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All In For Ingathering

Ingathering 2020 Divides Up the Work for Each District

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Although plans were made for the annual Ingathering event to be held at the Arkansas Foodbank, as it has for the past few years, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic required new ideas to be put in action to ensure that Arkansas children and families don't go hungry this holiday season.

This year's Ingathering will not be a centralized in-person gathering in the Central District, as it has for many years, but instead, all five districts of the Arkansas Annual Conference will host events in their own districts to gather canned and dry goods, raise money for disaster relief and food pantries, and raise awareness for hunger in Arkansas.

"The decision to move Ingathering to the district level was based on two realities," said Mary Lewis Dassinger, Project Coordinator for 200,000 More Reasons. "First, safety guidelines during the pandemic would not allow for us to plan, with confidence, a large event where 275 Methodists could work side by side to pack food. Moreover, we recognized almost every community is seeing a need for greater access to food. Our goal with Ingathering is to meet this growing need and stay safe, serving together while apart."

Here's what each district is planning to do to help hungry families in Arkansas this year.

Central District:

The Central District will hold a one-day drop-off event from 10 a.m – 2 p.m on Saturday, Nov. 21 at the Arkansas Foodbank, 4301 W 65th St, Little Rock, AR.

The district is asking for people to bring monetary donations or non-perishable food donations, including: canned meat, canned fruit, canned vegetables, canned or instant gravy, canned sweet potatoes, cranberry sauce, macaroni and cheese, mashed potato mix, and cornbread/stuffing mix. Drop off will only be available from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. on Nov. 21.

In addition, churches in the district are encouraged to raise money for a donation designated to the Arkansas Foodbank. The donation can be paid online by the church filling out the Ingathering Form.

Gently used or new children's books, and UMCOR Relief Kit supplies (hygiene kits and cleaning kits/flood buckets) will also be collected.

Lastly, the district will be collecting donations for the Arkansas Disaster Response/Volunteers in Mission teams to construct a new storage facility for supply kits, tools and trailers. The goal is to raise \$15,000 from Ingathering.

Central District Ingathering Form

Northeast District:

The Northeast District is encouraging a more individualized approach to Ingathering. Non-perishable food items and monetary donations will be collected by churches and can be given to a favorite local feeding ministry in the district.

They are also encouraging churches to compete against other churches, youth and children's ministries to see which group can collect the most food items or raise the most money throughout the month of October.

UMCOR Relief donations and monetary gifts to support the Disaster Response and VIM storage facility are also encouraged.

Northeast District Ingathering Form

Northwest District:

On Saturday, Nov. 14, the Northwest District will host a Day of Giving at five strategically selected ministries across the district. People are encouraged to drop off their food or monetary donations from 9 a.m. to 12 noon on Nov. 14 at one of these locations: Alma UMC, Dardanelle UMC, Huntsville UMC, Mission UMC, and Waldron UMC's Food Distribution Site.

Donations should be placed in a brown bag, and weigh approximately 9.5 lbs with donations included. They are asking for the following specific donations: one 40oz. jar of peanut butter, two boxes of mac and cheese, 32 oz bag of rice, 32 oz. bag of beans, two boxes of 32oz. shelf-stable milk (NOT powdered milk), two cans of chicken.

Cash donations only will also be accepted at any location. Donations will help UMCOR relief, Arkansas Disaster Response/VIM, and UMCOR Sager Brown.

Northwest District Ingathering Form

Southeast District:

The Southeast District will be collecting non-perishable food donations and monetary donations to support local backpack programs and blessing boxes.

Food items that are needed for the backpack program are canned fruit, canned meat (such as tuna, Vienna sausages, and Beanie Weenies), shelf-stable milk, and cereal bars.

Blessing boxes are accepting donations of any canned goods (vegetables, fruit, meat, meals, etc.)

Donations for UMCOR Relief and Arkansas Disaster Response/VIM will also be accepted.

You can also tune in to District Superintendent Rev. Mark Norman's Facebook Live stream on Nov. 7 for a celebration of Ingathering in the Southeast District.

Southeast District Ingathering Form

Southwest District:

Non-perishable food items as well as monetary donations will also be gathered by the Southwest District, but they are also asking churches to participate in a Fill the Van to Fill the Tummies event at your local Walmart or grocery store.

To participate in the event, ask your local Walmart or grocery store if you can park your church van in their parking lot on Saturday, Nov. 21, and then gather food donations from local shoppers that can be used by your UMC food pantry.

Donations for UMCOR Relief and Arkansas Disaster Response/VIM will also be accepted.

Southwest District Ingathering Form

No matter which district event you take part in, each volunteer or church should fill out their district's Ingathering Form so that the conference can keep track of how many donations we gather this year.

Every district is doing something different, but no matter their plans, they are all coming together to battle the ongoing fight against hunger in our Conference.

"As much as I love the traditional Ingathering event where we can serve shoulder-to-shoulder with Methodists from across the state, I believe this year's Ingathering will be a powerful testimony to the connection of the Arkansas United Methodist Church and give us all a greater sense of unity as a people of faith and action when it is needed most," Dassinger said.

For more on Ingathering 2020, visit our website at arumc.org/ingathering/.

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