

**NEWS From
Bethlehem United Methodist Church-Claremont**

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BETHLEHEM UNITED METHODIST CHURCH-CLAREMONT TO COLLECT FOOD TO BENEFIT LOCAL SCHOOL CHILDREN

CLAREMONT — Bethlehem United Methodist Church of Claremont will be collecting food on Oct. 1 during Claremont Day for the county's Backpack Program to feed elementary children.

Members of the public are encouraged to drop off donations at the Bethlehem United Methodist Church booth. A partnership between Catawba County Social Services and Eastern Catawba Cooperative Christian Ministries makes it possible for churches and businesses to operate Backpack Programs within their local schools, reaching children with the food they need. This program provides a backpack full of nutritious food for elementary school children in need to take home every weekend during the school year.

Countywide, some 7,213 elementary school children receive free or reduced price lunches. Research has shown that 1,500 of these children are facing food insecurity. These are the children the Backpack Program seeks to reach. The Backpack Program is entirely funded by local donations. Volunteers help pack the backpacks.

Claremont Elementary School will receive first priority for food collected during Claremont Day. Any extra food collected will be distributed in Catawba County.

Persons are asked not to donate anything that is perishable or requires refrigeration. Also, please do not donate anything in glass packaging due to the danger of breakage. Smaller sized packages and single servings are preferred because the loaded backpack must be carried by a young child.

Some of the best items to donate are peanut butter (in plastic container), jelly (in plastic container), single servings of main dishes (such as beef stew or spaghetti and meatballs) in pop-top cans, fruit in individually wrapped containers (unrefrigerated), single servings of pudding (unrefrigerated), macaroni and cheese or Easy Mac, single servings of cereals (not large boxes), boxes of individually wrapped single servings of oatmeal, fruit juice in individual serving containers.

Please do not donate anything in a glass container, anything that must be refrigerated, anything that is past its expiration date, sugary snacks, candy, cookies or cakes. Additional information about the program, including a detailed list of the best foods to donate, is available at www.catawbacountync.gov/dss/backpack.

The Backpack Program is also seeking support from other churches and businesses. Cash donations are also welcomed. Online donations to the program may be made by going to www.catawbacountync.gov/dss and clicking on the "Donate Now" button.

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