

Mission News

The Care Mission Quarterly Newsletter for January - March 2017

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Visit us on the web at www.thecaremission.org

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Jeremiah 29:11

This verse, found in the Book of Jeremiah, is well known to most Christians. You’ll find it on posters, Bible covers, wall-plaques, Tee shirts, and more. But, as is always the case, this verse takes on a deeper meaning when read in context. These words are just a small part of a letter of encouragement and instruction, written by Jeremiah, to “all those carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon”. Through this letter God gives His people instructions on how to live their lives while in captivity because God has a plan for them then and after Babylon.

As we look back over the almost 12 years of the Care Mission we can also see how God used our lives before the Care Mission to prepare us for life with the Care Mission. For He knew the plans He had for us. And I believe that God continues to use each day to grow us and prepare us for the next. This past year, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, we made some changes at the Care Mission. But, God had prepared us in advance without us even knowing.

In June 2016 we closed our thrift store. As our food pantry grew it became increasingly difficult to operate both the thrift store and the food pantry to the point of becoming physically impossible. But, how could we close our only consistent source of income? Our thrift store sales could be counted on to at least pay rent and keep the lights on. And what about the ministry of the thrift store? Many families depended on us to clothe their children. *But the Holy Spirit is saying, “Trust me. Close it down.”*

Now that some time has passed we understand that the thrift store was a “safety net” that God wanted removed. Our faith would not have allowed us to operate without this safety net before, but over time God had developed our faith to the place that we could. It wasn’t easy, but He had prepared us.

Operating without the thrift store for the last 6 months of 2016 we were able to increase greatly the quantity of food being distributed as well as the quality of ministry. The numbers we’re about to share are important, but the greater story is the increased amount of ministry we can now do within the time once devoted to the thrift store. More time to pray with and listen to those we serve, to share the Gospel or offer encouragement, to write and mail prayer notes as we are inspired by the Holy Spirit. All these things were being hindered as we worked to keep the safety net in place. Unfortunately these things are impossible to track on paper and often go unnoticed. But the spiritual aspect of our ministry is the most important.

Let us share with you then a few things that can be recorded and tabulated. After reviewing them we believe you will agree that God is good.

If you supported the Care Mission in any way during 2016 you allowed God to use you to help us distribute approx. **350 TONS** of food to **18,783 individuals** making up **7,547 households**. Approx. **76%** of those individuals were **children, disabled adults, or senior citizens**.

Enough food was distributed to prepare approx. **465,600 meals**. Meaning on average each individual served received enough food to prepare approx. **25 meals**.

The goal of the majority of food pantries across America is to provide “Emergency Food Aid” only, which is approx. 9 meals per individual served.

Our Total Operational Cost for 2016 was \$77,162.42. Therefore, we were able to provide food assistance to these families at a rate of approx. **17 cents per meal**.

The Estimated Retail Dollar Value of the food distributed was **\$2,095,000.00**.

How were we able to do so much with so little? **GOD.**

He knew the plans He had for us. He prepared us in advance by providing the hands and feet we needed. Our volunteers are the back bone of this ministry. It doesn't matter how much monetary support we have or how much food we have on hand, if we don't have the help to distribute the food it doesn't get to those who need it. We would like more help, but somehow God always makes sure we have enough. Sometimes just barely enough. Perhaps you would prayerfully consider donating some time?

He prepared us in advance by giving us the wherewithal to take advantage of the price reductions on various foods by the Atlanta and Chattanooga Food Banks. Having a box truck, having a forklift, and now with the thrift store closed, having the time and space enabled us to maximize the benefits of these deals in ways we could not have otherwise.

He prepared us in advance by giving us the monetary support we needed to operate. We never had a great surplus of funds only enough as we needed it. And when unexpected situations occurred, such as our cooler going down or our truck needing repairs, God moved on those in our network of supporters to meet those needs. We greatly appreciate those who faithfully support this ministry, but we give the Lord all praise and glory for every success. Doing more with less is not unusual for God because He has a plan. Amen.

The Food City Stores of Lafayette, Fort Oglethorpe, and Mission Ridge collected monetary donations on behalf of the Care Mission during Nov. & Dec. of 2016. Together they collected \$9,301.00 which was presented to us in the form of Food City Gift Cards in January. We used \$1,401.00 of those gift cards to purchase items from Food City that we cannot purchase through the Chattanooga or Atlanta Food Banks. Thanks to many of our supporters we were able to convert the remaining \$7,900.00 back into monetary funds. We have already spent just over \$4,500.00 of those funds purchasing food from the Chattanooga and Atlanta Food Banks. The balance will be spent in the same way over the next few months. By converting those gift cards back into monetary funds we will be able to purchase approx. \$470,000.00 worth of food through the Chattanooga and Atlanta Food Banks. What a blessing!

Blossman Gas of Lafayette donated a portion of their Dec. 2016 sales to the Care Mission. Branch Manager Gerald Cook presented us with a \$788.69 check. We greatly appreciate Gerald, his staff, and the Blossman customers for their support of our community.

The Walker County 4-H Community Club made and donated to the Care Mission "Birthday Bags" for distribution to boys and girls within the families we serve. These bags included cake mix, icing, plates, cups, hats, candles, etc. so they could celebrate their birthdays.

Christopher Bell, a senior at Ridgeland High School collected non-perishable food items for our food pantry as part of his Senior Project. He collected approx. 960 lbs. from his fellow students and teachers. We thank Christopher for having a heart for his community.

Stamp Out Hunger, held nationwide by USPS mail carriers, will be **Saturday, May 13th**. All non-perishable food items collected within the 30728 zip code will be donated to the Care Mission. Please be sure to leave your donation for pickup. And let your mail carrier know we appreciate their faithful service and especially their extra effort for this event.

How's your garden growing? If you have more produce than you can use how about donating it to us? We'll have no problem getting it distributed to area families who can use it.

State Farm Agent Jason Long has chosen the Care Mission as his "Quotes for a Cause" charity. He will donate \$1.00 to us for every new like on his Face Book page or coverage check during the month of May. Like him on Face Book and support the Care Mission!

We need bags and totes! We are totally out of the cloth tote bags we use when assisting clients who are walking and we are extremely low on the regular plastic grocery bags. We are generally at the mission Monday – Friday 8:00 AM – 6:00 PM working, but the door is locked when the food pantry is not open. So ring the doorbell if you come by to drop off bags. Thanks in advance.

Did you know we give out FREE BIBLES? Right now we're giving out about 50 per month. Currently we have one supporter who donates funds for this part of our ministry. Would you be in prayer about joining this effort?

Please be in prayer for our volunteers, we have several with health issues. Also continue to pray for our Board, our financial needs, and that we do not grow weary. Pray for our wisdom and discernment. Amen.

Food for thought...The other night Kendra woke me up at 12:22 AM insisting it was time to get up for work. She was certain my alarm clock and her cell phone were wrong. She even checked the clock in the kitchen. Finally she accepted the fact that it wasn't the time she thought it to be. We often do God that way don't we? We insist it is time for this or that while He says wait. Other times we want to wait while He says it's time to move. But, regardless of what we think, God's timing is always perfect. Amen.

Thanks for your support and Be Blessed!

Deon and Kendra