



Neighbors Helping Neighbors | Faith-Based Organizations Serve Communities Impacted By Coronavirus Outbreak #Inthistogether

Scotch Plains, New Jersey – What ultimately became a statewide initiative began when one family who attended Evangel Church did not have the supplies they needed after being diagnosed with the coronavirus. When Pastor Chris Morante learned the family was in need, he led the effort to provide help. Together with church members, Morante gathered donations and pack groceries and supplies into a box to deliver to the family. After this first successful delivery, the group decided to continue the project and serve others. The Evangel Church partnered with Convoy of Hope, a non-profit organization that facilitates disaster recovery around the world, and the initiative grew. Church members say these “boxes of hope” are meant to give hope to individuals and families battling the coronavirus. *“We have thousands to go. We’re believing as many people as reach out to us we will get a box up to their doorstep,”* Morante said. *“I started to call my pastor friends all around New Jersey and I said this is the plan. I think that the church can lead the way in helping bring hope to every person in this season.”* [Read more from NJ.com](#)



[Photo courtesy of Chris Morante and NJ.com](#)

Buffalo, New York – The local chapter of Catholic Charities in Buffalo is adjusting the way they serve their community during the coronavirus outbreak based on need. Because of the economic impacts of the pandemic, more community members are in need of food donations. Fortunately, local restaurants have made donations, sometimes through the Catholic Charities organization, to the nine food pantries in the community, but the work doesn’t end there. Catholic Charities employees are helping to provide seamless pantry service by sorting the donations that come into the food pantries so that families can receive food quickly. *“We are fortunate to have staff from other departments who are willing and able to come in and help*

during this time of discord," said Eileen Nowak, Catholic Charities Parish Outreach and Advocacy Director. "They came with energy and compassion for the needs of others. [Read more from the Catholic Charities of Buffalo](#)



[Photo courtesy of Catholic Charities of Buffalo](#)

Ponce, Puerto Rico - As the island enters its third curfew week due to the coronavirus crisis, [Puerto Rico's EnVision Center, Sor Isolina Ferré](#), which is also a faith-based organization, adopted a virtual platform to continue with classes. María de Lourdes López, Education director, indicated that 91% of the students, have access to a cell phone to use the new virtual tool, while only 25% have access to a computer and 87% have internet access. As for students who do not have computers or the Internet, "*We are developing strategies to serve them. Many have challenging family situations,*" said López. "*(The school staff) becomes their support network.*" [Read the full story from El Nuevo Dia](#) **Note:** Right click to see the English translation.



[Photo courtesy of El Nuevo Dia](#)

Columbus, Ohio— Because of the shelter in place orders designed to combat the spread of COVID-19, many Jewish families are celebrating Passover at home with family instead of in large groups. To help families celebrate Passover and host a traditional Seder dinner in their home, the Chabad center in New Albany has made “Seder to go” kits that it’s delivering or allowing for no-contact pickup. The packages contain every element needed to conduct a traditional Seder, including homemade Matzo bread. *“The whole idea is we want to bring hope,”* said Rabbi Areyah Kaltmann, who serves as executive director of the Lori Schottenstein Chabad Center in New Albany. *“We don’t have to be enslaved by our current difficult situation. When you connect it to something higher, you don’t fall down.”* The Chabad Center plans to deliver more than 100 kits. [Read more from the Columbus Dispatch](#)



[Photo courtesy of the Columbus Dispatch](#)

White Plains, New York – In early March, many members of the Young Israel of New Rochelle synagogue were infected with the Coronavirus and nearly 1,000 congregates were quarantined. Only a fraction of those ultimately contracted the virus, but safety precautions were implemented to prevent the spread. Now that members of the community have recovered, they're looking for ways to give back. Young Israel members are now donating blood so researchers can determine if they have a sufficient amount of antibodies to fight COVID-19. If so, members of the community who were infected can donate plasma that can be used to help treat people who are sick with COVID-19. *"To see people who have recovered and recovered with such vigor and spirit, their willingness to help is amazing,"* said. Dr. Liise-anne Pirofski, chief of Montefiore's Department of Medicine Division of Infectious Diseases. [Read more from USA Today](#)



[Photo courtesy of USA Today](#)

Myrtle Beach, South Carolina – The Grand Strand Islamic Society in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina is providing resources for their community members in need while practicing safe social distancing. Mosque volunteers are donating and preparing bags of food and supplies and have set up a 'drive thru' resource center. "This is a gift to our Myrtle Beach community," Imam Abdou El-Helali said. "We are honored to help those who are in need during this hard time." Volunteers wear protective gear to keep other volunteers and donation recipients safe. [Read more from WPDE](#)



[Photo courtesy of WPDE](#)

Jackson, Mississippi— Ordinarily, the Interfaith Shelter can accommodate more than 40 people facing homelessness. However, the facility cannot adhere to the recommended social distancing guidelines amid the coronavirus outbreak and serve the same number of people in need. Stephen Castle, Jackson Interfaith Shelter executive director knew he had to find a solution. To meet community needs, the Shelter teamed up with the United Way to help the homeless. Instead of turning people away, the organizations paid for 30 families facing homelessness to stay in local hotels for two weeks, while other arrangements are being made. *“We knew when this crisis first broke that it was going to effect the most vulnerable people first, so we were really keeping track of what was happening at the Interfaith Shelter,”* Ken Toll, United Way president/CEO, said. *“If you’re living stacked up on top of each other in the shelter, we know that there is no way to observe social distancing or any of the safety measures that are recommended.”* [Learn more from MLive](#)



[Photo courtesy of MLive](#)

Springfield, Missouri— Freeway Ministries, which ordinarily provides hot meals, clothing and a gospel service to community members in need each Saturday night, is adjusting the way they serve the community in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak. To adhere to CDC social distancing guidelines, the Freeway Ministries organization is now bringing hot meals and supplies directly to those in need, while abiding by safety guidelines. From an appropriate social distance, Freeway Ministries members are also offering prayer for those afflicted by the virus. [Read the full story from KY3](#)



[*Photo courtesy of KY3*](#)

Franconia, Virginia – MakeSpace is a Muslim non-profit organization in Virginia that is coordinating volunteers to deliver groceries and other supplies to households in need during the coronavirus outbreak. *"Our organization was started to serve the community's needs through spiritual guidance and service,"* Omar Nassimi, the program manager at MakeSpace said.

"So when this crisis broke out, we knew that so many people were going to be negatively affected. We started this service to bring the community together in order to help each other in this difficult time. We see this as our responsibility according to our faith." [**Read the full story from Middle East Eye**](#)



[Photo courtesy of Middle East Eye](#)

Alexandria, Virginia and Cincinnati, Ohio – Penny Appeal USA, which is based in Virginia and CelebrateMercy, which is based in Ohio, are national organizations working with the Islamic Center of New York University to raise funds for individuals and families in need. During the first week, the organizations were able to raise \$270,000. "*This is a core aspect of our faith - to be a mercy to everyone,*" Tarek el-Messidi, the founder of CelebrateMercy said. The fundraising campaign has already raised more than \$520,000 and delivered aid to nearly 700 applicants. [Read the full story from Middle East Eye](#)

CORONAVIRUS EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Stand with Low-Income Families
Impacted by the COVID-19 Outbreak.



[Photo courtesy of launchgood.com/corona](https://launchgood.com/corona)

Fort Collins, Colorado—During the seasons of Easter, Passover, and Ramadan, the faith communities are not able to gather as they typically would due to health concerns during the coronavirus outbreak. In this age of technology, though, faith leaders are not abandoning their congregations. Instead, many faith-based organizations are filming services and messages for posting online or on social media. Some faith leaders are even conducting services alone and streaming them live, so that congregates can tune in and worship from home. *“The truth is the most faithful thing we can do right now is to stay home,”* said Rev. Amanda Henderson, executive director for the Interfaith Alliance of Colorado. *“The way we can show love and compassion and commitment, the way we can love our neighbor, is to ensure that we stop the spread of COVID-19.”*

[Read more from the Coloradoan](#)



[Photo courtesy of the Coloradoan Church](#)

Birmingham, Alabama – The Church of the Highlands is a multi-campus church based in Birmingham, Alabama. In late March the church suspended their in-person services due to health concerns. However, the church campus is being used to help the community in another way. Utilizing the church parking lot, doctors in Birmingham tested 977 people from across the state by utilizing space and volunteers from Church of the Highlands. Pastor Chris Hodges worked in coordination with Governor Kay Ivey on the project. *“People were chaotic in their lives and busy. Now they’re sitting still. It’s scary to wait,”* Church of the Highlands Associate Pastor Layne Schranz said. *“In unstable times, people want to hold onto a stable God.”* [***Read the full story from the Washington Post***](#)



[Photo courtesy of the Washington Post and Church of the Highlands](#)

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