

Sharing & Caring

Serving The Midlands for 39 years

Understanding crisis clients in a post-COVID economy

Many will struggle to catch up and then keep up

The availability of vaccines may signal a return to pre-COVID-19 familiarity, but The Cooperative Ministry is forecasting a slow economic comeback for its crisis assistance clients – many of whom are struggling to avoid homelessness in the pandemic’s wake.

Bill Taber, Director of Crisis Assistance, says,



“Right now, one-fourth of all Richland County renters, who have children in the home, are behind in their rent by three or four months.” For some, that economic hole may have walls that are too steep to climb. Many are turning to The Cooperative Ministry for assistance.

“Compared to pre-COVID numbers, requests for crisis assistance are up about 250 percent,” Bill says. “We have been so fortunate to receive support from our church partners, family foundation grants, corporate grants and donations, and many private donations to help meet that need. Last year, many people forwarded their government stimulus check to The Cooperative Ministry as a gift.

“But, by no means are we out of the woods,” Bill says. “The economic recovery will take much longer than the medical recovery. It’s important for our community to come together to help one another.”

On the front line of listening and serving clients in crisis, Bill explains the scenario.

“In March 2020, because of COVID-19, the economic slowdown began, resulting in hourly-wage earners receiving less hours at work. Then layoffs began, especially within hospitality and service industries,” Bill says. “For many, unemployment benefits were not available, but those who qualified used up the maximum amount fairly quickly. Savings accounts and 401K accounts were depleted. Then, bills went unpaid and that led to skyrocketing car



repossessions. Without transportation, people can’t get to jobs – even if Columbia’s suburbs have available jobs.

“As courts reopen, we can expect a rising number of evictions, potentially leading to homelessness,” Bill says. “People get so far behind on rent and utilities - it’s tough to make up that ground.”

Bill says a University of South Carolina study titled “Tracking the COVID-19 Recession Effects in SC” reports that 25-45 percent of the hospitality and service jobs will never reopen. “That affects thousands of workers, and especially women with children.” Most of The Cooperative Ministry’s clients are women caring for at least one child though COVID-19 has widened the age gap to include younger adults and seniors.

“People are scared and hurting,” Bill says. “When I talk to them, they are really struggling with basic needs like shelter, food, clothing, and transportation.”

There is optimism. “The one thing that I know about the Midlands is that our people rise to the occasion to help one another,” Bill says. “Yes, the economic recovery will be hard for a lot people, but I am confident that people in our community will rally to meet the need, individually, and through their churches, businesses, and neighborhoods.”

ONE car donation can help as many as **FIVE** families with basic needs

What donors should know about the Car Program

A single car donation to The Cooperative Ministry's Car Program can help as many as five families with basic needs.

Like many non-profits, The Cooperative Ministry has a cars-for-cash program. One exception is that The Cooperative Ministry's Car Program is managed in-house, keeping proceeds local to benefit the Midlands community.

Cars, in all conditions, are towed for free and sold at auction. Weekday pickup is usually within 24 hours. Because The Cooperative Ministry is a debt-free organization, 89 cents of every dollar is used for direct program services.

The basic needs of clients include payments for rent and utility assistance; free clothing from our clothing bank, including new work boots and non-slip shoes; help with medical bills; and emergency food from our food pantry.

**THE
COOPERATIVE
MINISTRY**

Serving the Midlands for 39 Years



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- Free Towing - Weekday pickup within 24 hours or as scheduled.
- Knowledgeable guidance with Title Transfer.
- Letter of Receipt and Disposal for Tax Purposes.

Please help spread the word. Your car donation can turn into critical aid for those in crisis.

Please call Scott Vaughan on his direct line at (803) 799-2428 regarding a donation or complete the online form at coopmin.org/donate-your-car.

The Cooperative Ministry's 2020 Impact

13,336 PEOPLE received help through crisis and sustainability services

953 PAYMENTS were made for rent or utility assistance

2,107 PEOPLE benefitted from food assistance

3,260 PEOPLE benefitted from free clothing for school and work

7,496 FREE tax returns were prepared

313 VOLUNTEERS served 9,602 volunteer hours

Please visit coopmin.org for our impact brochure and annual report.



We work to make a positive impact on our clients, people, and communities, creating forward-thinking solutions along the way.

Volunteers are needed and we would love to see you

By Beth H. Irick
Chief Executive Officer



After one year of the COVID-19 global pandemic, it is so nice to receive telephone calls about volunteerism. We can sure use the help.

Though our lobby remains closed as a waiting area, we can use volunteers able to serve for half- or full days in front-end reception, answering the telephone and helping with clerical duties. We respect

masks and social distancing.

Individuals and groups of five or less are welcome to serve in our clothing bank, where we need help sorting and folding all the clothes we have received

over the past year. We provide masks and gloves, and can offer social distancing.

In 2020, despite the pandemic, we had 313 volunteers who served 9,602 hours. That service helps our clients directly and indirectly, and maximizes the full potential of our 15-member staff - each of whom served in the office throughout the past year.

Already, in 2021, we've been blessed with weekday and weekend volunteers in the clothing bank, students serving in reception, free income tax return preparers, and young people helping package non-perishable food for our clients.

It's all exciting and hopeful. The buzz of volunteers is contagious to our work as we stand in the gap to serve our clients. When you are ready to serve and are looking for a place, please consider The Cooperative Ministry. You can call or email Rhemie Gantz at (803) 799-0932 or rgantz@coopmin.org.

A partner's testimony

By Wes Church
Senior Pastor, First Baptist Church, Columbia

For 39 years, The Cooperative Ministry has served our community, meeting people in crisis and helping them on the road to sustainability. Throughout these four decades, Columbia's First Baptist Church has been a founder, a partner, and a prayerful supporter of this ministry within our community.

We are told in 1 John 3:17 that if we see a brother in need and don't help them, we may not possess love. We can't just say, "I love you," without showing it. The Scriptures go on to say, "Dear children, let us not love with words or speech, but with actions and in truth" (1 John 3:18, NIV). The Cooperative Ministry is an organization in our community where congregations, businesses, neighbors, and people just like you and me come together to let our actions speak louder than our words.

As a downtown church, we regularly encounter and minister to people who are not members of our congregation but are in considerable need and crisis. Often, this crisis comes because of failed



transportation, unexpected medical news, a failed relationship, unemployment, underemployment, or the unexpected need to care for dependent family members.

What a blessing that our church can connect hurting people to The Cooperative Ministry and trust that those people will be heard, loved, understood, and helped somehow. Further, we can serve so many more because of our partnership with more than 50 other congregations and thousands of individuals within our community. Because The Cooperative Ministry is a debt-free organization, 89 cents of every dollar can find its way to client services.

You may know that The Cooperative Ministry had to close its lobby during the COVID-19 pandemic, but even still, they never stopped serving people. The organization recently reported that 13,336 people were served during 2020, and financial assistance with rent and utilities increased by 41 percent over 2019. I have been impressed with how the organization has adapted to serve people using its website, email, telephone, and arms-length connections in its parking lot. Actions speak louder than words.

I'm proud to be the pastor of a church in partnership with an organization like The Cooperative Ministry. I encourage every church and organization in our community to learn more about The Cooperative Ministry's mission and services designed to give a hand up to the least of these around us.

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Beth H. Irick, Chief Executive Officer
Scott Vaughan, Director,
Community Awareness

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Please Support
THE COOPERATIVE MINISTRY
On Tuesday, May 4, 2021
6 a.m. to Midnight

With An Online Donation at
www.midlandsgives.org/TheCooperativeMinistry

Our 2021 Goal: \$20,000
All Gifts Tax Deductible



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