# Food Banks; helping the marginalized

Donated time and resources to Good Shepherd's Food Bank, Food Bank of the Rockies, Metrocaring, the St. Francis Center, and other food banks in the area. Also provided fresh water and clean-up for the unhoused.

Good Shepherd has been operating a busy food bank for almost 30 years. In May served over 380 individuals of which 86 are seniors and 192 are children. Some of the Food Bank clients attend worship with us.

Metrocaring works with our community to meet people's immediate need for nutritious food while building a movement to address the root causes of hunger. Also offers innovative programming in Healthy Foods Access, Nutrition Education, Cooking Classes, and more.

Hosted a thank you dinner for nine of the volunteers who served at CARES Shares Food Bank in Strasburg, which closed on May 13th. Shared food, fellowship, sadness and thanksgiving as we expressed our gratitude for the many hours of service!

### **Partnerships**

Partners that we work with to advance Matthew 25 tenets include: Central Visitation Center, a supervised visitation program, designed to be a safe but temporary solution for maintaining a relationship with a parent until he or she parent resolves court or lifestyle issue.

Gathering Place offers services to combat poverty and address the impacts of marginalization and oppression contributing to poverty or homelessness focusing on women, transgender folks, and children living in poverty.

Benefits in Action in Lakewood, increases understanding, access, and utilization of healthcare resources, especially for low-income older adults.

New Genesis, a sober living program for homeless men, women and their families striving to become self-sufficient.

The Third Story, a ministry to neighborhood kids in west Denver, that offers Bible clubs, tutoring, mentoring, music camp and other opportunities.

**MWANZO**, which means hope in Swahili, is working on establishing a self-sustaining community center in Rabhor, Kenya.

# Matthew 25 Month of Engagement May 2022

The Denver Presbytery invited all churches to participate in a Matthew 25 Month of Engagement in May. Almost two thousand hours were posted across ten churches. The stories of Hope in Action are inspiring to all.

# Matthew 25 Presbytery-wide Initiative A Bold Vision and Invitation

- Build congregational vitality
- Dismantle structural racism
- Eradicate systemic poverty

Matthew 25 is an ongoing initiative across PCUSA. Structural and systemic change is hard work! We together celebrate all efforts by churches, individuals, and Presbyteries. You are truly helping make "God's kingdom come, on earth as it is in Heaven."

THANK YOU!

#### **Education**

Education continues to be a major theme in our collective journey to understand – and prepare ourselves to take meaningful action against -- structural racism and systemic poverty.

Faith Formation Leadership from the Presbytery gathered to share resources for the Matthew 25 Initiative in congregations for all ages. A rich resource list was created and shared.

**Books** cited across the Presbytery included "How to be an Anti-Racist" by Ibram X. Kendi and "God and Race" by Siebeling and Francis.

Other helpful resources were "Facing Racism" from PCUSA and "Enduring Legacy of Racism." The PBS documentary "Slavery by Another Name," lays out how a corrupt criminal justice system and widespread racism of white Americans in every region continues to drive catastrophic results.

Published diversity-related definitions in weekly enews and/or bulletins to keep anti-racism in mind and to build related vocabulary,. For Pride Month (June) the definition included the Presbyterian history with LGTBQ+ people. For Juneteenth, prepared a flyer that explains what it is and includes prayers of confession/hope.

# **Collaborative Worship**

A joint worship service between a historic Black congregation and a majority-white congregation included significant conversation and a sermon about love shown through acts of service -- presented in dialog form. Encouraged participation in Central Presbyterian's Civil Rights Pilgrimage in June.

# **Advocacy**

Emails and petitions for human rights and environmental rights, especially for those most exposed to pollution, typically communities of color. Contacted Senator Bennet asking for a "yes" vote to end Title 42, the public health order that keeps thousands of migrants from entering the US and seek asylum. Attended vigils at GEO Detention Center in Aurora in support of immigrants held in detention.

# **Immigrants and Refugees**

Settlement into Denver by immigrant and refugee families offers an exciting way to live into the Matthew 25 challenge.

Learning to be in relationship with many immigrant families by sharing each other's stories. Strive for authentic relationships that are genuine and caring. Building relationships with Afghan refugee families includes sharing dinner, mentorship, and driving children to school and women to English lessons.

Grocery shopping at **ZAMZAM**, a halal grocery store for meats and other necessary halal food items.

Volunteered at Ruby's Market, a multi-cultural artisan and food destination, incubating refugee, immigrant & indigenous entrepreneurs and supporting local businesses. "Delivering precious boxes of food to 7 migrant families is a joy! Two of our families had graduating seniors, one to attend DU and another Red Rocks this Fall. We gave them each a graduation card with a cash gift enclosed. We share a prayer with each family before we leave."

Attended Journey With Migrants Mission Partnership meeting.
Arranged a simultaneous translation service.

The Afghan families hosted a **picnic** in the park to thank the volunteers who drove their children to and from school. Fantastic Afghan food and games with the children!

Conducted informed discussions with people acting on behalf of the immigrant "strangers needing welcome", including people from Haiti who as black find incredible racism at the borders they cross.

**Shared a meal** together and planted a garden together with our Malawian friends.