

We will have a Q&A afterwards and then we will receive Holy Communion.

In 2017 we helped 69 times for a total of \$11,884.93. That averaged \$990 per month. In 2018 we've helped 31 times for \$5,855.50. So far that averages \$1,153.06 per month.

Ways We Help Financially

Electricity (all at Dominion Energy. Dominion Energy loves us!)

Rent and trailer space rent (check always written to landlord or management agency)

Motel housing (Glou. Inn Motel, Tidewater Motel.) Weekly rates. TM has larger suites.

HRSD (sanitation, water)

grocery store gift cards (Food Lion, used to do Farm Fresh)

tank of gas (we have an account at Phillips. The person goes, fills up, Phillips bills us.)

automotive repair (one man who was in our GUEST, and one woman relocating in area)

DMV updated driver's license

Working policy that I inherited from my Predecessor

We help members and nonmembers. We require picture ID.

We limit financial help to a person or family to once a year.

We partner with local churches and agencies.

We require folks to bring a copy of bill/notice & photo ID. Photo text in extreme sits.

I determine the amount we assist with.

Two names are on the account: mine and the chairperson of finance.

We give folks a list of churches and agencies to call and we ask who we're working with.

We keep a register that includes date, names, address, type of assistance, and amount.

We assist only residents of Gloucester County unless they are a Bethany member.

We pray with them. We are conscious of their spiritual needs.

We ask if they have a social worker or advocate and request an Information Release

Form to provide the best possible service. If they refuse to sign an IR, we still help but not as much.

Are there things we do not do?

We don't hand out cash.

We don't pay phone bills or cable bills.

I don't make house calls to pick up their bill. They have to make arrangements.

I don't drive people in my car. (*Can you take me to Food Lion or Tidewater Motel? No.*)

We do not help with utility cut-offs. People need to call before service is terminated.

Two things I do different from my Predecessor:

1. I'm open to helping people more than once a year and have done so.

I know there are pros and cons to this. I pray about every situation then do what I feel led to do. If I feel like a person is taking advantage of me or coming to rely on Bethany as a second stream of income, I suspend assistance. Otherwise, I feel that if people need help and we have money, help them.

2. I ask for other info (phone, email, # in Hh, names and ages of children).

I hope we will use this info. To encourage and invite children to events like VBS.

Do you invite them to church? Always. Sundays, other programs and special events.

Come worship with us. Give us a try.

What do I wear? Unless they have their pajama trouser pants on or dressed immodestly I say *What you have on is fine. You'll find people dressed in different ways at Bethany.*

All people are welcome. So, we have to be more than inviting. Folks don't want to be known as the person in need or let that define them. I find folks want caring friendships, they want to be a friend and want to have friends.

Do we see any new people from this ministry? Yes. Because of your love and people feel the Holy Spirit here. Practically speaking, it's evident people feel better once they have the need met and some stress lifted and so they experience God's love.

Quiz time! I want to ask you 3 questions about our area.

1st Q: What is the county seat of Gloucester County? A: *Gloucester Courthouse.*

2nd Q: How many census-designated places are there in GC, and what are they?

A: *Two. Gloucester Courthouse and Gloucester Point.*

3rd Q: How many unincorporated communities are in GC? A: *84. Mathews County has 4.*

We get requests from many communities – from here to *Glenns* to *Dutton* to *Lands End* to *Naxera* and home again. Folks know Bethany is a church that helps others in crisis. There's no doubt that people in crisis talk and share who helped them. We see senior citizens in perpetual need living in poverty. We see working people with and without kids. Very often Dee Dee and I hear they simply don't make enough money to live on.

I don't know of any churches in our county who help nonmembers in neighboring counties. Some churches have defined geographical boundaries within our county for giving assistance. For example, one church's policy is to help people who only live between the York River and as far out as Providence Road.

How It Happens

Most folks phone us themselves requesting help. The second most frequent is walk-ins and third is by referral from agency or other church. We listen to their story and schedule them to come in if we have funds. More often than not, Dee Dee takes down some basic info. I meet with the person and decide how much we assist with. Dee Dee takes care of the correspondence via email and makes copies for our records.

Dee Dee talks with folks, too. Both of us pray with people. We offer spiritual help. Most folks are embarrassed to come and ask for help. *All of us need help sometime.*

I ask if I may partner with their Pastor, Priest or church. If they say they haven't got one, or if they don't know their name, then I know they are unchurched. *Give us a try.*

I say, *"Bethany is happy to help you. This is not my giving money helping you. Some people think it's me. This comes from the people of Bethany Church. When everyone gives what they can and knows how it blesses, we have enough. We can do more together than alone. We want the best for you and hope this helps you."*

Dee Dee has a big heart for people. She's doing a great job. We've seen five-minute phone calls turn into a much longer phone call because when people are at their breaking point they need someone to talk with. Just someone to listen.

We see a big uptick in requests following Christmas and in winter. Everyone's stretching their dollar all year long. *Old saying: You can only spend a dollar once.* Folks want to give Christmas presents, and have more food on hand. Also, we meet watermen, construction workers, and other laborers who work outside and only get paid by the job: no work and no income in bad weather. We see a lot of that.

Let me say a word about Motel Housing and Emergency Housing.

In winter, we refer people to G.U.E.S.T. rather than pay for or assist with a room. It would have to be extenuating circumstances to do a hotel when GUEST is available.

What are the Challenges to this ministry?

I'll offer 3 I've seen in the folks we serve, and then 1 that I think is a challenge for us.

1. I think Discouragement is one, paired with low self-esteem and worn out that comes with the constant worry of money. The battle of not having enough money, and not allowing money to define who you are.
2. Helping folks see that money is ultimately a spiritual issue. Some folks just don't see any peace until that bill gets paid or the need is met.

3. I'm guessing some folks are in crisis in part because they didn't plan financially for the next bill or their tomorrows. I think basic money management is a skill **everyone** needs.

A challenge for us.

This comes out of my years pastoring, recently working with 3e Restoration in WB, and before that, working with Emergency Shelter in Richmond. It's the mindset that says people are poor because they're lazy and just want to sponge off society. I find this stereotype to some degree in agencies, churches, and individuals in of every age, socioeconomic class, race, creed, and occupation. I don't mean to imply that everyone at Bethany has that mindset. Many of you don't have that mindset, but some do.

My thought? Yes Sure, some are lazy. There are folks who don't try so hard and want a handout. But you can find laziness in 1,000 places. **Yes,** there are folks who sponge off. Co-dependency becomes a fixture, a survival tool right there.

But I think it's unfair and inaccurate to generalize that to ALL folks in crisis everywhere ALL the time. I find the great majority of folks in need care a lot. I find those same folks want caring friendships, they want to be a friend and want to have friends.

Next steps?

Time management. This wonderful ministry takes energy, time and it works on your heart. We're glad to do it! It's a privilege. We also want to be good stewards and not let other ministry areas go undone – areas we are paid to do, too. We've discussed receiving people on specified days rather than 5 days a week.

Training volunteers.

- I'm glad to announce 3 ladies have agreed to serve as volunteers! They will receive some training in meeting folks and gathering basic information. After they meet with folks, they'll meet with me.
- Volunteers can be trained to pray with folks.
- AND send invitations to services and events if they're willing.

There are success stories out there. Some we'll know and discover, and celebrate with them! And some we'll never know.

THANK YOU for giving to the LORD! It really helps people. We do it because we want people to see Jesus. Folks can see Jesus' love in you. In us. Thank you for your heart for folks and families in crisis. People see God's love because of your faith, participation and generosity. ***Let's have a brief time of Q&A before we come to the Lord's table.***