

South Dallas church cares for the whole person

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DALLAS—Dennis Winston, bivocational pastor of Beckley Community Church in Dallas, understands people need food—and much more.

“I want our church to be a caring church, not just a church that provides food,” Winston said.

Since he has a full-time job, Winston does not accept a salary from the church, allowing the congregation to use that money to buy food for people in need. When funds are short, the pastor supplements the food pantry from his own resources.

At first, the South Dallas Texas Baptist congregation provided about 75 families with turkeys for Thanksgiving and Christmas. Winston realized the depth of need in his community when he went into their home to deliver the turkeys.

“We learned that there were people in our area that didn’t know what they were going to do for the holidays,” he said. “There was no food in the refrigerator. No money to buy... anything.”

Winston recalled one mother who benefited from the church’s food-distribution ministry. She said: “When Thanksgiving and Christmas came around, I didn’t know what we were going to do. You came just in time. Our refrigerator was empty. But your church gave us food. We are thankful.”

The church’s ministry to families in need grew into a twice-a-month food distribution center that serves between 300 to 400 people, and the number continues to increase.

‘Bring them food ... show them the love of Jesus

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Beckley participates in the [Crossroads Community Services](#) distribution network and benefits from resources of the [North Texas Food Bank](#).

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Through prayer, planning, promotion and persistence, the congregation of about 75 people has transformed a simple food pantry into one that ministers to the whole person.

“Most important, people need to know Jesus,” he said. “By helping to meet their food needs, we can tell them about a loving Savior and how they can have eternal life. ... We bring them food, and then we show them the love of Christ.”

God prepared the pastor

Winston believes God had a plan for his life. Before he answered God’s call to ministry, he worked in management, which he sees now as a way God prepared him to serve others more effectively.

“My experience in management and leadership helped me get a clear picture of life,” Winston said. “A lot of people do not have knowledge of resources out there. For example, they need a place to live. ... (They want to know:) ‘How can I receive a GED? How can I apply for a job? How do I fill out a resumé?’ There are many components to this problem. We try to minister to the whole person.”

Winston orders food online, including meats, canned vegetables, breads, rice, beans and other staples. When funds allow, he purchases fresh vegetables and fruits.

“Technology is so important today,” Winston said. “With a full-time job, my time is limited. I use a computer to order the twice-a-month food, put orders in the computer, print out forms and audit the delivery. My previous work was God-given. This employment equipped me to be able to handle

this food pantry.”

‘We just want to help those who need us’

In addition to the food pantry, the church provides backpacks to students. Last fall, Beckley Community Church gave away between 75 and 100 backpacks.

“Some of our organizations only give to certain ZIP Codes,” Winston said. “We are not concerned with where you live. We just want to help those who need us.”

Through his community involvement and work with Dallas Baptist Association, Winston learns where there are people who need help, as well as resources available to them. He welcomes each opportunity to meet needs in Christ’s name and point people to God.

“When people come to pick up the food, I introduce myself. Then I say: ‘God has blessed us. Please worship with us. There are no problems that God can’t handle. This food is not from us ... but from God.’”

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.

Carolyn Tomlin writes for the Christian market and teaches the Boot Camp for Christian Writers.