

Free Farmers Market



WHAT A PRIVILEGE IT HAS BEEN for the Redeemer prayer team to participate at Free Farmers Market. When the idea of a Free Farmers Market was first discussed as a part of Church of the Redeemer's response to the pandemic, Sally Miller clearly saw Redeemer's prayer team being a part of it. She saw the prayer team offering a table for prayer with the guests, a place complete with colorful prayer request cards and a backdrop of brightly colored ribbons like prayer flags waving in the breeze with the prayers attached.

The Free Farmers Market had the atmosphere of a harvest festival: brisk sunny days (mostly) with an assortment of produce coming in waves of harvest, and the sharing of these gifts of organic produce. The sharing of prayer was a natural part of this festival. Two people were usually stationed at the prayer team's table--a prayer team member and a clergy member. We usually had between 15 and 25 people drop by for prayers. Sally and David Miller and Mercy Ogunjobi were a vital part of the prayer team's presence. Any doubt that I had concerning the need for our presence left me after our first two requests for prayer, both concerned homelessness--one from a gentleman who was living in his car, and the other from an elder lady who was soon to lose her place to live.

We prayed for both guests and also for some volunteers. Prayer requests came in three different ways: by invitation or offering: a team member would ask "would you like us to pray for you?" By seeking us out: a guest would come by the table and ask for prayers and also by filling out a card and leaving it in a box stationed on one of the picnic tables. Many children filled out the colorful cards at the tables. We also let people know that we would pray for them immediately right there and then if they would like, but also that the whole prayer team would be praying for them in the upcoming week as well. Nearly all wanted to be prayed for right then with the team members at the table.

We prayed for so many different things, We prayed for fear of the virus, grief, health and family concerns, marriages, financial worries, homelessness, arthritis, a son in prison, an aunt with cancer, a father with a heart condition, pain in the back, legs, shoulders, a family member with schizophrenia, protection from addiction, an end to anxiety, success at school, and over and over again a hunger for a closer relationship with God.

In return we received so much: gratefulness, gladness, some tears, some returning each week, some sharing that their prayers were answered and some healings. As each prayer team member knows, you cannot pray with others and not be changed yourself.

Jim Godfrey

Tammi Marohn

THE FREE FARMERS MARKET has been a lovely light during this pandemic and isolation. As the leader of the Hospitality Team, I organized volunteers to serve as car greeters, to welcome visitors, and to explain the workings of the market. At times, we would almost be scrambling for volunteers. But the Lord provided every single time! What a great reminder of God's constant love and care for us.

It was a joy to meet new friends from Redeemer and also meet new people from our community. Week after week, customers would return and sometimes bring a friend or family member to experience the market. Our arms, our hearts, and our food supply just stretched a bit further as we welcomed more and more people. It was amazing how we never ran out of food to share! The lines would sometimes be long as we monitored how many people were in the market area. We were compliant with COVID regulations and safely distanced shoppers from one another. This waiting provided time for us to chat with people and obtain their names and emails for follow up during the week. My team was so good at making each person feel welcome and loved. I am grateful that so many volunteers showed up each week--rain or shine, warm or cold. Some images in my mind are the smiles of children that made a flower bouquet, families sitting down for a pancake or waffle breakfast and volunteers praying over guests at their request. When we all come together, God through us can do remarkable things! I am thankful to have been a part of this endeavor.

WHEN FARM DIRECTOR LENA VAN WYK approached me about the vision for having a free farmers market and about my managing it, I was both intrigued and, frankly, apprehensive (you could even say a bit skeptical). There were a plethora of considerations. How would we be able to pull this off? How would we be able to target those who truly needed help and how would we be able to control this from being exploited? Would we be able to provide all that the community needed? And, the big gorilla in the room, how could we ever manage a market in the midst of a pandemic? The answer soon became evident: we couldn't. But we all agreed we needed to trust God that this was going to happen. So the work began, and boy, He didn't let us down!

For me, the best (and most beautiful) thing (and there are dozens!) that has come out of this whole experiment is God's miraculous intervention in provision, cooperation, community, and especially the outpouring of love I have been privileged to witness--not only with the Church of the Redeemer community, but the community at large. Miraculous is the only way to describe it. Every week except two (when we actually had an over-abundance!), we had exactly enough food for exactly the amount of people who attended the market.

In addition, we have made some wonderful friends, had volunteers come to help us who didn't go to our church, and had the privilege to pray for dozens upon dozens of people. One particular guest, a Jewish woman, told me the first week of the market with tears in her eyes, "this is the most beautiful thing I've ever seen. You all are truly walking the walk." That still gives me goosebumps, even today. From this skeptic in the early days, I can honestly say: to God be the glory! He has proven to me once again that nothing is impossible with God.

Leigh Wills

Deedee Ungetheim

MY JOB AT THE FREE FARMERS MARKET was to gather volunteers to work the market stands each of the twelve Saturday mornings. The most thrilling part of this was the number of teens that came out and helped again and again. River Lewkowitz took on the job of pursuing the teens each week to see who was willing to help, and help, they did! Nearly every week, we had about ten teens show up to set up

tents and tables, to carry chairs and to pack food for our guests. They arrived at 8:00 am Saturday morning. We truly couldn't have done it without them. I do hope and believe that they will remember serving our guests for many years to come and no doubt that opportunity will impact their hearts and increase compassion in their hearts for those that are struggling to find enough to eat.

It took a lot of manpower to set up, tear down, and man the booths each week. The first few weeks, by Thursday, I was stressing over whether or not we had enough help. But week after week, people crawled out of bed early on Saturday morning to come serve. We always had enough people and we seemed to always have the right amount of food. In the spirit of the loaves and fishes, we always seemed to have just what we needed in terms of product and manpower: A great reminder that what the Lord ordains, He will supply.

It was a delight to meet our guests, grab a carton of eggs to put in their bags, learn about pork belly and Swiss Chard and an African vegetable called Intogi. The gratefulness of our guests spoke volumes to the meaning of community--helping one another along on this bumpy road called life.

