

Music into manna: symphony concert benefits church's hunger ministry

November 23, 2010

FORT WORTH (ABP) — A free concert at a North Texas church turned into a blessing for the city's hungry and homeless.

When members of the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra approached [Broadway Baptist Church](#) about staging a concert as a gift to the community, it sounded like a good idea. Then the musicians added that they wanted the event to benefit the church's Agape Meal ministry.



More than 850 persons attended the benefit concert by musicians of the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra.

An offering during the 90-minute concert in Broadway's sanctuary on Nov. 16 raised \$5,600 for the Agape Meal. That's enough to cover the cost of about seven weeks of meals served every Thursday evening in the church's fellowship hall, said Brent Beasley, senior pastor.

Beasley said linking good music and a good cause complemented the church's mission. He quoted French philosopher Albert Camus, who said: "In this world there is beauty, and there are the humiliated. And we must try, hard as it is, not to be unfaithful to one or the other."

"At Broadway, we see our mission as trying to hold together both the love and worship of God through the beauty of the arts and the love and care for

the poor and broken who are our neighbors," the pastor said. "This was a great chance to be faithful to beauty and the broken in the same event."

One of several community ministries supported by the church's partnership with [Buckner International](#), the Agape Meal has dished up a hot meal once a week for more than 15 years. Meals are served family style on white cloth-covered tables with real plates, glasses, silverware and linen napkins. Diners are welcomed as guests by volunteers who serve the food, refill drinks and host tables.

Each week the church serves about 175 guests.



An offering during the 90-minute concert in Broadway's sanctuary on Nov. 16 raised \$5,600 for the Agape Meal.

"The Agape Meal is about feeding the hungry, but it is more than that," Beasley said. "It is a meal with dignity, and it gives us the opportunity to sit down together around the table with our homeless friends and build relationships. Jesus made a point of breaking down social barriers by sharing a meal with all sorts of people, and we're just trying to follow his example."

Beasley said he hopes members of the symphony will someday play at one or more of the Agape Meals.

Bassist Brian Perry, who worked with Broadway organist Al Travis to organize the concert, won't be surprised if that happens. "The Agape Meal is such a neat concept," he said, adding that colleagues were "thrilled and deeply touched by the whole experience."

"It's heartwarming to know, especially during this season of the year, that the money raised will be enough to get this ministry past Christmas," he said.

—David Wilkinson is executive director of Associated Baptist Press. He formerly was on staff at Broadway Baptist Church in Fort Worth.