

NEWS RELEASE

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University Lutheran Church to Aid 300 Homeless for National Service Celebration

Event:

GAINESVILLE, Fla. — University Lutheran Church and Student Center is partnering with Gethsemane Lutheran Church to distribute 300 “life packs” to homeless camps this Sunday as part of a nationwide anniversary.

After the weekly 10:30 am church service, members of both Gainesville churches will join forces at ULC, 1826 W. University Ave, at around 1:30 p.m. for what they are calling “Feed My Sheep.” They will make peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and organize donations in backpacks that will be personally taken to Gainesville homeless camps. This is part of both churches’ celebration of [the 25th anniversary of membership with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America](#). The backpacks will include toilet paper, laundry detergent, canned goods, fruit, batteries and devotional books for spiritual encouragement, which were donated by churchgoers and Thrivent Financial Group. The churches are targeting their efforts in Sweetwater “Tent City” on 16th Ave. and Williston Road and behind the bus station on Depot Ave., where a good amount of Gainesville’s homeless population resides.

“We have former homeless members in our congregation who told us what the homeless actually need, not just what church members think they need,” said

Bill Chamberlin, Campus Ministry Board Chair at ULC. “They’re not just backpacks of perishables — they’re packs that will make life easier.”

The two churches are among four million ELCA member churches around the country that will partake in the 25th anniversary celebration dubbed “God’s Work. Our Hands.” ELCA congregations around the country are encouraged to leave the comfort zone of the church to outreach to local community needs.

ULC Background with University of Florida:

A major component of ULC is University of Florida students’ involvement in the Lutheran Gator Campus Ministry, who are also expected to participate in the project. ULC started in a small house with a focus on campus ministry in 1950, then moved into an abandoned fraternity house in 1961 before finding a permanent home at the church with the iconic spiky, peaked roof in 2003. Its location has allowed it to be immersed in the Gainesville and UF community for over 60 years. The campus ministry students have a history of being actively involved in church projects, such as: “crop drop,” in which 45,000 bags of potatoes were packed and distributed to the needy; the social justice garden, in which plants are grown by churchgoers and donated to St. Francis House; and food collections for Gainesville Ministries, in which churchgoers donate canned foods for those in need. “Feed My Sheep” follows the tradition of community service for ULC, yet will have a broad scope due to joint efforts with both Gethsemane and ELCA.

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