

## One Great Hour of Sharing 2015

### Presbyterian Hunger Program

#### Community of the Beloved: Crossing Boundaries

The Rev. Amy Cantrell has always felt called to build community with people who live on the margins of society.

“I needed to be a minister to people who don’t have one,” she says. “When I began this journey, I learned the public housing complexes are very isolated—at the end of streets, up against a highway—people don’t even know where they are.”

It was there, in the middle of one of these isolated areas, that Cantrell and Lauren White co-founded the Community of the BeLoved in Asheville, North Carolina. They placed their hospitality house downtown near homeless shelters, public housing, and the bus station, across from a senior center and the employment commission.

“Love requires proximity, so we put down roots in the middle of that struggle,” says Cantrell. “The solution to a lot of our community problems can be found by creating communities.

“But it means developing relationships, and that requires a lot of powerful boundary crossing because of different religious backgrounds, racial disparity and segregation, and poverty and homelessness. But we have a great role model—Jesus was a very good boundary crosser.”

One way the Community of the BeLoved connects with others is by sharing food through a free farmers market, community gardens, and food pantry.

“One in 10 seniors in North Carolina is struggling with poverty,” Cantrell notes. “Our city is No. 9 in food insecurity, which is shocking because of how many farms we have, but you can go into a classroom and count every other child as a child who is hungry; more than 50 percent of our children in Buncombe County schools are food-insecure.”



**Members of the community pick up fresh vegetables from the farmer's market.**

Families who were helped through the group's transitional housing program helped to create community gardens through a summer camp and healthy eating program. That's where a unique idea was born—a food truck.

“It will take fresh foods to kids who are hungry,” Cantrell explained. “They can't come to us because their parents struggle with transportation, so we go to them and ensure healthy food is still accessible, even when school is out.

“We don't ask if they need it. We just show up where the children are and share food together, also teaching the kids how to cook and garden.”

That's the project the Presbyterian Hunger Program is financing—through your support of the One Great Hour of Sharing. It's a program that will not only feed children but will also create neighborhoods where they can feel loved by the whole community.

“If we are to ‘live love,’ then we have to move out and connect with people—that's what it means to love your neighbor,” Cantrell says. “In our culture, individualism is celebrated. We don't talk to our neighbors anymore. But in reality, community is a spiritual gift, a powerful thing for all of us.

“This area was not a neighborhood when we came here six years ago. Now people are saying ‘hello’ to each other. Every time we cross a boundary, there is a connection that Jesus is a part of making.”

**Please give generously.**