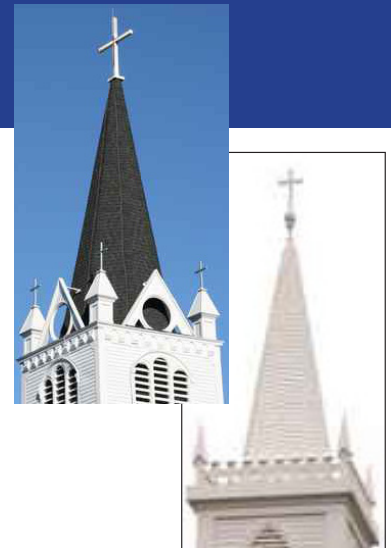


A Tale of Two Churches



Imagine two churches across the street from each other. Both realize that many people in their congregations and community are struggling with economic problems to a degree that they sometimes have trouble feeding their families. Both churches decide to set up food pantries to help. But they decide to run those pantries in different ways.

Church X

- Asks its members to bring non-perishable food to the church's food pantry.
- Members purchase food at the grocery store for the pantry, spending a total of \$5,000 over the course of a year.
- Neither the church nor its members receive any tax break for the food gifts.
- \$5,000 worth of store-purchased food totals about 3,500 pounds.
- Church members lovingly assemble 70 50-pound standardized boxes of food.
- They offer the standardized food boxes to 70 hungry families.
- Because the families' dietary needs, preferences and other factors are not considered, some of the food goes to waste.

Bottom line:

At a cost of \$5,000, Church X provides hungry families with 1,750 to 3,500 pounds of food they can use.

Church Y

- Asks its members to donate funds to the church's food pantry account at the Food Bank.
- Church members donate \$5,000 over the course of a year.
- Church members' gifts (\$400 maximum) qualify for a 50% Michigan tax credit and up to a 25% Federal tax deduction, so the after-tax cost to the members is as little as \$1,250.
- \$5,000 in donations let the church obtain approximately 35,700 pounds of food from the Food Bank.
- Church members lovingly stock the shelves of their food pantry.
- They invite 714 families to come and select 50 pounds each of food that fits their families' needs.
- Because the families choose what they can use, virtually none of the food goes to waste.

Bottom line:

At a cost of as little as \$1,250, Church Y provides hungry families with 35,700 pounds of food they can use.

Both congregations mean well, but the subtle differences in how they mobilize and dispense food make a huge difference in how much help they are able to provide, and how much it costs to provide it. When times are hard and needs are great, doesn't it make sense to review options and make educated choices on these matters?