

# The Evangelical Covenant Church



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The Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC) is a rapidly growing multi-ethnic denomination in the United States and Canada with ministries on five continents of the world. Founded in 1885 by Swedish Immigrants, the ECC values the Bible as the Word of God, the gift of God's grace and ever-deepening spiritual life that comes through faith in Jesus Christ, the importance of extending God's love and compassion to a hurting world, and the strength that comes from unity within diversity.



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## Kerman Church Donates Food to Drought-Ravaged Area

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KERMAN, CA (April 15, 2009) – A note passed to the pastor of [Kerman Covenant Church](#) after he finished a sermon on giving led the church to donate more than two tons of food to hungry people the following week.

Volunteers delivered 5,100 pounds of rice and beans along with other assorted food items to Mendota, a community 20 miles away.

"Mendota and the Westside of Fresno County have been shaken with unemployment rates exceeding 40 percent," says Pastor Dan Shelton.

Shelton says the high unemployment is largely the result of drought and a federal court order. The combination has led farmers to reduce their crops and even let land remain fallow.

California is in the third year of one of its worst-ever droughts. Some reservoirs are at only 22 percent of capacity, according to state reports. Last year, a federal judge ruled that diversion of water to farmland could be reduced up to one third as part of an effort to save the endangered Delta Smelt minnow.

Shelton says that after he preached a sermon about giving on March 29, member Phil Larson, a county supervisor for Fresno County, passed him the note that read, "Something should be said about the need for food on the Westside."

"He had been on the Westside the day before and witnessed first-hand the despair among the people and heard children sharing stories of their stomachs hurting because they were hungry," Shelton says.

Shelton shared the need with the congregation, and Larson told of his experience from the day before. Shelton then appealed to the congregation for each family to purchase a 50 pound bag of rice and/or beans for the normal food bank offering the following Sunday. In addition, an appeal letter was sent to everyone on the congregation's mailing list.

The bags of beans were brought into the Worship Center on Sunday. "The presence of the bags was a meaningful part of worship," Shelton says.

On Monday, more than 20 volunteers repackaged everything within two and a half hours. The accompanying photo shows Naomi Samarin making certain the plastic bags are sealed properly. "The sense of joy and excitement was exhilarating," Shelton recalls. [Click here](#) to see additional photos.

The food was distributed to Mendota with the support of the Fresno Economic Opportunity Commission, which is scheduling recurring food drives for Westside communities affected by the water shortage, Shelton says. The volunteers receiving the food were surprised at the amount of food the church donated.

"They (volunteers) said it is the first time they have distributed food where everyone in line is able to receive a portion," Shelton says. "It's ironic that in the world's most fertile valley, in the country's largest agriculture producing county, that people are struggling to put food on their plates."

[Covenant World Relief](#) has provided the church with a grant that will be combined with additional offerings from the congregation. To read more about the Fresno EOC work, [click here](#).



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