

St. Paul Wednesday Soup Lunch Ministry

St. Paul Lutheran Church started serving free Soup lunches to the community every other Wednesday @ noon in October 2008. After just three months, in January 2009, we changed to serving soup lunches EVERY Wednesday due to the high demand. During 2009 we served 3,296 soup & sandwich meals to community people. In 2010 St. Paul served soup lunches to 4,145 guests plus 922 volunteers for a total of 5,067 meals. In 2011 we served 4,856 guests plus 950 volunteers for a total 5,807 lunches served.

Our lunch also provides a social networking opportunity for our guests. Some lunch guests are older-often isolated senior citizens, who live in the neighborhood. Other lunch guests are looking for opportunities in the community to find work and improve their living conditions. Our weekly soup lunches help them to communicate and take care of each other. Supportive social networking helps our guests survive and provides knowledge about everyday happenings.

Last year we added a Lydia's Closet project during soup lunch time. Every second Wednesday we provide recycled, re-purposed and gently used clothing for our soup lunch guests to purchase for .25 .50 or .75 cents. This has provided additional affordable resources for our guests and a small income for food for our lunches.

For the last 3 years we have provided a gift shop for our Lunch guests to shop for Christmas presents at no cost for themselves and others. They really appreciate the opportunity and like being able to give some gifts to others from our shop. This helps provide Christmas cheer and goodwill for everyone.

Our soup lunch volunteer workers provide a safety net of care and concern for our soup lunch guests each week.

We are now averaging 116 soup guests per week...up from an average of 103 in 2010 and 72 persons per week in 2009. Every week our church and community volunteers faithfully provide salads, breads, apple juice, milk, coffee and desserts for each lunch guest. However we purchase the food to make the main dish, usually soup, to serve our weekly guests. This soup kitchen exists through donations from church members and others. It does not use church budget monies for support. As the price of food increases and our number of guests rise, we need additional assistance to purchase the food and supplies.

We have a diverse group of church members who volunteer every week for Soup Lunch. Some of our church volunteers are members who did not really take an active role in the life of St. Paul before we started soup lunch. This has helped to revitalize our church members and gives them a purpose every week and a stronger faith connection. Our volunteer base at St. Paul has increased regularly over the course of our 3 years of Soup Lunch. In 2009 we averaged 13 volunteers every week. In 2010 our average volunteer participation was 18 volunteers each week and 2011 we averaged 19 volunteers a week.

We also have community people who loyally support our soup lunches with donations of food stuff and time. This has created wonderful intergenerational relationships between young adults, middle-agers and older retired seniors... as we connect each week and serve the Lord.

St. Paul Soup Lunch is making a real difference in our community!

In April 2012 St. Paul Soup Lunch received a generous donation from Siebert Lutheran Foundation to support our soup lunches for 2012 and 2013.