

San Angelo volunteers serve hungry bus passengers

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SAN ANGELO—[First Baptist Church in San Angelo](#) takes snack sacks to passengers on the afternoon bus that stops there each Sunday for one simple reason—hungry people.

And the church's volunteers hope their demonstration of Christ's love will give the riders a hunger for the Bread of Life.

✘ A bus passenger accepts a snack sack distributed by First Baptist Church in San Angelo. Robert Dillard, pastor's visitation assistant at First Baptist, directs the ministry. While his position primarily keeps him busy with the 76 people on the church's homebound roll, he feels privileged to work with the volunteers who make the bus ride through San Angelo a bit more sustaining—and potentially life-changing.

Layman Paul Mansfield started the bus ministry in 2007. He noticed the bus didn't stop long enough for people to make a trip to a restaurant, and the station lacked any place for them to eat. He proposed the church put together sacks with a light meal.

A couple of years later, Dillard and a team of volunteers joined the ministry. Once a month, they gather to put into each paper sack a gospel tract, a bottle of water, Vienna sausages, pudding, peanut butter and cheese crackers, and a spoon. A woman who is blind and homebound lovingly wraps each spoon in a napkin as she listens to broadcasts of the church's services each week.

Each bus typically carries 25 to 30 passengers, and a couple from the church meets the bus each week and distributes the sack lunches.

✘ The church's Kingdom Kids missions program helps assemble some snack sacks. "It's been really refreshing," Dillard said. "The people are very cordial and grateful to have a little snack. We've had ladies come through with four or five children, and they are very grateful for something to give them."

Many bus riders have little money left after buying their ticket, so any help is appreciated.

The church also has received cards and letters from the recipients expressing their appreciation for the congregation's kindness.

The children in the church's Kingdom Kids missions program also help fill the sacks from time to time.

The ministry's longevity demonstrates its perceived importance.

"Our church really seeks to be a service-minded church, and this ministry meets a real need for those people on the bus," Dillard said. "And when you give that sack to a person, it is so rewarding. We don't do it for the reward, but that smile says so much."