

## **ST. LUKE'S FOOD PANTRY'S 5<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY**

Five years ago on August 24, 2018, St. Luke's Food Pantry officially opened its doors to those in our community who need supplemental nutritional assistance. Planning had begun as far back as May of that year and the Pantry had its start in trying to meet the needs of school children and their families in Chino Valley. When the doors first opened there were no customers that day, but the diligence of those who founded the program was rewarded shortly thereafter. The initial Food Pantry was contained in a closet in the large conference room next to the office reception area. Soon the program was serving between 15 – 20 families each week. As the program grew, in addition to helping families with children we have also become a key resource for the many seniors in our community who also have varying degrees of food insecurity. In addition to the weekly distribution of food in the Pantry, we have also provided Thanksgiving dinner boxes to over thirty families for the last five years. As the program expanded, St. Luke's made additional space available in the southwest hallway where the Pantry is open for food distribution on Fridays from 9:00 a.m. to noon.

St. Luke's Food Pantry remained open throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, adjusting its operations to help prevent the spread of the disease. As the program continued to grow and resources became more limited, late in 2022 we applied to become an affiliate of St. Mary's Food Bank in Phoenix. St. Mary's is the major distributor of nutritional assistance in the state. We were accepted as an affiliate of St. Mary's in January receiving our first drop of food on January 12, 2023. The number of families, individuals, and children we serve each month has doubled since and we would not have been able to accomplish this without the assistance we receive from St. Mary's. Over the last five years members of St. Luke's have been generous in their support for equipment and supplies as well as their donations of food. Operational financial assistance from St. Luke's general budget has not been necessary until recently.

If you happen to share our passion for Jesus' imperative to feed the hungry and give the thirsty something to drink (contained in Matthew 25) there are three ways you can support this ministry. First, we need additional volunteers from time to time especially when we pick up donations from the Yavapai County Green Bag program in February, June and October and when Mary's delivers the food we receive from them on the second and fourth Thursdays of each month. Second, there are volunteers in the pantry Thursday from noon to 2:00 p.m. ready to receive your donations of any unopened food (we are located on the south end of the Western hallway in the circular driveway). Lastly, cash contributions specifically designated for St. Luke's Food Pantry are welcome at any time and greatly appreciated. If you have any questions or would like additional information, you can contact any of the co-chairs; Carolyn Jones at [cajones4662@gmail.com](mailto:cajones4662@gmail.com), Rebecca McClelland at [paris83rlm@gmail.com](mailto:paris83rlm@gmail.com), or George Chesney at [gchesney47@gmail.com](mailto:gchesney47@gmail.com).