

Home Moravian Church

Mission Lovefeast

2/8/2026

I am so happy to be here and sharing a few thoughts this morning as we share in Lovefeast together. A simple meal. Think how many times you have shared a meal with others. So much of our life is shared over a meal. How many times have you or someone invited you to have lunch. To conduct business, to share fellowship. Sharing Lovefeast is a great way to start a conversation about hunger and poverty.

I am going to talk about food insecurity and clothing poverty this morning, and about Sunnyside Ministry, But, I think it is important to talk about how prominent the subject of poverty is in the gospels. Just a few examples:

¹¹ “If you have two coats,” Christ replied, “give one to the poor. If you have extra food, give it away to those who are hungry.” Luke 3:11

Each time we participate in communion we share one of the most tangible examples of a connection between us and Christ, in a meal of bread and wine.

Christ said: "you give them something to eat." As recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. He says this to his disciples, as he already knew the miracle he was to perform with two loaves and five fish when he fed 5000 men, plus women and children.

I place a high level of importance on this passage, that appears in all four gospels. Ginny or Craig might be able to correct me, but as I recall there are only a couple of passages that appear in all four Gospels.

They are the Baptism of Christ, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection, maybe one of two more. And then there is the feeding of the 5000.

Feeding people had a particular interest for Christ. As we ask, "when did we see you hungry..."

Hunger is real in this community, less than a five-minutes from us are our neighbors that will not even have as much as a bun and coffee for a meal today.

22.2% of children in Forsyth County are food insecure. In 2025, Sunnyside Ministry provided over 450,000 meals in the form of groceries to our neighbors. And yet we could have done more. Probably twice as much if there were more time and more volunteers and of course more food. I am not going to share a lot of numbers this morning, you want remember them and if you have questions about numbers, many of you know I am in the South Vestibule most Sunday mornings, just ask me.

I have a hard time accepting that we cannot help if there is a hungry child in this community, today, tomorrow or next week. If we can reduce that 22.2% to .2% and then 0%, imagine how that would change this community. No hungry children. One thing that is lost in numbers are faces. The faces of the child that comes to Sunnyside Ministry with

her mother, the cute little girl, who looks like the children seated around our sanctuary this morning. That child, her mother are my neighbors and they are people, just like you and me.

You might ask, when do you see me hungry... Less than two weeks ago, on Wednesday, January 28th, as there was still ice on many of our streets and Sunnyside Ministry was closed, I was there doing paperwork. There was a knock at the door. I went and there was a mother crying in the cold. There was a car from Forsyth County Department of Social Services with a little girl looking out of the back seat window. The mother said, through her tears. "I have run out of food, and I don't have anything to feed my child today. Can you help me?" I didn't pause or hesitate, I said wait in the car, I will be right back. I gathered four bags of groceries. A variety of fresh, frozen and canned food. In just a few minutes I had delivered them to the car. The Mother, still crying, but now what seemed like tears of relief, rather than tears

of fear, said THANK YOU! As did the social worker, the little girl smiled as she saw the groceries go into the back seat.

One could ask, how did this happen? The answer you may be looking for is “she is a neglectful mother.” But that is not the case. The mother is disabled, she receives a Social Security Check, less than \$1,000/mo. for her and her daughter to live on, no child support. She doesn’t own a car and bus transportation was using modified routes. We were closed the day before and she was out of food stamps. It is easy to blame poverty on the poor, but it is far more complex. The top of the mountain is much farther away, if you start from the bottom of the mountain. And even further when you have to make the climb alone.

We did we see you hungry...

We see the face of Christ daily at Sunnyside Ministry. A few weeks ago, Sylvia came for food and clothing assistance. She was being interviewed by a volunteer, as I walked the interview room, I heard: “there he is!” I turned to see her, she came over and gave me a big, big hug! I know

Sylvia, because when the weather is warm and nice, and I have a few minutes which to be honest is far less than I would like, I will go on our front porch and visit with our neighbors. Sylvia has been coming to Sunnyside Ministry for food for decades, she is on disability and has been on disability for a very long time, earning less than a thousand dollars a month. She remembers coming to Sunnyside Ministry when Jack White was the Director. He retired in 1990, as a reference for how long she has needed help with food. She has told me stories about Jack White, and she has honored me by saying I remind her of him. I find that incredibly humbling.

“When did I see you naked!”

Many of you have donated clothing to Sunnyside Ministry, we are grateful for these gifts. A couple of weeks ago, Abbie Flores, our Crisis Assistance Manager, received a phone call from a local elementary school, where a teacher was looking for a warm coat for a five-year-old who came to School on a freezing cold morning without a coat. Abbie

didn't start asking a bunch of questions like Why doesn't he have a coat? How did this happen? The question Abbie asked was what size does he wear. And she went to Clothing and found a like new heavy coat that was the child's size. Over the last couple of weeks in the cold weather, the child had a good coat to battle the elements. Abbie could have asked those questions, but here is something we know from working with local, high poverty schools. A five year old may have been dressed by a 12 year old sibling, because mom is making biscuits at Hardee's every morning.

"When was it that we saw you naked and gave you clothing?"

The food and clothing we distribute at Sunnyside Ministry are all made possible because of gifts from folks like you. And I would say that Home Church and its members are very generous to Sunnyside Ministry. And that has been the case since I was in High School and Sunnyside Ministry was a new ministry. Without those who donate clothing, food, and monetary gifts, none of this would have been possible.

It also takes people to make these opportunities to serve. Walt Disney said: 'You can design and create and build the most wonderful place in the world. But it takes people to make the dream a reality.' Our Board, our staff at Sunnyside Ministry, can have ideas and dreams that will change things for those in poverty in our community. But in order to make 100% or even 1% of those ideas and dreams a reality, it takes volunteers.

A lot of you are volunteering at or for Sunnyside Ministry all ready, Every shift, all nine each week, has at least one volunteer from Home Moravian helping our neighbors. Members of Home Church are on our board, remove our cardboard, and help us organize special events. The Joint Board came to Sunnyside Ministry last summer to bag beans and rice and laundry pods, we also did Beans, Rice and Laundry Pods twice during Wednesday Evening Fellowship here at Home Moravian, this Wednesday we will do it again. In a few weeks we will once again collect food for Lent, our Bagging Up Blessings Foodraiser.

I am an advocate of volunteering. One interesting thing about volunteering is that volunteers live longer. There are health benefits that come from volunteering, I shared this with a group of Methodists during a lunch group, last fall and one of them beat me back to Sunnyside Ministry to sign up to volunteer. According to the Mayo Clinic, and I hear they are pretty smart folks, there three health benefits that come from volunteering: first, Improved physical and mental health. They say; by spending time in service to others, volunteers report feeling a sense of meaning and appreciation, both given and received, which can have a stress-reducing effect.

For more than three years, about once a month Sunnyside Ministry gathers on a Tuesday Evening, at a Konnoak Hills Moravian Church and bags beans, rice or laundry pods. One of the things that makes these evenings exciting is a local group home for intellectually-disabled ladies who participates in the activity. I had a conversation with one lady while bagging rice, and she asked. "What do you do with these bags of

rice?” I explained that we give them to people who are hungry. I said there are a lot of people who do not have enough food to eat. She said, as she held a bag of rice she had just filled, “someone is going to have this for supper?” is said yes! And she said “that makes me feel good!” and I told her that It makes me feel good, too.

Second, volunteering provides a sense of purpose and teaches valuable skills. The work that volunteers provide is essential to everyday activities, giving volunteers a sense of purpose, especially when giving their time and talent in the areas they find meaningful. Older volunteers experience greater increases in life satisfaction and self-esteem.

One of the hardest days I experienced at Sunnyside Ministry was Friday, March 20th, 2020. That was the day when NC issued the COVID-19, “stay at home order.” We decided we had to ask our volunteers to stay at home, that left a group of eight of us to fill food orders and review financial assistance requests.

Many of our volunteers stayed in contact with us. They told us how they missed us. And how they couldn't wait to return.

We missed them and we know they missed us, but to be honest, they missed our neighbors. because helping others is a feeling that is hard to experience by any other means.

Third, volunteering nurtures new and existing relationships. Volunteering increases social interaction and helps build a support system based on common interests. One of the best ways to make new friends and strengthen existing relationships is to participate in a shared activity.

There is a story I have to share with you, it says so much about this congregation and how we take seriously our affirmation during Baptism, when we are asked: "Do you affirm these children of God as members of this congregation, and accept our obligation to love and nurture them in Christ."

Last spring on her Birthday, Adelaide Merrick, a member of our congregation and a teenager on her Birthday brought five of her friends to

Sunnyside Ministry to volunteer for the afternoon. Adelaide had been coming to Sunnyside Ministry with her grandfather, Charles Turner for years to work in the Food Pantry, and over the 2024-2025 school year she brought the R J Reynolds Girls Service Club once or twice a month to volunteer. The group had a good time, they worked hard, but they also had fun, laughed and told stories. This is how volunteering should feel.

We are a congregation engaged in this community. We walked in the CROP Hunger walk; the second largest CROP walk in the US in 2025. We work at overflow shelters and Samaritan Ministries shelter, we volunteer with the Forsyth Jail and Prison Ministry, responding, “when did we see you in prison.” I will share that having a conversation with a young man that has spent every day of his life since he was seventeen years old in a prison and at 32 is six months from being released is eye opening. Imagine if you were isolated from life for the last 15 years, since 2006, and you were just about to reenter the world today. How much has changed, and how much help does this young man need? And much of that help will come from volunteers

In 2003 the youth of Home Moravian Participated in the first ever Mission Camp at Laurel Ridge. It was an incredible week of mission and learning for both the youth and adults. We have gone to this camp many more times over the years, but that first week will remain in my memory forever. It is hard to spend a week helping someone, getting to know that person and not forming a bond. At one worksite, we replaced the floor in a mobile home, the owner who was battling cancer had a leak in his kitchen sink, he couldn't fix and it caused his floor to develop a bulge, and he almost tripped every time he walked through his kitchen.

In 2004, one year after we did that first camp, we were back for a second year. The Sunday evening of that camp we got information that the gentleman whose trailer we had repaired the year before had passed away just a few days before we arrived for that second year. That first night at the camp as we gathered around a campfire some of the youth that had been there the previous year talked to the first-time campers about what to expect. One of the Home Church Youth, who had helped replace the floor in that mobile home, stood in front of the group and cried as he told the story

of replacing the floor and getting to know the man. Helping someone else changes you.

If you hand a person a bag of groceries, you feed them, but it changes you.

Handing a person a coat on a cold day helps keep them warm, but it changes you. Telling someone that they are not going to be evicted helps relieve their stress, but it changes you! Filling a bag with beans or rice is a simple activity. But when you pause to realize that you are holding part of a meal for a hungry family, that changes you.

Christ said we are to love our neighbor, I believe he defined who our neighbor is in this passage from Luke 14: “When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers and sisters or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. ¹³ But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. ¹⁴ And you will be blessed because they cannot repay you.”

Lord, open our eyes, our hearts and our minds so that we will see you, when you are hungry, thirsty, cold, and lonely. So that we look into the face of

everyone we meet with the anticipation that we are seeing you. We know this is true, because the Holy Spirit dwells within us, and within our neighbor. When did we see you...every time we look at someone else with an open heart.

Amen