

## **From The Community Engagement Team - Hunger Relief Listening Sessions: What We Heard & What's Next**

Dear Friends,

On March 1, more than 30 members and friends of our congregation gathered for a series of listening sessions focused on hunger and food insecurity in our community.

These conversations were thoughtful, honest, and deeply encouraging. We are grateful to everyone who participated and shared their insights, questions, and ideas.

### **What We Heard**

Several clear themes emerged across the sessions:

#### **1. The need is significant.**

Many of our neighbors rely on a network of food pantries, meal programs, and distribution sites to meet basic needs.

#### **2. Strong partnerships already exist.**

We learned that this work is being carried out by a well-established and collaborative network of organizations, including the Redwood Empire Food Bank and its local partners. These groups bring deep experience and commitment to this work.

#### **3. Our role is to support, not duplicate.**

There was a strong sense that our church is best positioned to strengthen and support existing efforts, rather than starting something new.

#### **4. People want clear ways to engage.**

Participants expressed a desire for opportunities that are visible, accessible, and relational—simple ways to get involved and make a difference.

### **What's Next: Our Action Plan**

In response to what we heard, several concrete steps are underway:

#### **1. Bags of Blessing (Palm Sunday)**

Our *Bags of Blessing* project was completed on Palm Sunday.

- 100 cloth bags were beautifully created by Presbyterian Women
- These bags were shared as a tangible expression of care for those in need
- During worship, we included a Blessing of the Bags to highlight this ministry and invite participation

#### **2. Food Insecurity Fair**

We are planning a **Food Insecurity Fair** for later this summer or fall.

**Purpose:**

To connect our congregation directly with local organizations and meaningful ways to serve.

**What to expect:**

- 5–6 local partners present between and after services
- Opportunities to learn, ask questions, and sign up to volunteer
- Participation from FPCSR ministries and volunteers
- Space to build relationships with organizations already making a difference

Potential partners may include FISH, Redwood Gospel Mission, The Living Room, and others connected with the Redwood Empire Food Bank.

### **3. “Menu of Opportunities”**

To make it easier for everyone to get involved, we are developing a **“Menu of Opportunities”** (planned for spring or summer).

This resource will:

- List local mission and volunteer opportunities
- Include a church contact person for each opportunity
- Be available in both print and online formats
- Help individuals, families, and small groups find ways to serve that fit their schedules and interests

This will be a simple, practical tool to connect intention with action.

### **Moving Forward Together**

What emerged most clearly from these conversations is that our congregation cares deeply—not only about meeting immediate needs, but about doing so thoughtfully, collaboratively, and faithfully.

We are not starting from scratch. We are joining a larger story already unfolding in our community—one that calls for compassion, partnership, and presence.

We invite your continued input and participation as we move forward together, listening for God’s call and responding in service to our neighbors.

**With gratitude,  
The Community Engagement Team**

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