

# WE CAN!

## WE CAN – Information for Congregations

Thank you for your interest in **WE CAN** – a multi-congregational collection of what we hope will be more than **100,000** food items during March and April 2010. Working together, we will all see hunger in new ways, and mobilize our congregations to respond to hunger here in central Iowa and around the world.

**What is WE CAN?** WE CAN is originally a project of Polk City United Methodist Church, which collected **29,000** food items – with the help of other churches and residents in and around Polk City – during March and April 2008. This number—29,000—is significant because it represented the number of children who die *every day* of hunger and other preventable causes. These food items were displayed right in the church's worship space and the congregation watched as they grew week by week. When Polk City UMC planned for 2009, the church decided to enlist 28 other congregations in collecting at least 1,000 cans each, to spread the vision of this audacious undertaking. These **29** churches together surpassed that goal, raising the equivalent of more than 34,000 items of food.

**What are we collecting?** Food items that will then be distributed to food pantries and homeless ministries in Iowa. Cans and packages of **food that you can build a meal around**: rice and black beans, stew and pasta, peanut butter and cereal, fruits and vegetables. We will produce a list that can be copied and distributed for easy reference when people go to the grocery store. Beginning in 2010, congregations can also (or alternatively) collect **cash** if they so choose.

**How will we work together?** All of the congregations that participate in WE CAN will be invited to bring the food and money they've collected to a **WE CAN Rally** that will be held at a location in downtown Des Moines on **Sunday, May 2, 2010** between **1:00 and 6:00 PM**. During this time we will be sorting and displaying the food that you have collected. It's an amazing thing to see thousands of cans of food! We will also have a live concert later in the afternoon with special guest **Dakota Road**, a band from the Dakotas and Minnesota, along with speakers and displays from programs that address hunger locally and around the world. You and members of your congregation are encouraged to join in the festivities. The public—including those served by local food pantries and homeless shelters—will also be invited.

**What happens to the food?** Between 5:15 and 6:00 PM on that Sunday afternoon, we will load the food onto truck and other vehicles to deliver it to the Des Moines Area Religious Council's food pantry, and to homeless ministries in the Des Moines area, including Hope Ministries. If your congregation has a special relationship with a particular food pantry or other food program, you can choose to deliver your portion of the 100,000 cans to that pantry or program.

**What does all of this have to do with hungry people around the world?** Even though the food we collect does not immediately address the needs of hungry people outside of central Iowa, WE CAN operates under the belief that as we all become aware of the problem of hunger both domestically and abroad, we all learn to respond to hunger not just locally but worldwide. On May 2, rally attendees will have the opportunity to sponsor, through WorldVision, a child who is a risk of dying from hunger somewhere in the world, and information will be shared about the many faces of hunger. Different stories will strike different chords with different listeners. Each of us will be lead to respond in unique ways.

## How can we get involved?

- **Become a WE CAN congregation** by committing to encourage your congregation to collect 1,000 cans or other food items (for new congregations), two times the number of cans you collected in 2009 (for returning congregations), or another (God-sized!) goal set by your congregation. The collection period is March and April 2010. Remember, in 2008 Polk City UMC worked with its community and successfully collected 29,000 cans! Think big! **To say “Yes”**, contact our director, whose contact information is below.
  - The WE CAN Team will disseminate a packet of materials in late January that will help you promote this project within your congregation. This packet will include the “shopping list,” ideas for collecting food in and beyond your congregation, promotional materials, and more details about the May 2 WE CAN Rally. We will also be in touch with you regularly during the months of March and April to collect and share progress reports, and to offer continuing support and encouragement as we work together to meet our goal.
  - Consider having a group in your congregation other than the missions or outreach committee spearhead this project in your congregation. Ask around to find out if the youth group, men's group, women's group, or Thursday morning prayer group is looking for a project to take on.
  - This effort has grown out of Polk City UMC's participation in WorldVision's 30 Hour Famine. If you don't already “do” the Famine, check out this program at [www.30hourfamine.org](http://www.30hourfamine.org). It is designed as a youth event, but can include all ages.
- **Save the date:** On **May 2, 2010** from **1:00-6:00 PM**, the WE CAN Rally in downtown Des Moines is the place to be! We hope every WE CAN congregation will bring 20 people or more to share in this day of noticing and responding to hunger. Even if you choose not to commit to WE CAN, we hope you'll invite people to come and be a part of the WE CAN Rally.
- **Invite!** We are hoping to enlist at least 50 WE CAN congregations for 2010, but we have not yet reached that goal. If you have contacts with other congregations in central Iowa that you could interest in this project, pass this information and challenge them to join!
- **Contribute.** We need each WE CAN congregation to contribute **\$50-100** to the cost of this event, which includes facilities rental, concert, display, and food services costs. The more we talk, the more ideas we have. As you participate financially, the possibilities expand.

If you'd like to learn more about WE CAN, you are invited to attend one of our WE CAN Intro sessions:

- **Mon., Nov. 16 at 7 PM** at New Hope United Methodist Church in Des Moines (4525 Beaver Av)
- **Sun., Nov. 22 at 4 PM** at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Ankeny (517 SW Des Moines St.)  
We'll share information & some treats, we'll take your sign-up and we'll answer your questions.  
**Please RSVP** to Lisa at 984-6274 or [office@polkcityumc.org](mailto:office@polkcityumc.org) and we'll plan on you!

Or contact us directly anytime at: WE CAN Team, c/o Polk City UMC, 1421 W. Broadway St., Polk City, IA 50226. Or you can contact the director of WE CAN, Lee Schott, at 515.984.6274 or by e-mail at [RevLee@polkcityumc.org](mailto:RevLee@polkcityumc.org).

**TOGETHER, WE CAN!**