

# Mission

## Faith Supported Mission Project:



### *Agua Fria Food & Clothing Bank*

For many years, Faith Presbyterian Church has supported through budgeted Mission Committee dollars The Agua Fria Food and Clothing Bank (AFFCB) in Avondale which has quite a history. The Mission Committee would like to share the history of this project and the success of the program.

In 1982, the Grand Canyon Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church (USA), began to minister to the Rural Poor. Food distribution was the approach to reach out, and to participation in mission in the West Valley. A very small scale Food-For-The Needy operated out of the trunk of cars with Carlos Gutierrez as the first to begin this service in the Goodyear-Avondale area. These early helpers distributed food to refugees from El Salvador and Nicaragua civil wars, migrant workers, the homeless, and the poor.

Later, an old Luke AF Base barracks at Harrison and 2<sup>nd</sup> Sts. was later obtained as the site and used as a permanent location, and soon a clothing store was added, and thus became The Agua Fria Food and Clothing Bank. The number of people served grew and Maricopa County offered a larger and more modern building for the facility at 405 Harrison Drive where it still operates today.

In 1996, the AFFCB entered an informal partnership with the Westside Food Bank which allowed this project to receive a wider variety of government and donated food items. In 1997, it was determined that there was also a need for spiritual guidance, counseling and assistance as well as food and clothing. As a result, the Grand Canyon Presbytery called Rev. Renato Alvarez, an ordained Presbyterian Pastor, as a full time director of AFFCB. This decision makes THIS Food and Clothing Bank very special and different than other banks of this type. Rev. Alvarez still leads the AFFCB some 13 years later with programs that now include worship communities, counseling, showers for the homeless, food for the needy, and baby care items for infants, as well as Thanksgiving and Christmas food packages (and gifts for which Faith Church collects each Christmas Season), and school uniforms for the

qualifying needy (which Faith Church helps to provide with our Pentecost Offering).

This growing ministry works hard to serve the poor in the Southwest Valley. In April of this year, responding to an expanded need, AFFCB has opened another Food and Clothing Bank farther west in Tonopah, a rural community of 6,000 people of which many are the rural poor. When the need is so great, The AFFCB responds, as it has in some way since 1982. As Presbyterians, we can be extremely proud of the work of Rev. Alvarez and the many volunteers he leads as they serve needy people in urban and rural areas in the name of Jesus Christ.

## Did You Know?

- The AFFCB has programs in emergency food, baby care, Food Plus, Thanksgiving Food Boxes, Christmas Food Boxes and Gifts, School Uniform, Clothing Bank, Utilities Assistance, Counseling, Spiritual Aid, Pastoral Care.
- The AFFCB makes referrals on alcohol and drug abuse programs, emergency housing programs, immigration and naturalization services, legal assistance, and parole/probation services, and spiritual aid.
- In 2009 45,259 people in their communities were served by the AFFCB (7,491 more than 2008).
- The AFFCB provides School Uniforms (2 sets per family)—Vouchers are given to those who qualify so they can go and get the sizes needed for their children.

Just one visit to the Agua Fria Food and Clothing Bank will touch your heart. As we (Mission Committee members) deliver (almost monthly) beautiful handmade crib quilts (made and given by a friend of a Mission Committee member) to AFFCB, we never cease to be amazed and touched by the work of this special Presbyterian led project that serves those so badly in need. That is why the Committee wanted to share this information with our congregation so they may know what our Mission dollars mean to so many.

*Submitted by: Gerri Kiessel, Mission Committee.*