

Heartland News

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Reaching Hearts Everywhere

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Paul Arnopoulos, grocery man to the poor...

By Tom Shanklin

For Paul Arnopoulos of Disciples Ministry Church in North Minneapolis, the work of the ministry is more than preaching a message on Sunday morning to his congregation. It's living that message seven days a week.

Disciples Ministry is a church with a mission, and that mission is feeding the poor with both spiritual and natural bread. Located in Minneapolis's Northside, where minorities make up about 30 percent of the population, "Pastor Paul's" ministry is reaching thousands of people each month with the love of Christ in a practical way.

The mission gives an average of 12,000 bags of groceries away each month, a figure Arnopoulos believes is the largest in the nation. Besides the grocery giveaway, the mission provides two hot meals a day for the hungry and needy in the basement of the former Jewish synagogue, which has been converted for use as church sanctuary and missions headquarters.

The "fellowship hall" in the basement has the appearance and atmosphere of a nice restaurant. Filled with tables and chairs and the love of Christ, it has become a place where people can find a warm meal and a kind word each day. Not just a soup line, people are served their meals at the tables and treated with respect.

The mission also operates a "hobo bus" which delivers hot meals to needy throughout Minneapolis. In the warmth of the bus, the poor are fed a warm bowl of soup and shown the kindness and love of Christ.

Recently, the mission has expanded into St. Paul with its feeding program and Pastor Paul is considering establishing a soup kitchen and a home for the needy in that city.

Nine years ago, Arnopoulos was a successful pastor in a suburb of Minneapolis. After starting his church in his home, it had grown and was meeting in a building in Brooklyn Park, Minn. But in 1977, the church purchased an old Jewish synagogue at 1000 Olive in North Minneapolis. At that time, he lost about two-thirds of his

