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This past year, I've been chatting with quite a few folks about ways to combat food insecurity among our neighbors and within our communities. Thank you for reaching out and sharing your ideas!

According to Food Bank of Iowa's 2025 statistics, "12% of Iowans (1 in 8) and 16.6% of Iowa children (1 in 6) face food insecurity. All 99 Iowa counties saw an increase in food insecurity in the latest report."

If you are like me, you have probably stood in front of your refrigerator or pantry and said, "Ugh, there is nothing to eat in here!" In reality, there was a bounty of options available; you just weren't in the mood for any of them at that moment. Or perhaps, as often happens in my house, the night before trash pickup involves throwing away food that wasn't eaten and has gone bad. It's a simple example of food waste.



I encourage you to consider some of the following ways to help:

- Find a food pantry in your community and make a donation. Please ensure that any donated items have expiration dates at least six months away.
- If you garden, share your harvest with neighbors or donate it through a community organization.
- Start a Blessing Box at your church or school. They are fairly simple to build and maintain.
- Volunteer at a food distribution site and learn more about the needs in your area.
- Begin planning a community garden for next year's growing season.
- Volunteer for Meals on Wheels or similar programs.
- Prepare and deliver meals to shut-in members of your congregation, and take time to sit and visit with them.
- Check your refrigerator, freezer, cupboards, and pantry before shopping so you can avoid purchasing items you already have. Consider buying smaller quantities of perishable foods to reduce spoilage and waste.



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A newer idea that Timothy Lutheran Church in Council Bluffs has embraced is hosting a community refrigerator and pantry on church property. There are several community refrigerators in the Council Bluffs area and more than two dozen in the Des Moines metro area. I am currently exploring how this concept might be adapted to serve some of our smaller communities. Again, please reach out with your ideas!

Community refrigerators are a simple yet powerful way to address food insecurity while also reducing food waste. Often located in easily accessible public spaces, they function as shared refrigerators where anyone can leave or take food. Individuals, local businesses, restaurants, and community organizations contribute fresh and healthy items. There are no forms to complete, no income requirements, and no questions asked, just a space built on trust, kindness, and mutual support.

What makes community refrigerators especially valuable is their ability to bring people together. A family facing financial hardship can pick up groceries they need. Someone experiencing housing instability can access a meal. Restaurants and grocery stores can donate excess food that might otherwise go to waste. Community refrigerators also foster collaboration. Volunteers help keep them clean and well-stocked, local organizations spread awareness and provide support, and businesses contribute food regularly. Over time, these efforts create a broader network of care that extends far beyond the refrigerator itself.

There are many ways we can reach out and make a difference in addressing this great need throughout our district and state. God has indeed blessed us, and in turn, let us be a blessing to others.

