



FINDING GOD IN A PARKING LOT

One Sunday every month, a small group of Lutherans congregates in the parking lot of the Home Depot in Passaic, N.J., before services start at St. John Lutheran Church. They're not there to buy home supplies—they're there to worship.

Four years ago when St. John was looking for a way to become more integrated in its community, the congregation came up with the idea of a breakfast ministry. Their first attempt at breakfast after church didn't bring any visitors. Then a member suggested taking food to the Home Depot parking lot, as there were always day laborers who waited there to be picked up for jobs, and they could use a good breakfast.

"Sure enough, they welcomed us," said Jay Unzaga, the congregation's former pastor. "From that Sunday on, St. John hasn't stopped going there in four years and feeds a hot breakfast to about 40 to 50 men every week."

In addition to sharing breakfast, the

community worships together once a month. "We do a holy service of word and sacrament in about 15 minutes right there in the parking lot," Unzaga said. They call the ministry *Misión Pan de la Vida* (Mission Bread of Life).

The worship services are led in Spanish, and Unzaga always invites the men to take part by reading a lesson or helping serve communion. "Imagine how hard it is to get a reader out of a parking lot when most of them didn't go past elementary school," he said. "But the Holy Spirit always provides and these men do it for the glory of God."

Holding worship in a parking lot brings an array of variables that can't be controlled—whether it be interruptions when a van approaches to pick up some workers or if store security asks the group to move.

"To go to a parking lot and claim that as the house of the Lord is powerful and beautiful, especially in the dead of winter," Unzaga said. "To share the cup of salvation with our immigrant neighbors in the snow is just a humbling and beautiful sight."

Your Mission Support dollars are used by the ELCA churchwide organization to fund new congregations like Misión Pan de la Vida.

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