

El Paso-area church shows love by sharing food

February 1, 2019

EL PASO—Every month, an El Paso-area church with about 60 members prepares food boxes for 50 families in need.

“We want our community to understand we care about them. We want them to know that Jesus loves them. Having a food pantry is one way of showing this love to others,” said Virgie Vasquez, director of the food pantry at Pueblo Nuevo Community Church in Clint, southeast of El Paso.



Virgie Vasquez

Vasquez launched the pantry in 2011 when she realized children and families in the neighborhood needed food.

“In our area, we have many single parents raising children,” Vasquez said. “Also, grandparents may be raising grandchildren. ... We see veterans who are homeless—no place to go, very little food.

“Many senior citizens live in our community, and they have a limited income. Like in other parts of our country, sometimes they must make a decision to pay the electricity and rent, buy medicine or purchase food. We realize their needs.”

On the third Wednesday of each month, church members distribute boxes filled with dried beans, rice, cereal, canned vegetables and other supplies to 50 families—typically about enough to feed a family for one week.

“There is no need to advertise or post an announcement about when the food is provided. The news travels by word-of-mouth,” Vasquez said.



Pastor John Roman helps with the food pantry at Pueblo Nuevo Community Church in Clint, southeast of El Paso.

Seven volunteers work with the food pantry ministry on a regular basis, with additional help from other volunteers and with the support of Pastor John Roman.

Whenever Pueblo Nuevo distributes food, participants are invited—but not required—to participate in a prayer time.

“Catherine came to our church in need of food,” Vasquez said.

However, Catherine found more than meals to serve her family for a week. She found everlasting life.

“She confessed her sins, accepted Christ and was baptized. Soon, her two sons came with her. They too, received Christ as Savior and were baptized,” Vasquez said.

“Since attending our church, she has brought several people and they have become Christians. Catherine clicks with those who have addictions to drugs and alcohol and the homeless.”

Supported by Texas Baptist Hunger Offering

Pueblo Nuevo operates the food pantry on \$220 per month. The church contributes \$50 each month, and the rest is provided by the [Texas Baptist Hunger Offering](#). It is one of 134 ministries in 30 countries and 37 Texas communities the offering helps support.

“All the funds come from Texas Baptist churches and individuals who care about people impacted by hunger and poverty,” said Ali Corona from the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission. One hundred percent of the offering goes directly to hunger relief and development ministries, she added.

As part of its commitment to fighting hunger, Pueblo Nuevo also launched a community garden. Organizers hope to find a partner agency or organization to help the church plant and maintain it.

Twice a week, the church opens its doors for community classes in food preparation, nutrition and healthy lifestyle choices made possible by the [Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service](#).

Often, participants in the classes have raised vegetables in the garden to supplement their food supply.

Schools in the area near Pueblo Nuevo have a high percentage of students who qualify to receive free or reduced meals. The church includes several teachers who know the families. In the blue-collar community, if workers get sick or are laid off, they lack money for basic living expenses.

Pueblo Nuevo provides training to help their neighbors earn high school equivalency diplomas that improve their employment opportunities and help their families become self-supporting. Community members who need assistance filling out forms and help with legal issues also receive aid at the church.

The ministries of Pueblo Nuevo are changing lives and opening doors of opportunity previously closed to people, Vasquez noted.

“People do not want to be homeless or food insecure,” she said. “Often this is due to bad choices, failing health and other conditions. Pueblo Nuevo Community Church is striving to feed the hungry—one person at a time. We ask people to pray for our program, that we will have the resources to minister to more families and individuals.”

This is part of an ongoing series about how Christians respond to hunger and poverty. Substantive coverage of significant issues facing Texas Baptists is made possible in part by a grant from the Prichard Family Foundation.

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