



East Central Ministries' 2020 Summer Newsletter

Fear of the Covid-19 pandemic. A toxic political atmosphere. The Black Lives Matter protests calling out systemic injustices. Together we are in a season of massive societal disruption that is painful and uncertain.

In the middle of Albuquerque's International District, these issues aren't philosophical or theological exercises, they are deeply felt and personal. Our community is suffering and vulnerable with raw emotions of lament, anger and fear. We resist the urge to fight against, quickly resolve, downplay or ignore the pain of these disruptions knowing that this is a process of community grief that must be walked through if any wisdom, growth, healing and lasting change is to follow. For our resilient and strong community, growth and transformative healing is always our goal, so we take these opportunities to listen and hold this collective trauma and pain of our neighbors.

Our love for each other is practical. At ECM this practical love has had us roll up our sleeves and be busy. In the neighborhood, we have set up 13 donated 275-gallon tanks as hand washing stations for our unsheltered neighbors, also partnering with six Navajo groups for another 77 tanks to families on the Navajo Nation. We are working with our neighbors who are facing evictions and financial struggles by helping with rent and utility payments. Our community health workers and leaders are counseling and encouraging those that are experiencing strong waves of anxiety and depression. With modification we are continuing our essential work with health care, food distribution, and case management. We have taken a leadership role in helping organize and promote a strong Census turnout among our most hard to count community. We employed neighbors in part time work through this Census and other advocacy work. For years we have promoted equitable policy changes (mostly in collaborative partnerships) in areas of healthcare, housing, economic development, education and police oversight. Our neighbors of color live and die in these social inequities every day. We stand together, embracing the painful realities, in a renewed work to create a more just and loving society that welcomes and embraces everyone. This is how we make Love practical every day. This Love of God, neighbor, and ourselves inspires us to hold the pain while imagining and working for the better way to love and live together. You are always invited to join us in this practical Love.

John, Founder and Executive Director



How has the pandemic changed what we do at ECM?

The Pathways Program had to shift focus from not just helping those in need with resources, but acting as frontline Community Health Workers. We began our Covid season educating our homeless neighbors about the virus, and then we helped them apply for the IRS Stimulus which helped many people have shelter, if just for a few weeks. **Eva, Pathways Navigator and Community Health Worker**

My interactions with people at ECM have changed—little things like wearing a mask, remembering to wash my hands, disinfecting phones, doorknobs, desks. I spend a good portion of the day interacting with our unsheltered neighbors who come to the door, and I help educate them to stay as safe as they possibly can as well. More people need food or help, and every night we have people sleeping on the porch, trying to catch a safe night's sleep. **Bob, Volunteer who lives at ECM**

The Tertulias Research Project, which addresses social isolation in order to reduce depression among Mexican immigrant women, had to be redesigned during the pandemic. Interviews are now done by phone or zoom, rather than in person. This has exacerbated the social isolation for the participants and sheds even more light on the need for behavior health services and the importance of personal interaction, but it also has shown that we actually can support one another even through a screen! **Lidia, Tertulias Research Project**



As COVID-19 progresses, we are getting creative about how we move forward so we can provide patients with the care they need. We are training and teaching them about new ways to stay connected by either telephone or video appointments and check-in calls.

Blanca, One Hope Health Center Director

This time of social distancing with patients and having doctors working on the phone, has given us the opportunity to reorganize the clinic for a more comfortable and organized return. **Laura, One Hope Health Center**

Everyone stuck at home wanted to garden this year. We sold curbside and wholesale, and though it was impossible to predict what would sell and to whom, 2020 was Growing Awareness' best season so far!

Morgan, Growing Awareness Urban Farm



Thanks to Liz who donated 4 tower gardens to ECM! The youth program kids and everyone in the clinic loves them! (February, pre-Covid-19)

I've had more interaction with families from the Food Co-op. The families have been reaching out for help with resources and information on assistance with unemployment filing, rental assistance, social security disability claims, job search, citizenship, and immigration issues. Mrs. Norma has been amazing connecting the families to Pathways, and together we believe we can do more for our families in the Food Co-op.

Gigi, Pathways Navigator and Community Health Worker



We are adapting and accommodating to people's needs so we can get food to as many people as possible. Overall we have fewer people coming in: people are scared to go out or it is much more difficult with kids at home. Sometimes they pick up food after the regular co-op hours, and sometimes I deliver it. We are blessed to have a lot of food, and we continue to encourage members to share with others.

Norma, Food Cooperative and Bookkeeper

While staying at home, everyone is spring cleaning, and we've received tons of donations at The Common Good. The store closed March 15 for three months. Near the end of that time we re-did the floors and re-organized the entire store! Currently, the store is open three days a week rather than five, but despite this, our sales since we reopened June 18 are only slightly lower than the same period last year. Our loyal past customers and many new customers are delighted that we have reopened.



Susan, The Common Good Thrift Store



Our youth programs, including the pre-school co-op, temporarily stopped gathering in March, due to Covid-19. All Albuquerque Public Schools are continuing remote learning at this time. These are difficult decisions and times for our community, but in order to keep everyone safe during the pandemic, at ECM we continue to follow the leadership of our governor. Thankfully our numbers in New Mexico remain low.



i COUNT NM
i count because i care

Census 2020: Make it Count!

An undercount means underfunding for our communities for the next **TEN** years. For each person counted in the Census, New Mexico receives approximately \$3,000 per year for ten years (\$30,000!). Currently, the self-response rate is 53%. With the deadline being moved to Sept 30th, **we need EVERYONE helping and reminding our community to count themselves!**

<https://my2020census.gov/> or English: 1-844-330-2020 and Spanish: 1-844-468-2020

A Special Request

Welcome to New Mexico, where the summer sun is hot and the winter air is cold! We at ECM experience the same weather discomforts as most of you, and like you, we have persevered. In the summer, we wear t-shirts, drink a lot of water, and fan ourselves with whatever might be available (file folder? empty muffin package from the co-op?). Winter calls for heavy sweaters and coats, and even the odd jumping jack! But after a particularly warm summer, we had to ask ourselves: is this the best that we can do for our staff, food co-op members, and program clients? We have been very blessed with sufficient heating and cooling systems in both the One Hope Centro de Vida health clinic and the ECM admin house, yet the warehouse housing our food co-op and offices for many of our program staff continues to be stifling in summer and freezing in winter. It has saddened us to see even our clients request outside meetings due to the discomfort of our building. So we decided that, yes, we can do better, and we are hoping you can help us.

We have contracted with a local heating and cooling professional to replace our inadequate swamp cooler and electric heaters with a HVAC unit. We are making a special appeal for donations from you, our committed donors, to help us make this happen. **Our goal is to raise \$14,000 to cover these costs.** Our work is critical during regular times, but especially so during this pandemic, and we do not want to divert crucial funding away from our clients and community programs to pay for this. We are, therefore, making a special request for support so that we can do what we need to do to ensure that our staff and clients have the infrastructure they need in order to do their jobs. A comfortable working environment is critical for the success of our staff, and we also want to be hospitable to our co-op members and the various clients we serve.



Will you help us reach our \$14,000 goal? Any amount helps!

Judy, Development Director



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