

NYC Church Uses COVID-19 Response Grant to Feed People in Six Neighborhoods During the Pandemic

Bethel Christian Church (DOC)

COVID-19 NBA Response Grant Recipient

November 2020



The COVID-19 Free Transportation and Food Delivery Ministry has been very effective in targeting our geographic areas: Brooklyn, East New York, Crown Heights, Bushwick, Bedford-Stuyvesant, and especially in the East Flatbush community, where Bethel Christian Church (DOC) is located in Brooklyn, a borough of New York City. The entire community is suffering due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Bethel Christian Church is committed to helping as many people as possible in our community during this critical time especially those who are homebound and don't have the adequate access to food due to illness or loss of loved ones.

Our COVID-19 Free Transportation and Food Delivery Ministry plays a vital role in our community. Complying with the social distancing rules and regulations of our state in order to save lives has brought much hardship for the elderly, people with disabilities, the sick, and homebound to stand and wait in line just to get food. This is why our ministry has become the hands and feet for to those who are so desperately in need. We all can agree that food is essential for our daily survival. We continue to live in this ongoing crisis. Regardless of the increasing devastation associated with COVID-19, the ministry is committed to providing free food service delivery and a food pantry at our church to those who can come collect food.

Being a social service ministry in our community during this time is not an easy task. We face many challenges. When we began serving the community in this way, one of our biggest challenges was a shortage of church members' involvement in the work. Amazingly, God opens the hearts of people in the community, who joined hands with us in the packing and distribution of the food. Working with the community in this way has allowed our church to grow stronger, we are learning to appreciate each other more than ever before.

We give great respect to Pastor Jerome Herold, the Shepherd of Bethel Christian Church (DOC), for placing the needs of the community first by delivering food and offering transportation to those in need. We are grateful for his ongoing commitment in finding community members to help pick up food from grocery stores and unload the supplies at the church so that packaging can be completed for distribution. In doing this, Pastor Jerome, his wife, Myrtha Herold, and our team of volunteers regularly put themselves at risk of contracting coronavirus yet they continue to offer their full selves to this work of service and care. As we reflect on this work, we are reminded of the scripture, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). We seek to faithfully continue making a difference in the lives of many in our community.

The positive impact of our food pantry and delivery services is more than we can fit in this story. But we realize that the impact of our ministry has meaningful reward for both Bethel Christian Church and the wider community. We have had the privilege to prove our love to people we've never met before and people have been able to receive the support they need during this critical time. Love is our strength in developing a stronger relationship with our community. Love in action is worth more than anything else.

As the health and social services general ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the National Benevolent Association partners with congregations, regions, general ministries, and a variety of Disciples-related health and social service providers to create communities of compassion and care. Founded in 1887 by six women responding to the needs of the day and on their doorsteps, for more than 130 years the NBA has continued to serve "the least of these." Learn more at www.nbacares.org.