

# East Texas church provides groceries during crisis

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LONGVIEW (BP)—More than 100 at-risk families in Longview have had one less thing to worry about in the last few days—how to acquire groceries during the COVID-19 pandemic. New Beginnings Baptist Church plans to ramp up its Grocery Relief Program to help 200 families each week throughout the crisis.



Terri Sparks volunteers with the Grocery Relief Program at New Beginnings Baptist Church in Longview. (Photo courtesy of New Beginnings Baptist Church)

“There are kids and families who are being directly impacted by the coronavirus in ways that we cannot even imagine,” said George Willis, pastor of missions and pastoral care.

As he has helped get the program going, Willis has seen single parents, elderly people and widows trying to make adjustments to a new living situation without leaving their homes.

“When you donate groceries or come help volunteer to assemble and distribute groceries, the food goes to people who truly need the help,” he said.

New Beginnings is partnering with three local school districts to deliver food to 128 children enrolled in the schools’ Backpack Program while schools are closed.

The program serves children who are at risk of going hungry on weekends and during the holidays. School staff identify children who show signs of hunger and malnutrition and discreetly distribute a backpack of food for them to take home.

Word about the free groceries is spreading in the community. Courtney Bill, a school nurse, said she could not leave home because she was sick. The groceries were a welcome relief.

“I got sick, and my doctor told me to stay at home and monitor the symptoms,” Bill said. “I reached out to the church. When they dropped the groceries off, they prayed for us through our window. It was great to know you have a church family that’s there for you when you need them,” she said.

Todd Kaunitz, lead pastor of New Beginnings, said the church always has been a place of hope and help in times of crisis.

“We see in the Gospels that Jesus runs to those who are sick,” Kaunitz said. “He meets the needs of those who are hurting. As Christians we do not run from the sick, we run toward them. And in times of crisis, we do not hoard our possessions, but we share them.

“We want our community to know that we are here for them and we love them. Our desire is to serve them in this time of crisis.