MILFORD – On November 21, Milford Miami Ministry completed its 2nd decade of distributing Thanksgiving meals and helped over 220 families this year!   This nonprofit operates a year-round food pantry as more families are turning to the ministry to stretch their food budget in time of need.

“We’ve seen a slight increase in Thanksgiving signups this year,” said Steve Reis, the ministry’s operations manager. “Compared to this time last year, the number of families we’ve served in our food pantry is up about 7 percent in terms of number of families served year to date.”

Founded in 1996, Milford Miami Ministry is a collaboration of 20 churches. The 501 (c) 3 organization serving Milford, Miami Township and the Milford Exempted Village School District is also supported by local businesses, schools and the community. Since the ministry started 20 years ago, it’s helped thousands of families by providing food and emergency financial help when clients are threatened with eviction or shutoff of utilities.

“We can only guess why the numbers are up,” Reis said of those who are turning to Milford Miami Ministry for help. “I don’t think the economy is rebounding as much as some folks think. We see a lot of younger people whose hours have been cut and elderly people on fixed incomes. A lot of people also haven’t gotten much in the way of raises in the last few years.”

Between now and Dec. 15, Milford Miami Ministry is coordinating a special Christmas collection of non-perishable food items through its member churches. Besides canned goods, baskets will include a turkey or ham. Hats, gloves and mittens also are offered to clients.

This holiday season, the Milford Miami Ministry is partnering with the Meijer store in Milford, located at 1082 Ohio 28, to help struggling families. For each $10 donation to help neighbors in need, the store will donate matching funds. Meijer’s Simply Give program began Oct. 30 and continues through December. 31.

“This contribution shows our commitment to hunger relief in the Midwest,” Meijer Co-Chairman Hank Meijer said in a press release. “We appreciate the support and commitment our generous customers and team members have shown and we want to support their continued generosity.”

Others who want to donate non-perishable foods for Christmas meals can drop off items at Milford Miami Ministry food pantry in the lower level of Milford Christian Church at 844 Ohio 131.

**How to help**

To recommend a family for assistance or to donate, contact Steve Reis, operations manager, at 513-476-3997 or visit the website at [www.mmministry.org](http://www.mmministry.org/).

Food can be dropped off at the ministry’s food pantry in the lower level of Milford Christian Church at 844 Ohio 131. Cash donations also can be made in person or via PayPal on the ministry’s website, [**www.mmministry.org**](http://www.mmministry.org/).

Food pantry hours are 9 a.m.-noon Tuesday and Thursday, 6:30 p.m.-8 p.m. Wednesday and 9 a.m.-11 a.m. the second and fourth Saturdays of the month.