

***Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church
Personal Essentials Pantry
The Reasons Behind the Plan
March, 2009***

Mission of the Pantry

The Church is a people created by God in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, called and sent to bear witness to God's creative, redeeming, and sanctifying activity in the world.

In fulfilling this purpose, Zion's congregation responds to human need, work for justice and peace, care for the sick and the suffering, and participate responsibly in society. As a part of this response and care, Zion has established the Personal Essentials Pantry to share God's love and kingdom by helping with the essentials of personal and household hygiene, showing God's grace and love through these tangible gifts.

The policies and procedures of the Pantry reflect this mission, and the Pantry's understanding that:

*We are sharing God's kingdom, not doling out charity.
We are proclaiming God's grace, not passing judgment.
We are serving with joy, not establishing our own glory.*

The Pantry operates under the general oversight of the Congregational Council, in keeping with the principles of operation set forth in the Constitution for Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church "the Constitution").

Pantry Advisory Board

A Pantry Advisory Board has been established to provide the Pantry Coordinator with a broad range of perspectives on the ministry and operation of the Pantry,. The composition of this Board includes representation from Zion Congregation, from any ministries sharing Zion's facilities, from the Pantry guests, and from collegial agencies/organizations.

Staff

Since the Pantry serves a community far broader than the Zion Congregation, it is desirable that its volunteers are also drawn from the community at large. In this way, not only is the burden of Pantry staffing shared with the community at large, but the ministry itself becomes a ministry of the larger community.

Guest Eligibility for Staff Positions

The Pantry also recognizes that its guests are equally children of God, and equally blessed for ministry in their own ways. In recognition of this reality, the Pantry welcomes individuals who receive Pantry services to serve as Pantry staff members. Serving as a member of the Pantry staff does not disqualify such individuals to receive Pantry services; however, such receipt is limited to regular Pantry service hours, and such individuals must check in and proceed with their "shopping" in the same fashion as other guests. They may not self-register, nor may they fill their own orders.

Court-Ordered Community Service Volunteers

The Pantry is a ministry, sharing the gifts and grace of God. There are within this community, as within all communities, individuals who make bad decisions and who fall from grace; and some of these individuals fall under the authority of the civil justice system, which may from time to time require community service as compensation or rehabilitation. The Pantry is open to accepting such individuals as volunteers; such acceptance shall be at the judgment of the Coordinator.

All community service volunteers must comply with the policies and procedures of the Pantry, especially with regard to job performance; failure to comply may be grounds for termination of volunteer eligibility. All such volunteers also need to remain in compliance with the requirements of community service as established by the governing authority requiring such service.

The Coordinator communicates with such governing authorities concerning the performance of such community service volunteers. To the highest degree possible, the Coordinator works with the volunteer and the governing authority to find ways to mediate problems rather than resorting to termination as the first and primary option. The Coordinator also complies with any requirements of the governing authority regarding reporting or oversight.

The Coordinator has the right to refuse community service volunteers when the requirements of such volunteers are beyond the capacity of the Pantry, or the Coordinator deems the volunteer unsuitable for the Pantry or dangerous to the Pantry or its staff or guests or to the Zion community.

Training

Training is provided for all volunteers, in the form of both on-the-job training and formal pre- or in-service training sessions to be developed and conducted by the Pantry Coordinator.

Conduct of Volunteers

All volunteers are expected to be respectful of guests, fellow staff members, and the Zion community's members and facilities.

All volunteers are expected to follow the policies and procedures of the Pantry as outlined in the Plan of Operation and any training materials or staff manuals.

Pantry Guest Eligibility and Support

The Pantry's services are open to all individuals and households whose income is at or below the federally approved DCFS limits (equivalent to approximately 180% of the federal definition of poverty).

Pantry guests are provided with verbal (and, if requested, written) information as to the Pantry's policies and limitations on service, including distribution policies, definition of "household," and proper use of products provided.

Pantry guest visits are regulated to ensure the fairest possible distribution of the always limited supply of products to those who need them.

Access to Pantry services may be denied for households who abuse the program by violation of the Pantry's rules.

The Pantry does not expect to be able to, and does not intend to, provide all of the personal and household hygiene products that would be needed by any particular household, but rather to

supplement households' capabilities to adequately provide for their personal and household hygiene needs.

Pantry Operation

All Pantry policies and procedures for day-to-day operation are developed by the Pantry Coordinator with advice and oversight from the Pantry Advisory Aboard and the Congregational Council. All such policies and procedures shall be in accord with the Pantry's mission statement. These policies and procedures are reviewed at least annually by the Coordinator, the Board, and the Congregational Council.

The Pantry desires to be maximally available for its potential guests, and therefore intends to be open weekly for at least one weekday and one weekend day each week, including workday and pre- or post-workday hours. The hours of operation are, to the highest degree possible, set so as to be in coordination with the hours of service of surrounding agencies offering similar services, and to not interfere with the worship and ministry activity of Zion Congregation or other congregations operating within the Zion physical plant.

These hours are posted and visible from outside the physical plant, and shared with other social service agencies, especially those involved in information response and referral activities.

Pantry scheduled hours will not be changed without at least one month's notice to the guest community. Emergency closures are communicated as early as possible through collegial networks, information response and referral agencies, and public media such as television, radio, newspapers, and the web.

Fiscal Management

As a congregational ministry, the Pantry operates within the budgetary guidelines set forth by the congregation.

Because the magnitude of the Pantry's service is much greater than the congregation's resources, it cannot be fully supported by donations and funds from Zion Church. Rather, the Pantry, through the activities of the Pantry Coordinator and the support of the Board and Congregational Council, actively seek grants and donations from the larger church and the greater community. Funds received may be used for direct purchase of Pantry guest supplies, support supplies, administrative supplies, dissemination and evangelism of the Pantry's mission and operation, and personnel costs.

All donations and grants made specifically to the Pantry are used for the support and maintenance of the Pantry, not for the Congregation's financial responsibilities. Except when monies received are the result of a specific proposal, the donor of funds cannot specify how that money would be used or not used, and the Pantry is not required to segregate the funds for any particular purpose outside the purpose of the Pantry.

In the event that the Congregation decides to end the Pantry as a project within its ministry, all assets and funds will be distributed back to the congregation in accord with the Congregation's Constitution and Bylaws, or in the case of grants as required by the terms of the granting agency.

Service to the Field and “Model Pantry”

The Personal Essentials Pantry is one of the very few pantries of its type in the entire country; most pantries that distribute personal and household hygiene essentials do so as an adjunct to their focus ministry on food or housing. As one of the few pantries with this focus, we see ourselves as a model for the field, generating valuable information on need and demand, and offering what we believe to be a successful model for service. We therefore place great emphasis on sharing the knowledge that we have developed about this need area, and on making sure that the policies, procedures, and software that we develop is usable by other pantries. Outreach and information dissemination is and needs to remain a strong component in our overall activities.

We are also very much aware that we are merely treating a symptom through our provision of products. To deal effectively with this need area, we need to be making legislators and policy makers aware of the need, and urging more complete societal support of persons in need.