkets, local parks, and so on. These dinners should be done regularly (once a month, every other week, etc.) as some people in the community may come to depend on that meal.

Goody Bags

The Goody Bag (a one-gallon zip-close bag) can be filled with any combination of the following:

- Water Bottle
- Socks
- Tuna and Crackers
- Granola/Cereal Bar
- Fruit/Applesauce Cup
- Crackers w/ Peanut Butter/Cheese
- Gift Certificate to Fast Food
- Hand Wipes
- Pack of Kleenex
- Maxi Pads
- Toothbrush & Paste
- Nail Clippers
- Band-Aids
- ChapStick
- Comb or Small Brush
- Mints, Cough Drops, Gum
- Meal Voucher for Local Rescue Center
- Note of Encouragement or Bible Verse
- Bus Pass
- Travel Size Deodorant
- Hand Warmers
- Razor & Shaving Cream
- Soap & Wash Cloth

The idea with the goody bag is that the next time a homeless person is placed in your path you can have a goody bag prepared for him/her. Your congregation can collect these items and then fill the bags and distribute them among members of your congregation. They keep the bags available and when they come upon a homeless person they can give it to them.

The goody bag idea was adapted from Florida Christian Women Connection.