



On Tuesday, March 19th, it was evident the flood damage was historic and residents of Valley and surrounding areas were suffering devastation and overwhelming losses. St. Mark's, together with United Faith Church and St. John's Catholic Church, collectively pulled together to do whatever they could do to help. United Faith offered to receive donations of cleaning supplies, bottled water, household goods, used clothing/shoes, canned food, paper products, etc. St. Mark's and St. John's supported one another in getting the people fed. Members of St. Mark's prepared and served hot meals on Wednesday, Thursday, Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday. St. John's Catholic members came to St. Mark's kitchen and served on Friday and Saturday, with 870 people being served on Saturday alone. St. John's moved "operations" over to their church to serve hot meals on Wednesday and Thursday to honor a funeral service at St. Mark's.

By word of mouth and a quick home-made sign in St. Mark's front yard, they started serving hot meals on March 20th from 11am-7pm (most nights until 8pm). It was open to anyone who was evacuated and coming home, volunteers, or anyone in need of a meal. In the first 6 days they served almost 2700 meals. They also made "to go" meals available for those who were anxious to return to their homes or additional family members, neighbors, and volunteers who did not want to leave where they were working/cleaning.

Sharon Josoff, one of the volunteers and meal service coordinators for St. Mark's described the days as feeling like Jesus feeding the multitudes with 2 fish and 5 loaves of bread. The first day she prepared 20 gallons of chicken noodle soup and others from the churches brought in bread, lunch meat & cheese. That same day, they were planning their future meals and how they would pay for them, when 3 volunteers wheeled in 6 cases of ground beef from Greater Omaha Packing. Soon thereafter a case of pork butts was delivered, 8 cases of Village Pie

Maker pies-some already baked and ready to serve, Rotella Bread-all varieties of breads, buns, rolls, Olive Garden from two different Omaha locations not only supplied soup, bread sticks, and green salad for 1,000 people, they sent a crew to work with the volunteers. We'll Smoke U BBQ from Gretna delivered 850 meals of smoked pulled pork, buns, & chips and Porky Butts Catering also smoked that donated case of pork butts for the meal service. Great Western Bank wheeled in 8 large insulated coolers filled with water, soda, & Gatorade on ice. Then their team stayed to help with serving and cleaning tables. Anheuser-Busch donated 10 cases of canned water. Hy-Vee on 180th & Q sent 4 very large boxes of desserts, including cupcakes and cheesecakes. Family Fare in Elkhorn donated a large decorated cake with "Thank you for serving" on it. Rev. Becky Sells from Lord of Love Lutheran Church came with baked pies and cookies. And a small independent company called Maxines' brought & set up their soft serve ice cream machine, serving vanilla ice cream with lots of toppings for 3 hours.



There was also a wonderful spaghetti dinner for 150 people that the First Baptist Church in Plattsmouth brought to St. Mark's. Delivered on Tuesday, this gift included spaghetti, bread sticks, and lettuce salad. Countless people walked through their doors with food, desserts, drinks, money for food, and time to give in service. God's provision was a "flood" so overwhelming the coordinators simply couldn't keep track of who or how much was arriving. But there was no need to track all the wonderful individuals and local businesses, as no one asked for recognition, or for their donations to be recorded. They felt compelled to help. On Saturday, they prepared extra Mexican food knowing the crowds would be larger. They had served over 500 by 1pm and ran out of refried beans and Spanish rice. They were preparing to send volunteers to purchase more, when a tall gentleman walked in and asked, "*Just wondering if you could use some refried beans and Spanish rice? We heard you were serving tacos today!*" Sharon Josoff and the lead organizer from St. John's just looked at each other

and started shouting "Yes!" and soon they were tearing up. God had provided for them so abundantly, so perfectly, and so timely. El Bee's Restaurant in Waterloo had sent over 4 large foil pans of beans and 4 large pans of rice. With this donation, they had enough to finish the day strong.

Volunteers from Physicians Clinic Women's Center 192nd & Dodge came to St. Mark's on Saturday and Sunday and gave free Tetanus shots to 140 people. On Monday, 4 trained counselors were present for anyone dealing with grief, depression, or helplessness. They simply went to listen, pray, and encourage.

They heard so many heart-wrenching stories of complete loss, as well as stories of stamina and tenacity. An elderly couple who lost everything, was evacuated to a shelter in Fremont but due to disabilities, the wife had to sleep in her wheel chair for 4 days. Eventually she had to go to the emergency room. They came every day to eat and just sit in a warm and safe place. Within the 6 days of this couple going to St. Mark's, they found a new apartment and received a new box springs, mattress, couch, table, chairs, and a rocker for their new place-all from strangers. God was present and moving among His people every single day throughout this time of need.

