

Starting a Community Ministry: One Congregation's Story

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It was a breezy and warm day at the local park. We brought the grill, some of the youth group, and several boxes of food to cook and serve. The lemonade and water jugs were set out and just like the breeze in the air, the people started coming by. One by one, two by two, friends sat down together and new friends were made.

The Free Community Meals cookout drew 74 people that day and just like Jesus's miracle on the hillside, there was plenty of food for everyone to have their fill. It was an awesome day and everyone is looking forward to next month's meal. They will bring their friends!



How did it get started? In May 2015, our small town church started serving Free Community Meals, inspired by learning of our gifts and the community's needs in the **Wisconsin Council of Churches Hunger at our Doorstep Program**. I asked our church council to support my secretary and me launching this ministry for the remainder of the year. We got a few helpers from the congregation and started making monthly lunches, free and open to everyone.

As a pastor, I wanted our people to get to know our neighbors, and to feed them, in partnership with local businesses and the larger church. We asked for donations, and we got them. We applied for a grant from the **Neighbors in Need** fund, and it was given.

Brookfield Congregational Church is helping to fund us as well, and the program is financially secure through the beginning of next year.

We are still getting started, but we have lots of support. It's not costing the church much more than the cost of utilities. We still need a few more people to help serve, but we are making this a new tradition. What's your passion as a congregation? Just try it. You might just find that it works!

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