

2021

FFC

Christmas
Catalog



First Federated
Church of Peoria

3601 N Sheridan Road
Peoria IL 61604

“...For I was hungry
And you gave me food,
I was thirsty
And you gave me drink,
I was a stranger
And you welcomed me,
I was naked
And you clothed me,
I was sick and you visited me,
I was in prison,
And you came to me.”

Matthew 25: 37-39

Your 2021 Missions Committee

Greg Johnston ♦ Karen Henderson
Committee Co-Moderators

David Bailey	Jim Rosenbaum
Marylee Bales	Linda Sahn
Karen Calder	Rick Snarr
Rob Hackett	Sally Stone
Theresa Pfeiffer	Janet Vaughn
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A Message from the
FFC Mission Committee

Findings of Comfort and Joy

In your hands you hold a very special catalog that can help you experience the true meaning of Christmas. By assisting others in the Peoria community who are in need of a helping hand, you can rekindle your light and theirs.

The Mission Committee of First Federated Church has selected ten organizations to receive contributions through our *Christmas Special Offering*.

All have been carefully researched and selected for the impact they are having in the community.

This is how the *Christmas Special Offering* works:

Read through the catalog descriptions, decide which organization(s) you would like to support, place your contribution in the envelope provided, and on the insert of the envelope check the recipient(s) you have chosen. You may choose one, two, three, four, five, six or all ten. If you don't specify recipients, your donation will be divided among all ten.

Please make your single check payable to
First Federated Church.

Your contribution will be distributed according to your wishes.

If you prefer to pay online, please go to the First Federated Church website ffcpeoria.com, click on "Give." Scroll to and select "Give Online" in the orange box and you will be directed to our PayPal option.

Or, you may scan this barcode to take you to the website's giving page:

Send an email to cwalter@ffcpeoria.com with distribution preferences.



An Added Note About This Catalog

Top Community Concerns: Mental Health and Food Insecurity

Compiling this year's *Christmas Special Offering Catalog* with the goal of making it most relevant to 2021 has been a challenge. The needs in this community vastly exceed the resources. As COVID-19 lingers, demands for services are increasing while agencies providing care are hampered in their ability to connect with donors.

To determine where mission dollars could make the most impact, our Mission Committee asked community leaders to name their most pressing concerns. ***Mental health, especially among children, and food insecurity topped everyone's list.*** Therefore, for this year's *Christmas Catalog*, we have selected agencies addressing these issues. The agency write-ups concentrate on programs in these areas, although most agencies offer additional services as well.

In focusing on mental health and food insecurity, we added new agencies to our catalog and had to hold off on some of our past favorites. If a favorite of yours is not featured here and you wish to donate to them, please write their name on your contribution form. We will make sure they receive your donation.

The Christmas Special Offering Catalog is one of many ways for our members to "live their faith" by financially supporting agencies with mission-driven commitments to serve the less fortunate in our community. Many of you also give of your time. Your Mission Committee is continuously humbled by the generosity of this congregation.

If you feel the spirit of Christmas giving, we hope this catalog is helpful to you.

"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Matthew 6:21

Center for Prevention of Abuse

Focus: Mental Health

“Helping all people live free from violence and abuse.”

Violence and abuse impact all ages.

*The Children's Therapy Program at the Center for Prevention of Abuse (CFPA) addresses the mental health symptoms of children, ages 2-17, who have been exposed to domestic violence and/or sexual assault to help them heal. Specialized therapy helps alleviate symptoms that interfere with daily functioning, including sleep difficulties, extreme fear, aggression, anxiety, physical ailments, and academic performance. Master's level therapists facilitate healing by helping children explore confused and angry feelings through nurturing, non-threatening therapeutic activities. **Children also learn coping strategies and non-violent life skills** as they begin to heal. Our therapists are specially trained and experienced in working with children using multiple therapy techniques, including Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), Art Therapy, Play Therapy, and Sand Tray Therapy. These activities are especially helpful for young children who have difficulty talking about traumatic events or confusing feelings, and for those too young to have the language skills to verbalize their experiences.*

Children who feel safe and protected, learn new coping mechanisms, and have access to regular support from qualified therapists are more likely to have healthy relationships, experience fewer physical symptoms, and perform better in school. *Research indicates victims of trauma who have access to immediate intervention show fewer long-term effects.*

The benefits to the community include the prevention and reduction of future violence among teens and adults, students and employees that are more successful, and a more peaceful community.

Thank you for helping us build a safe and peaceful community.

Dream Center Peoria

Focus: Food Insecurity

The mission of Dream Center Peoria continues with renewed commitment and intensity as we strive to **“impact families living in poverty . . . starting with kids and youth.”** Because the poverty level in the Peoria area is around 19.6%, our services are more in need than ever before. Our core values remain the same to **give Dignity, show Compassion, and to ignite Purpose** in the lives of everyone with whom we interact each day as God provides opportunities to be His hands and feet.

DCP Housing includes our homeless Shelter, which houses 60-100 guests per night, and our Village apartments. The average age of our homeless population is nine years old, and we offer a safe place for women, children, and fathers with children. ***We serve approximately 70,000 meals each year.*** About \$20 per day provides meals for one family unit and \$250 provides one meal for all Shelter guests.

DCP Students is an after-school program for students between the ages of five and 18. Younger students are helped with homework; older ones are allowed to choose Job Skills electives. Students receive a snack when they arrive and a meal before they are transported home. ***We are adding culinary arts to our Job Skills program*** when our commercial kitchen is completed in December 2021.

DCP Cares encompasses our community outreach events such as Backpack Peoria, Promise of Hope, Serve the City, Metro Kids, the Hope Store and more.

DCP Mobile units take our services out caravan style to various neighborhoods. We have a shower/bathroom truck, a laundry truck, a hair salon, and ***a food truck is on its way*** (delayed due to COVID-19).

FamilyCore

Family School Liaisons

Focus: Mental Health

Often, the needs of students are not easily seen. How do you tell if children come to school hungry? How can you tell if they're having family troubles at home?

This is where the FamilyCore Family School Liaisons (FSL) come in. FamilyCore partners with 19 schools across Peoria and Tazewell counties and its liaisons serve over 3,000 students annually.

Our FSLs are trained to recognize behavioral, social, and emotional stressors. They provide crisis intervention and individual or group life-and-social-skills trainings, home visits, classroom observations, and basic needs like school uniforms, food, and school supplies. They help students regulate their feelings and offer a trusted adult to confide in. Their support helps teachers have more productive class time with fewer students acting out or unable to focus. ***The main goal is to ensure the social and emotional needs are met so children are ready to learn.***

Parent Testimony: "I've seen a big change in my child and she has a great bond with her liaison. I feel grateful that she knows she has someone she can trust and is comfortable with."

Teacher Testimony: "I can't imagine working without our FSL support. ***They are a very important part of the lives of our at-risk students*** and in preventing others from falling into the risks that greatly affect academic success. The FSL does visits, provides basic needs, and leads small groups to teach kids how to cope, and teaches children how to manage their emotions and behaviors. FamilyCore's FSL services are a valuable asset to our school."

Hult Center for Healthy Living

Focus: Mental Health

Hult Center for Healthy Living opened its doors in 1990 offering health education to both youth and adolescents. We are proud to have served the community for over 30 years. We are honored to be invited back to your *Christmas Catalog* for recognition and funding opportunity.

This year is very similar to 2020—the year of COVID—and possibly worse on the mental health front as our local and worldwide news continues to report the increase in the number of people suffering from a mental illness.

We have seen an increase in both adolescent and adult suicides. We have seen an increase in violence, especially as related to race relations and to differing perceptions of and responses to COVID precautions.

How has the Hult Center responded to this? We pivoted and implemented our virtual platform to continue offering health education to schools and our community in accordance with prevention practices of social distancing and limiting exposure. *We added specific COVID information to our health education curriculum*, where appropriate, with a special emphasis on the impacts of current events on our individual and community mental health. We extended our audience to health professionals and targeted specific groups such as medical residents, nurses, physicians, teachers, caregivers, etc.

Your donation will support the continuation of these life-saving programs in this critical time and help provide our community with much needed mental health education and resources, positive coping strategies, and life-saving suicide prevention. Thank you for your consideration. Be well.

Midwest Food Bank

Focus: Food Insecurity

As a faith-based organization, it is the mission of Midwest Food Bank to share the love of Christ by alleviating hunger and malnutrition locally and throughout the world and providing disaster relief, all without discrimination. MFB provides industry-leading food relief to those in need while feeding them spiritually. This is done through ten U.S. and two international locations.

In 2021, Midwest Food Bank Peoria is on track to distribute over \$30 million worth of food to 370+ nonprofit partner agencies. This is possible by the generosity of our donors, the valuable work of our volunteers, and the blessings of God.

Midwest Food Bank's four core programs are:

- Food for Nonprofit Partners (food pantries, soup kitchens, residential programs, and child feeding programs).
- Disaster Relief in concert with The Salvation Army and other partners.
- Tender Mercies®, Midwest Food Bank's nutritious bagged meal of rice, beans, and soy protein.
- Hope Packs, Midwest Food Bank's student feeding program, providing food-insecure children with supplemental weekend food.

MFB Peoria has formed relationships with many local farmers to purchase fresh fruit, produce, and meat. These are distributed to our nonprofit partners throughout the growing season. During the 2022 season, a local farm (Hungry World Farm) will be growing fruits and vegetables specifically for MFB Peoria.

These relationships dovetail perfectly with MFB's Healthy Food Policy, which is focused on increasing the procurement and distribution of more healthy food choices (fruits, vegetables, dairy, and protein). ***Our goal is to have more than 35% of our food distributed be healthy and nutritious.***

Neighborhood House

Focus: Food Insecurity

As food insecurity rose last year with the pandemic, Neighborhood House remained committed to supporting our community through all life stages. Our team rose to the challenge by ***growing our largest program, Meals on Wheels, by over 50%, adding over 500 new clients.*** The needs for these clients is still present and we remain mission-focused and passionate about ensuring no one in our community is going hungry. ***We currently serve over 1,000 local homebound senior citizens annually.***

When the school day stops that shouldn't mean meals stop, too. During school closures last year, we quickly shifted our youth programs to a meal delivery service. Now that schools are back in session we are happy to continue to provide for our area youth by returning to typical Summer and After School Programs. ***We are delighted to welcome youth back to our building*** and once again provide children a safe place with nutritious meals and educational support.

Another Neighborhood House program that saw incredible growth during the pandemic was our food pantry. ***What was once one of our smallest programs quickly grew to be one of our largest.*** We are proud to host our pantry twice monthly and Sunday Meals each week, to support the food insecurity needs of the community.

Last year we all faced challenges we had never seen before. ***As the pandemic continues, so do the growing needs of the community.*** With your support Neighborhood House will continue to strive to meet those needs.

Meals on Wheels

Senior Citizen's Meals for a Month	\$110
Senior Citizen's Meals for 6 Months	\$650

Critters Meals on Wheels

Senior Citizen's Pet for a Month	\$42
Senior Citizen's Pet for 6 Months	\$250

Food Pantry

One Food Pantry Box	\$100
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Paws Giving Independence

Focus: Mental Health

In addition to training service dogs to work with individuals, Paws Giving Independence trains facility dogs to work at schools, clinics, senior centers and other such locations.

Facility dogs at local schools are proving to be especially important as more and more children are affected by anxiety, depression, trauma and behavioral disorders. Three dogs have been placed in Dunlap schools, one in Brimfield, and three in Peoria at Jamieson, C. T. Vivian (formerly Thomas Jefferson), and Richwoods. One works in the pro bono clinic at Bradley University.

As reported by one school worker: Mason, our facility dog, helps establish therapeutic relationships in less time. He allows students who are upset to cry while providing comfort. In group therapy ***he helps us teach social skills like empathy, active listening, and how to be a good friend.*** Mason has changed our school culture.

PGI uses inmates at Logan Correctional Center to start the training of young dogs. ***The therapeutic value of having dogs in prison has been shown to help with the mental health and morale of both staff and inmates.*** Dogs can be brought in when tensions arise and are used in group counseling.

The value of dogs trained to work with individuals is well established. For instance, they can recognize the onset of seizures and blood sugar issues as well as provide independence, mobility, and companionship.

PGI is an all-volunteer organization that places dogs at no cost to recipients. Donations are used for costs related to training such as collars, harnesses, and veterinarian bills.

Peoria Grown

Focus: Food Insecurity

Peoria Grown addresses food insecurity issues in Peoria through improved coordination of resources; access to affordable, healthy food with an emphasis on fresh produce; and education on nutrition and making healthy food choices. We believe everyone should have access to affordable, healthy food and that education is the key to helping individuals be self-sufficient and improve community wellness.

Peoria Grown's current work is focused around three core programs:

Market 309 offers fresh produce at a convenient location and at a cost cheaper than grocery stores. Housed within the Logan Recreation Center, the market provides access to fresh, healthy food. This initiative supports our mission of providing accessible, affordable fresh fruits and vegetables.

Fruit stands have been placed at local community centers and non-profit agencies throughout Peoria. These stands provide easy access to fresh fruits for program participants at these centers to be able to grab healthy snacks throughout the day at no charge.

Cooking and wellness classes led by local dietitians and medical professionals provide our participants with the highest level of knowledge. With our cooking classes, all participants get to take home a bag of the ingredients for the recipes used in the class.

Peoria Grown makes a difference by providing fresh foods to underserved populations, particularly for children who are forming lifelong eating habits. Our long-term goal is to see a decrease in serious health issues in our community in lower income populations.

\$ 90 covers the materials to build a fruit stand

\$100 replenishes the stock at one of our fruit stands

\$150 allows dietitians to buy the necessary supplies and ingredients for cooking classes

South Side Mission

Focus: Food Insecurity

Peoria's 61605 ZIP code is listed among the U.S. Census data's 100 poorest ZIP codes in the country. *South Side Mission is located in the heart of 61605 where hope and food are in short supply.* In a Christian setting, South Side Mission assists with both.

The Mission building includes a large chapel and two commercial kitchens with attached multi-purpose rooms. *It employs a fulltime chef who oversees its soup kitchen* that is open Monday through Friday to serve approximately 150 free lunches per week. The chef also operates a Culinary Class four times a year. Upon completion of the class, a graduate is highly marketable and also in position to share healthy eating strategies with family and friends. The Mission hosts a food pantry and collaborates with a local program that provides seasonal plots for community gardening.

South Side Mission is well-known for the Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners it prepares and delivers to as many as 3,700 in one recent pre-COVID year. But the real impact of the Mission is on the youth of the neighborhood in the form of after-school programming and mentoring. Devotions and food are a part of that programming, as most youth arrive in need of both.

South Side Mission encompasses a wide variety of initiatives and is rebounding from COVID restrictions that have challenged its delivery of services. It does not solicit any State or Federal funding, relying instead on its thrift shop revenue and local churches, businesses, and individuals who are committed to spreading the word of God in a compassionate manner. It has been in operation since 1925.

UnityPoint Health – UnityPlace

Focus: Mental Health

UnityPoint Health – UnityPlace offers the most comprehensive mental health and substance use disorder services in Central Illinois. In 2019, three longstanding industry leaders - UnityPoint Health Behavioral Health, Human Service Center, and Tazwood Center for Wellness - joined together to form UnityPlace.

This not-for-profit organization provides a full range of inpatient and outpatient mental health services for children, adolescents, adults, and seniors. The care at UnityPlace also extends to addiction recovery services including inpatient, residential, outpatient, and medication-assisted recovery for adults and outpatient care for adolescents.

Among these important services, ***the demand for inpatient and outpatient mental health care for children and adolescents is growing locally*** and throughout the country. Specialized inpatient services for adolescents began at UnityPoint Health - Methodist in 1988. This unit expanded in 1996 to serve children ages 4 -11. Services assist children, adolescents, and their families with diverse concerns including anxiety, depression, trauma, and other mood and behavioral disorders.

Nearly 700 children and adolescents are served in inpatient care annually, making a significant impact in the lives of youth and families each day. Additionally, ***more than 30,000 outpatient psychiatry and counseling visits are provided to children and adolescents***. School-based counseling is also offered by UnityPlace in several local schools, serving an average of 700 students each year.

UnityPlace is helping children and adolescents with behavioral health concerns build a brighter future. Contributions will support inpatient programs to purchase updated video equipment, interactive games, and supplies for art and music therapy. Contributions will also assist the in-school counseling programs to purchase play therapy supplies, therapeutic games, and workbooks. These resources greatly support the therapeutic and recreational programs offered at UnityPlace, allowing kids to be kids during their inpatient stay or outpatient visits.

Connections

First Federated Church has extensive connections with social services throughout the community. Following are some examples of church members' involvement.

Since retirement from his medical practice, *Dr. Fred Hoy* has become a regular volunteer at the **Midwest Food Bank** warehouse.

Laura Kowalske is Director of Prevention Education for the **Center for Prevention of Abuse** and was named Educator of the Year by the Women's Fund of the Community Foundation for exemplary work at the agency.

In coordination with **Peoria Grown**, *John and Karen Calder* have expanded their garden to grow and donate the varieties of fresh produce needed most at Peoria Grown's pop-up fruit and vegetable stands and market at Logan Recreation Center.

Tom Simpson and *John Wahlfeld* served for decades on the Board of Directors at **Neighborhood House**.

As a Board Member of Human Service Center, *Sid Banwart* was instrumental in the formation of **UnityPlace** and served on the newly established **UnityPlace** Board of Directors upon its formation.

For many years *Ralph Dalton* and his late wife *Joyce* delivered holiday meals for **South Side Mission** and supported its culinary school. He is a regular donor of goods to the Mission thrift shops and to the **Dream Center Peoria** Dress for Success Program.

Robin Simpson currently serves on the Board of Directors of **FamilyCore**.

Under the leadership of Principal *Mandy Ellis*, Dunlap Grade School is home to a facility dog from **Paws Giving Independence** and offers field trips to all students to attend educational classes at **Hult Center for Healthy Living**.



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