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Auburn churches come through for needy families at Thanksgiving

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I have much to be grateful for. I have found the time preparing the Thanksgiving Day celebrations, each year, to be a blessed period for my pantry.

All of us, 50 volunteers strong, approach the season leading up to Christmas festivities with joyous resolutions. So much happens initially, and starts with the giving from members of the following Auburn churches: Auburn United Methodist, Westminster Presbyterian, St. Luke's United Church of Christ and the First Presbyterian Church on South Street. All have Thanksgiving drives where members can contribute food, money and, in Auburn United Methodist's case, stuffing.

But it is the Rev. Eileen Winter's commitment to her church's Thanksgiving drive that helps to give my 200-plus families a complete Thanksgiving turkey meal. They have been doing it for many years. Their efforts, called the Turkey Trot is spearheaded by Sue Anne Cunliffe, who goes into the public and talks about the church's pledges. Because of the Turkey Trot, families who do not have enough food daily will at least have complete meals with all the trimmings.

(My families expect no such thing as cranberry sauce or apple pie. You and I sit down to trimmings we can afford, but my families struggle with imperceptible problems that make normal eating unheard of because there is not much food in their cupboards. They also have horrific reasons for peanut butter and jam sandwiches, as their children need winter clothes, or they are waiting until the end of the month to be paid. Furthermore, the SNAP (food stamps) program, as of Nov. 1, cut \$10 dollars per family member from its monthly budget.)

If it weren't for the churches — need we say more? Thank you, Auburn United Methodist, Westminster Presbyterian, St. Luke's United Church of Christ and First Presbyterian Church members!

It takes a lot of work creating the baskets for each of my families. My volunteers do it all. I am told by the longtime volunteers that families who hesitate around our food offerings, with fear of taking too much, pick their turkeys up and greet their packages with delight and happiness. "Worth all the work for that smile," said one of my older volunteers to me last year. "They never smile otherwise."

Have a happy Thanksgiving day with your loved ones, because outside my pantry, I am scared this Thanksgiving season. Despair is in the air. I see new faces weekly as jobs are lost. Just yesterday, two homeless women searched for any help in here. There are no women's shelters in Auburn, and they don't want to leave the city.

If you would like to help me with your own special donation, call me at (315) 252-7772. I also include a list of Auburn's food pantries. Give any one of them a call. Volunteer, donate or reciprocate by giving in return to any one listed below.