



"YOU ARE LOVED," PAINTED BY BILL MILES 2020

COURAGE • INNOVATION • HEART • SERVICE

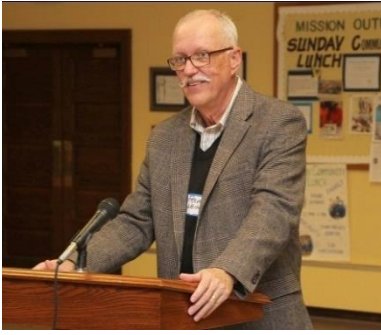
2020 ANNUAL REPORT

Celebrating 35 years of

Reaching out to those in need with God's love and provision

116 W PENNSYLVANIA AVE, TOWSON, MD 21204 | 410-296-4855 | ACTONLINE.INFO

ASSISTANCE CENTER OF TOWSON CHURCHES



Fred Weimert, Executive Board
President

*"Is not this the kind of fasting
I have chosen:
to loose the chains of injustice
and untie the cords of the
yoke,
to set the oppressed free
and break every yoke?
Is it not to share your food with
the hungry
and to provide the poor
wanderer with shelter—
when you see the naked, to
clothe them,
and not to turn away from
your own flesh and blood?
Then your light will break forth
like the dawn,
and your healing will quickly
appear;
then your righteousness will go
before you,
and the glory of the Lord will
be your rear guard.
Then you will call, and
the Lord will answer;
you will cry for help, and he
will say: Here am I."
-Isaiah 58:6-9*

Dear Friends,

Looking back 35 years to the birth of ACTC, formed out of the ministry of the Lutherville churches, I am amazed by all the changes over the years. Yet, this evolution pales in light of the change necessitated by the coronavirus in 2020. Last April, we had to cancel our annual spring meeting, as we did not know how to do it safely. Yet, that too was nothing in comparison to the changes ACTC made in order to remain safe and operational. *The only constant in the past 35 years, and especially this past year, has been the vision and support of all those individuals and institutions that make ACTC so great.*

With the coming of COVID and all of its associated challenges, our executive director and staff were called to re-envision how we could deliver much-needed assistance to our neighbors in need during this difficult time. Our staff and volunteers worked tirelessly to keep our shelves stocked with food and dramatically increased support given to families. We focused on providing food, frequently and abundantly. Later in the year, the staff even found a way to meet online with individuals experiencing financial need. All of this was done in conjunction with the members of our Executive Board who have met, often weekly, to discuss the needed changes to our program and to find and procure additional spaces for storage of food. The most impressive and changeless part of this past year has been the overwhelming support (food and financial) that has been given by our member congregations. In spite of not being able to meet together for most of this past year, you have provided even more support to the Center than ever before. I thank all of you for your faithfulness.

I have never been a fan of media religion, but over this past year we have been forced to communicate via technology. Zoom has become a necessary if not welcome tool for all of us, but it falls far short of the incarnational nature of the ministry to which we have been called. My prayer is that we will soon be able to meet together face to face in congregations and in our Center to share God's love with all of our neighbors.

Sincerely,
Fred Weimert

ASSISTANCE CENTER OF TOWSON CHURCHES

*"The Lord is my shepherd,
I shall not want.
He makes me lie down
in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths
for his name's sake."
Psalm 23*



Pre-COVID inside ACTC



Monday, March 16, 2020



As of August 2020

REFLECTIONS ON A YEAR OF PANDEMIC RESPONSE

Do you remember the early days of March 2020 when the CDC declared the pandemic? It was impossible to know all the ways our community would be impacted or how long our lives would be disrupted. At ACTC, the first thing we did was to consider how to remain safe and operational. This meant ordering food, planning how to prepack bags offsite, and determining if there were enough volunteers who could serve if we instituted safety protocols.

At 9 a.m. March 13, the staff met by phone with the ACTC Executive Board, which voted unanimously to remain open. We would focus on food and agreed to provide groceries to families every two weeks, instead of every three months, regardless of whether they lived in our service area. We would operate with up to five volunteers in the Center, while hosting our neighbors outside. Social distancing required that we move our food packing offsite and suspend financial assistance.

The following day, we reconfigured the Center to provide service at the door. We moved food to the guild room at Trinity Episcopal to prepack bags according to the family-of-two model, which we could double or triple for larger families. We recruited a packing team and packed 600 bags. We moved the prepacked family groceries back into the Center, ready for distribution on Monday. We had some enthusiastic volunteers who helped us never miss a day!

In the Center, we prepacked bag lunches for the homeless, needing only the addition of a sandwich, salad, or other fresh food. There were still other volunteers making sandwiches and baked goods at home and delivering them each week.

We were designated as an essential service by the State and remained open while most other relief organizations closed. We began weekly Zoom meetings with the Maryland Food Bank, Maryland Emergency Services, and other groups to coordinate and stay informed. Masks, gloves, and social-distancing kept us safe and operational. We are still going strong!

- Linda Lotz, Executive Director

ASSISTANCE CENTER OF TOWSON CHURCHES

WHEN THERE IS NOWHERE
ELSE TO TURN, NEIGHBORS IN
NEED COME TO ACTC



62,815 persons served from
Baltimore City & County



157 families helped to stay in their homes



36,013 persons served food
bags (\$1,060,000 value)



61 families helped to keep utilities on



7,244 lunches for homeless



648 people helped with gas, bus tokens and passes

More Stats

- Average of 5-6 tons of food a week distributed
- \$77,000 in financial assistance; service suspended 8 months
- 12,086 hours of volunteer service
- Increased food reserve from 4 weeks to 5-6 months
- 57 persons assisted on release from Baltimore County Detention Center
- Help with prescriptions, emergency shelter and referrals



3,066 Thanksgiving baskets

ASSISTANCE CENTER OF TOWSON CHURCHES



Courage

When the rest of the world closed down, ACTC remained open. Designing contactless ways to provide and using fewer volunteers in each space, we found a way. We responsively and thoughtfully changed everything about our operation, so that we could remain safe and open.

It was scary, but we knew people had to have food. We thought we might be overwhelmed, but we always had more than enough due to careful planning, your generosity, and God's blessing. ACTC was the only place in Towson open for homeless services, giving lunch, mail, care bags, toiletries, referrals, a kind word, and hope.

Innovation

At first, we used simple solutions to keep far enough away from each other - a table across the door, lines of tape outside to indicate where to wait, and advance preparation so no one needed to wait long to receive food. As time went on and it was obvious we were in for a long haul, we decided to make improvements and be ready for the pandemic to last into another year, and perhaps longer.

Neighborhood food drives and collection sites at Ascension Lutheran, Trinity Episcopal, and Valley Baptist church parking lots sprang up to help ensure food supply. We began packing food offsite for distribution at the Center and for delivery.

We renovated the Trinity undercroft to provide more storage, and to allow volunteers to work safely there each day.

A volunteer came up with a solution for an inner door to protect us from weather, with windows and an opening to slide out food, as well as an intercom system and a microphone to speak to the clients and the other volunteers.

We found a new way to provide contactless financial assistance using an online application, after renovating Calvary Baptist's office to provide access to phones and the ACTC computer system.

ASSISTANCE CENTER OF TOWSON CHURCHES

*"Even though I walk through
the darkest valley, I fear no evil;
for you are with me,
your rod and your staff—
they comfort me."
Psalm 23*



Food in Memorial Hall, Trinity Episcopal



Setting up the Thanksgiving drive-thru



The ACTC Christmas Elves take gifts to cars



Financial assistance volunteers at work

Heart

At the heart of ACTC are all the volunteers. They are the lifeblood of the organization and are truly the heroes of the year.

During 2020, there were volunteers who came to work as Center attendants, who greeted neighbors as they came to the intake window, runners who brought food and other needed items to the window and those who worked in the back to prep and stock food. A Wednesday morning team received deliveries from the Maryland Food Bank. There were those who received, weighed, sorted and moved donations into place; those who transported non-perishables; those who binned them; others who put them into the lines for the packing. Another team packed bags and transported them back to the Center.

There were teams of volunteers who provided Thanksgiving to families in the county and city, collecting and buying 3,066 bags, which potentially provided 15,000 meals, distributing them outside with walkup and drive through options. Another team provided Christmas gifts to 275 children in both the county and city, after creating a process to use an online application, with phone and email follow up, featuring contactless receipt and distribution. We collaborated with Prologue Inc. who distributed boots to our homeless clients.

There were those who called homebound clients to arrange for food delivery and those who delivered the food. Another team processed online applications by phone and email to provide financial assistance for those facing eviction or utility shut-off.

Underpinning all of this volunteer activity were our partner churches, organizations, civic groups, businesses, and individuals, who generously donated, encouraged and prayed for ACTC and our neighbors in need.

Service

"Christ has no body now, but yours. No hands, no feet on earth, but yours. Yours are the eyes through which Christ looks compassion into the world. Yours are the feet with which Christ walks to do good. Yours are the hands with which Christ blesses the world."

Saint Teresa of Avila

More than an organization, ACTC is a community that answers a call to care with a heartfelt commitment to serving the most vulnerable, even through the fog of a pandemic. There is a can-do spirit that seeks a way and finds it with the collective wisdom, effort, and strength of volunteers, staff and Executive Board. The unprecedented challenges of this year produced not only solutions but also innovations that enhanced our operations, expanded our services, and helped us persevere.

In 2020, our Executive Board got involved as never before, meeting weekly, responding to the many issues and obstacles that arose, and being present and involved in carrying out all the changes needed to stay open, safe, and operational.

In addition to hosting clients outdoors and reconfiguring in-house volunteer roles, we added many new off-site teams to pack and transport bags of food, receive and sort donations from community food drives, and transport food from new collection points at Ascension Lutheran and Valley Baptist to the Trinity Episcopal undercroft to be processed.

While other organizations shutdown or cut back, ACTC expanded by every measure. We consolidated food donations that overwhelmed three successive new storage spaces into leased warehouse space at year's end. Financial contributions, the numbers of people served, and the volume of food distributed likewise all rose dramatically. The number of active volunteers doubled to more than 150 this year!

Each volunteer, in every role, performed heroic service, putting our neighbors' needs first. They demonstrated the best of humanity, serving all those who came for help with the grace and compassion that is the hallmark of ACTC.

FINANCIAL Report

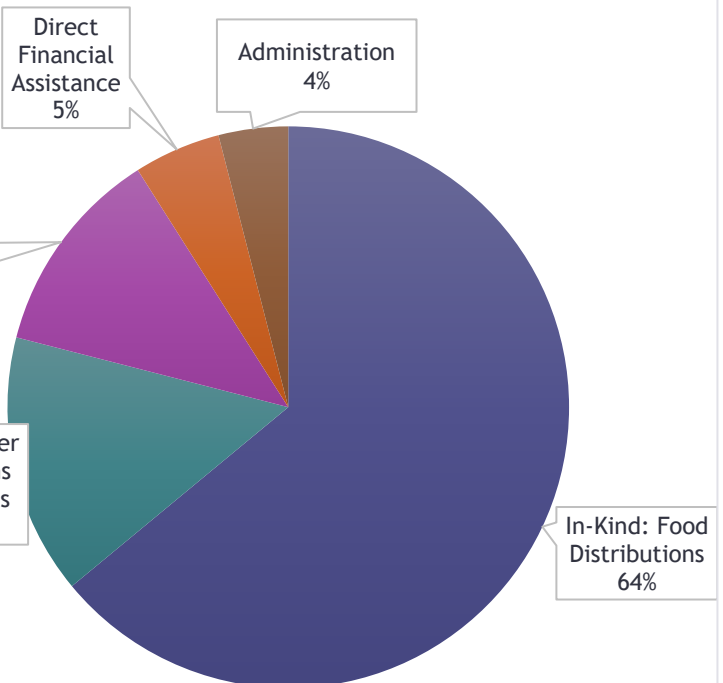
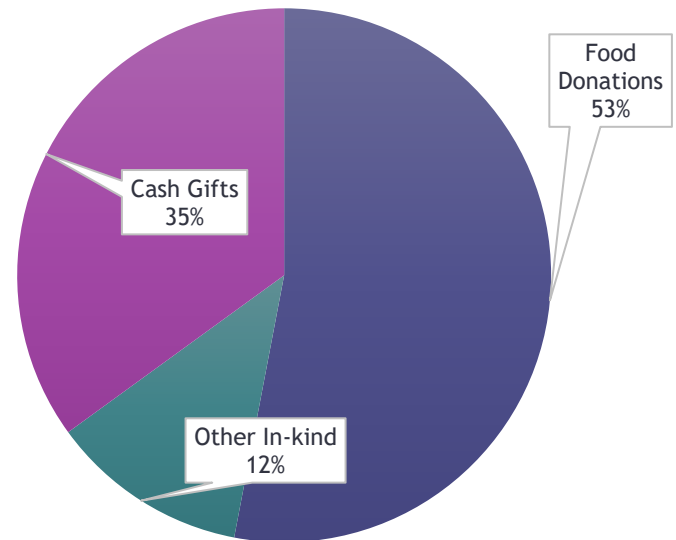
As the pandemic raged on, ACTC received record giving as the community came together to support ACTC's work to serve those in need. Contributions of food, toiletries, and baby and household supplies, along with cash, reached a record \$1,999,000 in 2020.

ACTC is increasing support to prevent eviction and utility cut-offs and plans to use the 2020 surplus to help stem the threat of homelessness in our community in 2021. We also added to our reserve to be sure the mission remains viable in these uncertain days.

*"Surely goodness and mercy
shall follow me
all the days of my life;
and I shall dwell
in the house of the Lord
forever."*

Psalm 23

2020 Income Total \$1,999,000



2020 Expenses Total \$1,640,000

THE COMMUNITY RESPONDS

Creativity that transforms

With most churches closed, ACTC encouraged neighborhood food drives, named “porch drives” mostly led by members of partner churches. These, along with other collections, including Boy Scouts, provided often a ton of food, and sometimes more each week.

People began to make masks to donate, so that our volunteers all had one, and could give them out to those who came for assistance.

Mt Calvary A.M.E. / Towson Presbyterian began to bring hot lunches once a week to ACTC, in lieu of Wednesday night Harvest Meals.

Freshly picked veggies and greens from community gardens such as Towson Presbyterian, First Fruits Farms, and fruit and vegetable boxes from Maryland Food Bank, along with frozen meat, are included in the grocery bags for families, along with eggs, milk, bread, and bakery products.



ACTC RESPONDS

Our Caring Community

- Volunteers call to check in with clients, and pass the latest news and guidance along to help navigate these challenging times.
- Volunteers call and email to follow up on providing financial assistance to many who need it for the first time.
- Volunteers provide home delivery to those who are homebound, or lack transportation, on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. We work in partnership with GBMC/Gilchrist and with Maryland Presbyterian who deliver to families in Woodbourne McCabe and others in the city.
- During the winter, ACTC volunteers distributed gloves, hats, scarves, emergency Mylar blankets, sleeping bags, blankets, and referrals to get coats from The Surprise Shop to help homeless friends keep warm.
- Volunteers add additional gifts as we have them and spiritual encouragement with gifts of “Our Daily Bread” and other notes as provided by our churches.
- We are working with our partners and meeting together to get updates and strategize on how to meet our neighbors’ unprecedented financial needs as effectively as we can, with guidance from Housing and Community Development at the Baltimore County Office of Health and Human Services.

PARTNER CHURCHES

Arnolia United Methodist
Ascension Lutheran
Babcock Presbyterian
Calvary Baptist
Central Presbyterian
Chestnut Ridge Baptist
Good Shepherd
Holy Comforter
Daybreak Christian
Assembly
Divinity Lutheran
Edgewood United Methodist
First and Saint Stephen's
First Church of Christ,
Scientist

First Lutheran/NewThing
Grace English Lutheran
Grace Fellowship
Greenspring United
Methodist
Havenwood Presbyterian
Holy Cross Lutheran
Horizon Church
Hunt's Memorial United
Methodist
Hunt Valley Church
Idlewyld United Methodist
Immaculate Conception

Jesus Christ Latter-Day
Saints, Lutherville
Joppa Bible Fellowship
Kingdom Worship Center
Life Church
Loch Raven Presbyterian
Loch Raven United
Methodist
Maryland Christian Church
Maryland Presbyterian
Mount Calvary A.M.E.
Mount Olive Baptist
Providence United Methodist
St. Andrew's Episcopal
St. John's United Methodist

St. Paul's Lutheran
St. Pius X
St. Francis
Timonium Presbyterian
Timonium United Methodist
Towson Presbyterian
Towson Unitarian
Universalist
Towson United Methodist
Trinity Assembly of God
Trinity Episcopal
Valley Baptist
Woodbrook Baptist

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS & BUSINESSES

Boy and Girl Scouts
Building for God Community Foundation
Baltimore County Communities for the Homeless
Baltimore County Retired School Personnel Association
Café Troia
A CAN CAN Make a Difference (CCMAD)
CARES/GEDCO
Community Assistance Network (CAN)
The Fresh Market
The Friendly Inn
Giant Food
Greater Baltimore Medical Center
Housing and Community Development
at Baltimore County Office of Health and Human Services
Hunt Valley Rotary Club

Ladies of the Towson Elks
Ledermark Communications & Coaching
Graul's Market
Kiwanis Clubs of Towson & Loch Raven
Maryland Food Bank
Masonic Knights Templar in Maryland
Office of the People's Counsel
Royal Farms Stores
Shoprite
Sprouts Market
St Paul's Schools
Towson ELKS
Towson Service Foundation
United Churches Network (UCAN)

Porch Drives - Mary Ann Brandli, Dotsie Bregel, Clare Cayce, Julie Eastwick, Charlotte Exner, Anne Fullerton, Karen Kruger, Ann Miller, Candy Perkinson, Linda Skeen, Dianne Thompson, Sheldon Tucker, Merri Toulas, Suzanne Whitney, & Allison Wohltmann. Collection Points: Ascension Lutheran, Trinity Episcopal and Valley Baptist.

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Rev. Fred Weimert, President
Pat Shaw, Executive Vice President
Roger Fiery, Treasurer
Dawn Bresson, Secretary
Cathy Evans, Vice President, Food Handling
Charlie Utermohle, Vice President, Operations
Jesse Gardner, Vice President, Development

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