



Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Church

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April 22, 2021

Hello OLQP Family,

Almost exactly a year ago, I reached out to you to describe the escalating demands on OLQP's food pantry that were occurring because of COVID-19 realities, and I asked for your help. True to OLQP form, your generous response was robust in every sense of the word, something for which I am enormously thankful. Though it has been a very long and difficult year, it has also been a year full of gratitude. I have been in awe of how this community — both the OLQP family and beyond — have repeatedly come together for the purpose of helping one another, over and over, all year long, in good times and in bad. So much incredible work has happened with our food pantry that I wanted to take the opportunity to share an overview of the past year, as well as give an update as we look ahead to this coming year.

The Surge

Early into the pandemic, while everything else in our parish had scaled back or was otherwise paused, our entire parish leadership strongly felt that it was vital to keep the Food Pantry open and continue to serve this community in need. We did not quite know how it would work, but we knew it was important to try. The longtime volunteers, led by parishioner **June Cieri**, knew adjustments would have to be made, and developed a plan for what would become known as the distribution side of food pantry operations — i.e., everything that happens once the food donations come into the building and go out for distribution. It was determined the best way to proceed would be to keep their distribution crew small and work longer days, keeping a tight group of 15 or so people that would essentially become part of each other's quarantine bubble.

I enlisted parishioner **Michaela Sims Stewart** to help us think through and operationalize a plan to ramp up surge capacity. The first six weeks are what I would describe as the [“sprint mode” portion of the surge effort](#) — as our community, and [those beyond](#), became [aware of the need](#), support came quickly in the form of funds and volunteers to help us carry out what was rapidly growing demand. Because food sourcing was a considerable challenge at the beginning, the only way to fill the pantry in those early weeks was to send numerous volunteers to grocery stores to buy as much as they could. For example, in mid-April 2020, 6,003 food items were purchased in 31 different grocery store trips by about 15 volunteers over the course of a few days. Over the course of time, as food sourcing became less of a challenge, we were able to switch into “marathon mode,” with fewer people needed for shopping each week. Thankfully, we were able to develop relationships with vendors and distributors to create bulk orders, so it became more common to have 1-4 shoppers in 6-8 stores over the course of a week.

A real highlight of the past year was our ability to offer clients fresh produce on a regular basis. Because so many of you stepped forward to help with donations of time and funding, we were able to create the operation necessary to offer fresh produce to a portion of our clients each week. We created strong relationships with two farmers markets — [Columbia Pike Farmer's Market](#) and [Fairlington Farmer's Market](#), that in turn put us on a pathway to receive produce from some of their farmers, notably [Penn Farm](#), [Pleitez Produce Farm](#), [Spring Valley Farm and Orchard](#), [Twin Springs Fruit Farm](#) and [Westmoreland](#)

“I was hungry and you gave me food, thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me...”

--Matthew 25:35

[Produce](#). A portion of the produce was paid for with a generous donation from our wonderful partner [Columbia Pike Revitalization Organization](#), and much of the produce was gleaned by our volunteers at the markets. In all cases, these farmers were incredibly kind in spirit and generous in their offerings. For example, a total of 3,000 pounds of produce was donated from the Fairlington Farmers Market over the course of six months, and at least that much was received from Columbia Pike Farmers Market over the same period. During the winter months a typical weekly pickup from our winter produce partner, Twin Springs Fruit Farm, would include 400 pounds of apples, 200 pounds of onions, or some of each along with 100 pounds of potatoes. What makes all this even more incredible is that most of these relationships were formed in the early part of the pandemic when food sourcing was a significant hurdle and creating relationships with vendors was difficult. What a blessing!

In addition to produce, we were also able to offer other fresh items to our clients. **Bread for Our Brothers**, a Knights of Columbus ministry, delivers an average of 350 loaves of bread each week. More recently, they have also started delivering some donated meat for us to provide to a portion of our clients each week. Volunteer **“Chef Annette” Oliveras** leads a volunteer team of butchers to cut it into client-sized portions each week.

Many of you would hardly recognize Fr. Ray Hall today. Before COVID-19, the food pantry was operating out of one room inside of the hall. Since the surge, the food pantry has taken over most of the hall. On a typical day, the main hall might be filled with 11,500 food items (approximately two weeks of food to distribute minus a few items that arrive close to distribution time) organized on various baker’s racks, tables, storage bins, crates, and yes, even church pews. The room just off the kitchen that has historically been used for a nursery and meeting space has become the produce and rice and beans room! See photos below.





Special Projects

A few special projects in the past year related to the food pantry are worthy of highlighting:

- With the help of parishioner **Marta Campos**, **José Andrés'** [World Central Kitchen](#) came to OLQP twice this past year serving over 7,000 delicious prepared meals for our clients (including tasty BBQ and lasagna!).
- Parishioner **Dr. Mary Sue Carlson** helped me lead an effort working with three organizations – Food for the Poor, Gifts for the Homeless, and the Matthew 25 Organization of Florida – for a large donation of toiletries. Incredibly, OLQP was the recipient of \$250,000 of toiletries, two tractor trailer loads that you may have seen parked in the parking lot last fall! Donated items included 160 bottles of Tide detergent, 310 bottles of Spic & Span, 3230 packages of hand soap, 12,960 razors, 38,000 tubes of shaving gel, 1620 packages of sanitary napkins, 5304 bottles of conditioner, 4464 bottles of beard soap, 672 cans of deodorant, 4008 bottles of dry shampoo, and 6-7 pallets of diapers and baby wipes. We were thrilled to be able to distribute these items to our clients.
- **Thanksgiving:** With the regular food distribution numbers far surpassing a typical year, we knew the Thanksgiving effort would require its own army of dedicated volunteers to handle everything from food sourcing and shopping to distribution. Led by **Pat Vinkenes**, **June Cieri** and approximately 50 volunteers, we provided 13,000 food items for a Thanksgiving meal to a record 768 families. OLQP teens led the “Operation Turkey Drive-By,” so that those donating turkeys and other items did not have to get out of their cars.
- **Feeding the Homeless Ministry:** Though not directly food pantry related, a critical food-related service was carried out each week that fed the most vulnerable among us. Led by parishioner **Jack McHale**, a team of volunteers brought food and toiletries to some of our homeless sisters and brothers in D.C. Many of you made sandwiches for this effort each week so I wanted to be sure to highlight how important that was this past year.

The Year in Numbers (April 1, 2020- March 31, 2021)

- OLQP's Food Pantry distribution has nearly **tripled in one year**, growing from approximately 225 bags distributed each week to over **625 bags each week**, a 177% increase in food distribution.
- In the one year since the pandemic surge began, approximately **28,750 bags were distributed to clients**, totaling 345,000 shelf-stable food items that were shared via the weekly food distributions this past year. This is as compared to 11,350 bags totaling 136,200 food items in the prior year.
- **180 hours**, more than the actual number of hours that are in an entire week, equal the **total number of estimated volunteer hours that it takes to operate the food pantry in a typical week**. Approximately 2/3 of that time is by distribution volunteers. Note these are present day estimates. In the early months of the COVID-19 food pantry surge, it was probably 30% higher than this.
- Pre-pandemic, we had 35 food pantry volunteers, now 200+ food pantry volunteers in the past year. The actual number is higher, as many volunteers bring their families with them to also volunteer. Approximately 70 children under 16 have been part of the volunteer effort this past year. All followed strict COVID-19 safety protocols.
- In addition to your individual generosity, OLQP was the recipient of a few grants and large food donations in the past year totaling over \$150,000, including:
 - **Capitol Area Food Bank (CAFB)** provided some food at a deep discount, and 4,800 boxes of food over 16 weeks, which was 4,800 fewer bags of groceries OLQP had to purchase and pack.
 - **Good Company Donuts** delivered about 200 delicious left-over donuts and pastries each week that we are excited to share with our clients.
 - **Catholic Charities' St. Lucy Project** periodically delivered large quantities of items such as cereal, pasta sauce and tuna.
 - **The Rales Foundation** awarded OLQP \$25,000 towards the food pantry.
 - **Knights of Columbus** awarded OLQP a \$6700 grant.
 - **Ng Company** awarded OLQP a \$3000 grant.
 - **Arlington Community Foundation** awarded us \$16,000 in grants.
 - **Albertson's Nourishing Neighbors Summer Meals Program**: This [\\$45,000 grant](#) was the result of a robust grant application process that took a team of volunteers, led by parishioner **Helene Stebbins**, to compile.
 - **Many local churches** have donated a variety of items and funding to our food pantry effort. Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington provided groceries for many months, as well as monetary donations. Grace Community Church bought lots of milk crates we needed for storage. St Peter's Episcopal Church of Arlington conducted several meat, cereal, and peanut butter drives. Many of the churches that belong to VOICE were among the churches that reached out to help us with the surge in numbers that were coming to the food pantry each week.
 - About a half dozen **local community gardens** regularly donated the produce from their gardens during the height of the summer season.
 - Local restaurant groups, **Clyde's Restaurant Group** and **Great American Restaurants**, donated several hundred portions of hot prepared meals that we distributed to clients.
 - Several local Catholic high school students from the 2020 Diocesan Summer Work Camp prepared and delivered over 400 hot meals.

Looking Forward and Thank You

I feel both relieved and humbled in telling you that the food pantry was able to meet the massive demand this past year, and it is entirely because of this incredible community's — OLQP and beyond — amazing generosity. Looking ahead, it is our working assumption that these higher surge numbers are going to be our reality for the foreseeable future. I am further humbled and truly moved in telling you that your generosity has been so robust that the funds we received for the food pantry have put us in a good position to continue to be able to meet this surge demand at current levels for at least these next several months. However, please know that [your support is always welcome and appreciated](#), and certainly directly responsible for our ability to continue to serve these families and their children in need.

Your kindness was so incredible this past year that we wanted to compile a list of all the volunteers and thank them by name — see attached. Of course, the risk of compiling such a list is that we are bound to miss some names. If you volunteered for the food pantry this past year and do not see your name, please accept my sincere apologies in advance. Reach out to [Michaela Sims@hotmail.com](mailto:Michaela_Sims@hotmail.com) so we can be sure to add your name to the list! If you have any questions about the overall social justice program, please feel free to reach out to **Sally Diaz Wells**, Social Justice & Outreach Minister. It is only through your amazing generosity that we can continue to assist our sisters and brothers in need during this most remarkable of years.

Easter Blessings,

Fr. Tim

THANK YOU OLQP FOOD PANTRY DONORS & VOLUNTEERS DURING THE COVID-19 SURGE

Throughout the course of the pandemic, OLQP's food pantry distribution has grown exponentially (nearly tripled!) – from approximately 225 bags distributed each week to over 625 bags each week, a 177% increase in food distribution. Meeting that demand each week was only made possible by your financial generosity and many, many dedicated volunteers. Led by a small but mighty OLQP staff, notably **Sally Diaz Wells**, Social Justice & Outreach Minister and **Christina Kozyn**, Business Manager, and other staff members including Rebecca Grant Jenkins, Mel Cabrera, Alex Hernandez, Michael Hill, Maria Theresa Laguna and Fr. Martin Vu, these volunteers listed below are some of the many volunteers that showed us all what it means to put discipleship into action this past year.



THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

***Bolded** names spent more than 150 hours volunteering, in some cases significantly more than that.*

OLQP FOOD PANTRY OPERATIONS

Distribution Operations

Distribution Leads: **June Cieri, Pat Vinkenes**

Everything involved once food arrives at OLQP through distribution to clients, including receiving items, storage organization, sorting, assembly of bags, distribution to client.

Surge Capacity Operations

Surge Capacity Lead: **Michaela Sims Stewart**

Everything involved in getting the food to OLQP including food sourcing research; working with stores/vendors on orders; bulk shoppers; produce pick up and gleaning; repackaging rice, beans, poultry and produce into smaller serving sizes; identifying and preparing materials for funding opportunities; staffing drop off hours; communications; and volunteer coordination.

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| Marilena Amoni
Veronica Bartlett
Rhonda (RJ) Bent
Nicole Bonjean
Christina Brito & Denis Roy
Allison & Ken Broadbent & Family
Megan Brooks
Kathleen Brown
Sue Bruns
Roger Bullock
Peg Butner
Charles Byers
Grace Callow
Mary & Jim Callow
Marta Campos
Lydia Cardona
Rebecca Carpenter
Julie Carson
Dianne Casey
Kevin Casey
Kris Casey
Evan Chate
June Cieri & Tom Brown
Janet Coleman
Paula Corbett
Ursula Cordes
Lydia Cordes
Andrea Cowley & Nora
Brenda Craine
Virgilio Crespo
Adele Crump
Susan Cunningham
Pat Daily | Bob Dannem
Yann Derriennic
Luc Dewulf
Kathleen Donovan
Shannon Doyle
Elaine Duffy
Debbie Dundon
Ellen Dwyer
Bob Ebbs & Family
Ma. Elena
Aleta Embry
Katherine Emery
Ann Felker
Christina Ferrari
Ann Forquer
Ginny Franco
Ellen Frawley & Family
Ted Friedman
Marcia Fulham
Tracy Gaither
Megan Garnett
Stan & Eileen Garnett
Christina Gelson
Stephanie Griffin
Tracey Harp
Karen Hill
Katrina Hill
Jennifer Himes
Jenni Hogan
Ashley Hopko
Julene Jarnot
Ann Johnson
Jean Johnson
Ryan Jones | Olivia Kane
Mary Kane
Candice Kaup & Family
Natalie Kean
Lynn Kearney
Brett King
Rebecca King
Abby Knight
Beth Koprowski
Jon & Shelly Kreykes
Megan Krug
Paul Kugler
Maria Theresa Laguna & Family
Susan Leverone
Sean Leyh
John & Jennifer Lis & Family
Kerry Litonjua
Melissa Longano
Joanna Lovo
Nathalie Lummert
Cynthia Lynch & Family
Maria M. Dalla-Via
Leslie Malone
Marissa Maurer
Nancy McBride
Kevin McDonald
Maureen McGinnis
Jack McHale
Jen McHenry
Christy McIntyre & Family
Barb McKeough
Maureen McLaughlin
Dana M | Laurent Meister
Elijah Middlebrook
Lyzbeth Monard
Harold Morales
Fred Mueller
Anthony Murray
Teresa Noonan
Jane Oates
Mercedes Oetgen
Annette Oliveras
OLQP Teens
OLQP Confirmation Students
Veronica Ong
Essee Oruma
Angela Pan
Tori Patterson
Jen Piatt & Family
Michael Picorrossi
Heather & Mike Planey
Patricia & Erik Potope-Albert
Grayson Quay & wife Marissa
Kathleen Reilly
Greg Roberts
Erika Roeder
Lawrence Romans
John Ruby
Bill Ryan
Maggie Ryner
Rosie Saberton
Jay Sapinosa
Christopher & Carmen
Scheffman & Family
Annemarie Schoen
Melissa Schwaber Hawkins | Susan Scott
Margaret Simkovsky
Grace Starbird
Helen Stebbins-Foley Family
Amy Stewart
Caroline Stewart & Family
Michaela Sims & Jon Stewart & Family
Kelly Stratman & Family
Mary Strimel & Family
Rich Strimel
Jenny Strimel & Family
Denise Sughrue & Family
Mary Ann Suhocki
Carly & Selene Swanson
Suzy Takata Waller & Family
Nina Tallon
Richard Tepel
Daniel Chris Tilson
DeeDee Tostanoski
Miranda Turner
Caroline Tuss
Chris Umanzor
Pat Vinkenes
Irene Walsh
Tamara Fucile & Todd Watterson & Family
Emma Weaver
Kerry Weaver
Chabeli Wells
Matt Whitaker & Family
Joy Womack
Mary Pat Woodman
Denise Woo |
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