



COVID Response 2020 A Targeted Way to Help Neighbors in Need

Our patron saint Stephen was one of the first deacons of the Christian Church and the first Christian martyr.

Early in his ministry, as the number of disciples in the growing church increased, there arose much confusion over the distribution of alms to those living at the margins. Stephen's trustworthy character distinguished him as an able organizer and administrator; and he was chosen as one of the seven deacons who would identify need and disburse care and funds within the surrounding community.

In the spirit of Saint Stephen's outreach ministry, and in this time of heightened need by our neighbors, the vestry of this parish decided at their last meeting on April 27 to form a short-term, *ad hoc* committee to assess and respond in a well-reasoned, deliberate, intentional and immediate way. Nimble and devoted, a group formed to explore ways that the larger community of St Stephen's Church could contribute in meaningful and significant ways. The hope is that this committee will seed a more formalized outreach committee for the longer term.

In the immediate term, Senior Warden Bobby Moore invited and convened the committee of dedicated and receptive members—Pam Martori, Kathy Perasso, and Sarah Sung—to serve as a structure to evaluate current and pressing needs of local charities impacted

by the Coronavirus crisis. The committee, working with great diligence, dedication, and speed vetted 5 local agencies to see where funds could make the most impact. They made a recommendation to the clergy who wholeheartedly support their efforts. Based on their recommendation, a donation campaign will roll out to the whole parish as we seek to serve and support our most vulnerable neighbors in a coordinated and communal way.

After careful due diligence and conversations with agency heads, the committee overwhelmingly and unanimously identified ExtraFood of Marin as the focused contributions recipient. ExtraFood Marin (<https://extrafood.org>) addresses critical issues of hunger, wasted food, and the climate crisis by collecting excess fresh food from businesses and immediately dispersing it to Marin's most vulnerable children, adults, and families via pantries and distribution locations. Even now as most food ministries are closed due to the shelter-in-place order, ExtraFood is directing deliveries through St Stephen's to help make 75 meal bags per week for distribution at St Vincent's and Open Door Ministries.

While having a previously established relationship with the charities considered by the committee was not a requirement, it worked out well that members of our congregation have already been quietly volunteering with this organization's efforts for years. The recommendation of the ad hoc committee strengthens our ties with ExtraFood and allows St Stephen's to make an even greater impact in the dual mission to lessen food insecurity and improve climate sustainability.

Many congregants have been wondering what they can do to make a positive difference in this time of crisis. St Stephen's Church has started a fund and welcomes your contribution. Leadership has dedicated an initial grant of \$4100 to support this effort and welcomes your donations to collect a sizeable and generous donation. 100% of your contributions will go to extending the mission and ministry of ExtraFood. This Sunday is Mother's Day, why not make a valuable gift in honor of the women in your life who have nurtured, loved, and cared for you!

To give: [Click here](#) to donate with a credit card via Paypal. Please indicate that your donation is for **COVID Response 2020**. You can give by check to St Stephen's, PO Box 97, Belvedere, CA 94920, with **COVID Response 2020** in the memo line. If you would like to donate stock or securities, please contact the office for brokerage instructions: elizabeth@ststephenschurch.org or betsy@ststephenschurch.org. All contributions are deductible to the full extent of the law.

Thank you Bobby, Sarah, Kathy, and Pam for your quick-acting and compassionate service on behalf of this congregation's ability to reach out and make an impact for good in our neighboring community!