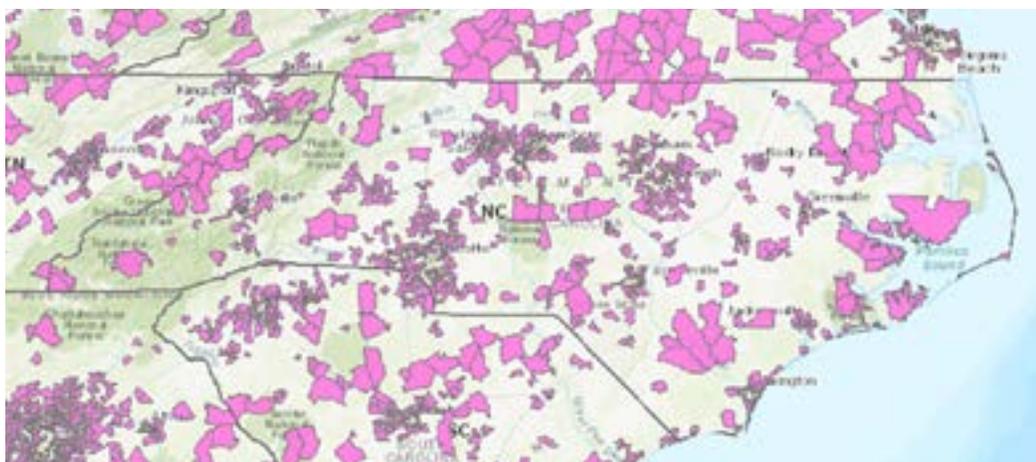


# COMMUNITY FOOD BANK: A GREAT WAY TO ENGAGE YOUR

*Community*

Ukraine has long been known as the “breadbasket of the world” due to its bountiful agricultural production and export industry, but with the 2022 Russian invasion of the nation, long-lasting impacts will almost certainly be felt worldwide. Combined with the challenges of supply chain delays, labor shortages and the highest inflation rate in more than four decades, this creates growing concerns about food shortages and food insecurity.



Areas shaded in pink qualify as “food deserts” because at least 500 people or 33% of the population live farther than 1 mile (urban) or 10 miles (rural) from the nearest supermarket. Source: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/go-to-the-atlas/>

In areas known as “food deserts,” where there is already little access to affordable healthy food, the impact will be far greater. At least 80 of North Carolina’s 100 counties contain at least one of these food deserts.

Challenges like these are pivotal moments for N.C. Baptists to shine the light of Jesus and share His love with people who are experiencing fear, uncertainty, hopelessness and despair. By meeting needs, followers of Jesus have the opportunity to meet new people—and in the context of those newfound

relationships, the gospel goes forth, disciples are made, and lives are transformed.

Churches must be intentionally evangelistic as they endeavor to provide any kind of food ministry in the community. A box of food may meet a temporal need, but only the gospel of Jesus Christ can satisfy our eternal need. Good deeds and acts of kindness can build a platform for the gospel, but these efforts do not proclaim the gospel unless accompanied by our words.



Churches that desire to engage in food ministries must prepare through prayer and equipping. Specifically, churches should pray for those they will encounter through these ministries before they ever meet them, when they meet them and long after they meet them. Volunteers should make it a regular practice to pray by name for all those they serve. They should also offer to pray with recipients for any needs that might be shared.

Volunteers must be trained in basic evangelism methods: sharing a personal testimony, having a gospel conversation, effective use of gospel literature, etc. The North American Mission Board has a variety of training resources available at [www.namb.net/evangelism](http://www.namb.net/evangelism).

It will often be the case that the most fruitful evangelistic work is done after food distribution has taken place. Every effort should be taken to ensure that saying “yes” to the gospel is not a prerequisite for receiving food, and that there are no “strings attached” to the offer of food or the offer of salvation.

Strive to follow up repeatedly with food recipients in a relational and loving manner. A good conversation starter might be as simple as, “We’ve been praying for you since you shared the need with us, and we wanted

to see how you are doing.” Consistently demonstrating interest in the whole person goes a long way toward establishing and nurturing a relationship of trust and mutual concern.

As these conversations unfold, ministry volunteers can bridge into gospel conversations through their personal testimony, Scripture portions or with an ongoing Discovery Bible Study (several examples are linked below). This might happen in one encounter, or it may happen over weeks, months or longer. The task of evangelism is not complete until the whole gospel has been made known, understood, and the opportunity to respond in repentance and faith has been extended.

Those who receive Jesus should be immediately discipled in a relational, one-on-one or small group setting. As new believers are discipled, they often become the most effective disciple-makers.

The growing number of hard-working North Carolinians who are struggling to make ends meet and put food on the table live within a stone’s throw of N.C. Baptist churches. How can your church care for these hurting neighbors in practical, tangible ways? The following list of ideas and resources are just a starting point for your church to show and share the Good News in your community.

# RESOURCES

 [Baptists on Mission: Food Pantry Outreach](#)

 [Baptists on Mission: Food Bank Network](#)

 [Baptists on Mission: Starting a Garden Ministry](#)

 [Baptists on Mission: Mobile Medical and Dental Clinics](#)

*Many families will forego much-needed medical screening and dental care in order to meet more urgent needs.*

 [NC Baptist Hunger Fund](#)

*Give to the NC Hunger Fund and apply for financial support to operate your church's feeding ministry.*

 [Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina Food Roundup](#)

*Host a food drive to collect items for Baptist Children's Homes. Invite the community to participate, being sensitive to respond to needs you may discover as you interact with church neighbors.*

 [NC State Extension Service](#)

*Host a community event at your church, and invite a representative from your local Extension office to make a presentation on gardening, nutrition or other topics relevant to the needs of your community. A directory of county offices can be found on the Extension Service website.*

 [NAMB Evangelism Resources](#)

## DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDIES

 [Stories of Hope](#)

 [The Story](#)

 [Commands of Christ](#)

*immediate, obedience-based discipleship for new believers*