

Opportunities

through empty tomb®, inc.



We live in a rebel-occupied part of the universe — C. S. Lewis

Christianity "... does not think this is a war between independent powers. It thinks it is a civil war, a rebellion, and that we are living in a part of the universe occupied by the rebel.

"Enemy-occupied territory — that is what this world is. Christianity is the story of how the rightful king has landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling us all to take part in a great campaign of sabotage." — *Mere Christianity*

What if C. S. Lewis is right?

How does what Jesus tells us sound then?

Take for example, Jesus presenting the Great Commandment in Mark 12:30-31:

" 'Love the Lord our God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

If C. S. Lewis is right, what Jesus is telling us here, is a strategy for how to conduct our resistance campaign in this occupied world.

Interestingly, John Wesley made a study of early Christianity and concluded that those Christians — and the renewal movements that followed — emphasized loving God and loving neighbor. As a result, Wesley made it a principle for Methodism to focus on loving God and loving neighbor, especially through works of mercy.

The revival that came from the Methodist movement transformed England at that time, and continued the cycle of Christians rediscovering and applying Jesus' campaign strategy on a broad scale.

So, what would happen if we Christians in this age of affluence decided once again to act as if we understood what Jesus tells us about the real challenge before us?

What if, like in those World War II movies about occupied countries, we embraced our role as the resistance, and we decided to carry out a broad campaign out of love for God and love for neighbor on a scale that could challenge the rebel leadership of this part of the universe?

Would revival result? There's no guarantee, of course. But it is possible that God may once

more grant the opportunity for the church to show what the Spirit can do through the church taking Jesus' campaign strategy seriously. As Howard Snyder wrote in *The Problem of Wineskins*, "These are not days for the church to turn inward, curl up in a corner and passively wait the end ... God's 'new thing' may have a greater beginning in human history today than we have thought possible" (italics in the original).

Of course, we see examples of church people carrying out "resistance" actions every day. The local works through empty tomb are a good example. As you can see on pages 3 and 4, many church people are out on the front lines, delivering food and furniture, sorting clothes, providing resources to help people pay their bills, or get a tank of gas, receive help through the Medical Fund, or even help others to have a merrier Christmas.

But there's more need than just locally. Jesus also pointed the disciples to take the movement to the whole world.

Widespread revival will involve widespread activity. This rebel-occupied part of the universe boasts a great deal of unfairness. And it is on those distant frontlines that we Christians must also join the resistance.

That's why we see the focus of Mission Match so basic to the church's role in the world at this point. Little children under age five should not be dying every 21 seconds from treatable causes. Not when church structures in the U.S. still have a delivery network and servants spread far and wide that could be providing more help to those children and their parents.

If we are going to love our neighbors as ourselves, we need to admit that if our own child or grandchild needed out-of-stock medicine, we would drive from here to Chicago or Indianapolis

or some distant city that very night to get it as soon as possible before we would let that child suffer even a few hours longer.

So we know how we love ourselves by taking care of those we love. Jesus' strategy says we need to take that understanding and love the parents in the 40 countries who need us to "drive" not in our cars but through our congregations to help them get the medicine and medical equipment and medical people their children desperately need.

Picture churches all over the country adding another project to their present missions effort that helps reduce these child deaths. Again, like in World War II movies, when more and more people join the effort, the enemy is weakened.

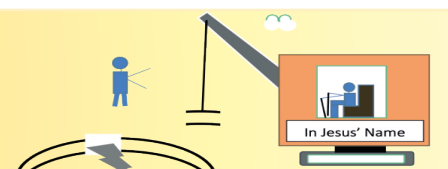
The information at missionmatch.org can help you take the first steps in fomenting a movement. There's a one-page handout you can share with your church. And the Mission Match application is there, too.

These actions that come from loving God and loving our neighbors as ourselves in Jesus' name are a different way of being than this rebel-occupied part of the universe expects. What's expected is that we will use our affluence for ourselves and be lulled into apathy while the rebel has free reign.

We need more resistance fighters, not to fight as the world fights, but to use the weapons the Spirit provides. God has provided great resources and information about global need, as well as communication and distribution systems, that can put Jesus' campaign strategy into motion.

Acting like Jesus truly loves the little children of the world may put into action the most powerful resistance movement yet!

- LOVING OUR NEIGHBORS AROUND THE WORLD: MISSION MATCH®
- THE POTENTIAL TO LOVE OUR NEIGHBORS: RESEARCH INCLUDING THE STATE OF CHURCH GIVING SERIES
- LOVING OUR NEIGHBORS ACROSS TOWN: LOCAL WORKS IN CHAMPAIGN COUNTY, IL



IN THIS ISSUE

Page 2

- Why ask ...
- The Body of Christ in Action

Page 3

- Scenes from the empty tomb Frontlines
- Statistics for December 1, 2024 - January 31, 2025

Page 4

- How Do You Help Make Christmas 2024 Happy for 113 Families?
- Thank you! & Thank you!
- General Fund Status through the January 31, 2025, Pay Cycle





By John and Sylvia Ronsvalle

Why ask your church to apply for a Mission Match matching contribution?



Because they can't.

Every 21 seconds, one of our global neighbors has a child under age five who dies from treatable causes.

When we or someone we love has a medical problem, we contact the doctor.

But in 40 countries, children are dying from treatable causes. And their mothers and fathers cannot get the medical help their children need.

Jesus said love our neighbor as we love ourselves..

Our global neighbors can't ask our churches for help.

But we can.

Each of our churches is no doubt connected to one of the 40 countries. These mission agencies know first-hand how we can help our global neighbors.

We need people who will be a voice for our littlest global neighbors and their parents in our congregations.

It's not either/or. It's both/and.

Pick a project that's going to help little children in Jesus' name. Let your church know that there is an incentive match available for a special offering for the project. Organize a Mission Match application. Then tell those in your church and have the special offering.

Can you picture how the world will look different if a lot of us step out in Jesus' name?

Now that will be something to see!

See missionmatch.org for more info, including (top right) [Proposal Handout for Your Church](#) and [Matching \\$ Application](#). See also emptytomb.org for the "21 seconds" video (middle of the homepage)!

The Body of Christ In Action

We thank God for the many caring Christian individuals who volunteer at empty tomb. Following are Christian groups and churches that individual and group volunteers represent through the works at empty tomb December 1, 2024 – January 31, 2025. Thanks to all.

Clothing Work: CU Church, C.; First Baptist Church of Champaign at Savoy; First United Methodist Church, C.; Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, C.; Mattis Ave. Free Methodist Church, C.; New Horizon Methodist Church, C.; New Life Church of Faith, U.; Pilgrim Missionary Baptist Church, C.; Twin City Bible Church, U.; and, The Vineyard, U.

Food Work: Apostolic Christian Church, C.; The Church of the Living God, C.; Copper Creek Church, C.; Dublin Street Church of Christ, U.; Emmanuel Memorial Episcopal Church, C.; Faith Community Church, U.; Faith United Methodist Church, C.; First Baptist Church

of Champaign at Savoy; First Mennonite Church, U.; First United Methodist Church, C.; Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, C.; Grace Lutheran Church, C.; Liberty Temple COGIC, C.; Mattis Avenue Free Methodist Church, C.; New Covenant Fellowship, C.; Pilgrim Missionary Baptist Church, C.; St. Matthew Lutheran Church, U.; Trinity Lutheran, U.; and, Wesley United Methodist Church, U.

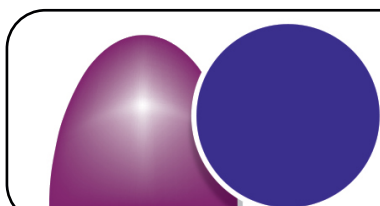
Furniture Work: Chinese Christian Church, C.; Emmanuel Memorial Episcopal Church, C.; Faith United Methodist Church, C.; First United Methodist Church, C.; Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, C.; Mattis Avenue Free Methodist Church, C.; Sangamon Valley Church, Mahomet; St. Patrick Catholic Church, U.; Trinity Lutheran Church, U.; and, Twin City Bible Church, U.

Office/Other: Apostolic Christian Church, C.; Christian Bible Church, Cissna Park; The Church of the Living God, C.; CU Church, C.; Emmanuel Memorial Episcopal Church, C.; Faith Community Church, U.; Faith United Methodist Church, C.; First Presbyterian

Church, C.; First Presbyterian Church, U.; First United Methodist Church, C.; Grace Lutheran Church, C.; Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, C.; Grace Lutheran Church, C.; Mattis Avenue Free Methodist Church, C.; St. Patrick Catholic Church, U.; and, Sangamon Valley Church, Mahomet.

Special-Christmas Preparation and Distribution: The Church of the Living God, C.; First Baptist Church of Champaign at Savoy; First Presbyterian Church, U.; First United Methodist Church, C.; Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, C.; Grace Lutheran Church, C.; Mattis Avenue Free Methodist Church, U.; St. Paul Lutheran Church, Gifford; Sangamon Valley Church, Mahomet; Stone Creek Church, U.; and Twin City Bible Church, U.

Please contact Sylvia Ronsvalle, Exec VP, at info@emptytomb.org if we neglected to include your church or student group who made a group effort to assist others in Jesus' name through empty tomb, inc. We will plan both to thank you and include you in the next issue!



The empty tomb Opportunities Newsletter is published bimonthly to report on the opportunities developed by empty tomb®, inc. for service to others through Christ's Body, the Church.

Layout and Production, Sylvia Ronsvalle; Matt Cosby;
Proofreading Assistance, Sharon H.; Beverly Voss;
Executive Vice President, Sylvia Ronsvalle;
President, John Ronsvalle

For further information contact:
empty tomb, inc.

301 N. Fourth Street
P.O. Box 2404
Champaign, IL 61825-2404
(217) 356-2262

www.emptytomb.org info@emptytomb.org

Scenes from the empty tomb Frontlines

Food Work

“If your gift is serving others, serve them well ...”
- Rom. 12:7 (NLT)

Shannon Cook Pursley brought her gifts and talents to the role of empty tomb Coordinator for over a decade. Shannon used to say that the Food and Furniture Works took volunteers into the home territory of those on the receiving end, rather than asking those folks to leave their comfort zones to receive the help offered in Jesus’ name.

We thank God for the faithful Food Work volunteers who accept a call from Helping Coordinator Debbie Smith once a week, once a month, or on another schedule (the church chooses how often they want to be called).

Every visit provides an encounter with someone who can see in word and deed that Jesus loves them. Some of the circumstances people were recently facing include:

- The woman was blind. Confusion with her government financial support source was being straightened out, but she needed food in the meantime.
- Due to utility payments and a car repair, the woman had no money for food at this time.
- A woman had recently moved to a safer neighborhood. With moving costs, she did not have money for food.
- An agency said all the person’s money was going for rent and utilities, leaving little for food. The person had applied for the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), which had been approved, but the benefits would not arrive until later in the month.

If your church would like to venture out through Food Deliveries, please call Helping Coordinator Debbie Smith at (217) 356-2262. Together, we can reach more people with God’s love through Jesus.

Helping Appointments

“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”
- Galatians 6:2 (NIV)

Up to 10 people each week make an appointment to receive up to \$30 in help toward a bill, gas for their car, or \$29.70 in bus tokens. During the Appointments, the staff or volunteer asks the person if they would like to pray. Sometimes people say no. But often people share a concern they would like to bring to God in prayer. We share some of those so you might also pray.

- Many people ask for prayer for their finances.
- A man asked for safety on his job in the security field.
- A woman asked for prayer for a better relationship with her daughter who lives in another state.
- A woman asked for prayer for her son’s success in high school.
- A woman asked for prayer for her sick mother.
- A man said he had struggled with substance abuse but was now in job training. After praying, he said, “That was a great prayer!”

Furniture Work

“Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.”
Romans 12:15 (NIV)

Bob Clark goes out with the Tuesday morning Furniture Crew. On a recent Tuesday, they had six men from four churches on their pick up-delivery crew. Bob has said that when Furniture volunteers drop off a piece of furniture, it’s not unusual for it to be the only piece of furniture in the living space.

That may be why the Mattis Avenue Free Methodist Church crew reported such a strong response to a delivery in December 2024. The team was delivering a table and four chairs. The volunteers said they got caught up in the family’s excitement, as members of the family helped bring in the furniture. The volunteers enjoyed the high fives and hugs the family shared.

Some months ago, the crew from this church returned very late. That always raises concerns about the status of the volunteers and the truck. In this case, the crew returned and apologized for being late. On one pickup, the couple providing the furniture had just learned that someone dear to them had died. The volunteers felt it was important to stay and talk with them, and offer to pray with them, which they did.

We thank God for all these volunteers who take the time to pick up and deliver furniture, offering to pray with both the givers and the receivers, and serving in Jesus’ name in this way.

Clothing Work

“Do not forget to entertain strangers ...” Hebrews 13:2a (NIV)

On a cold January day, Sylvia Ronsvalle went over to talk to a couple standing outside empty tomb, reading a sign. She explained we open at 1 PM. “We know. We wait.” Wanting to know a little more, Sylvia struck up a conversation. The couple was from a Central Asian —stan country, here at the U of I for a year. Nodding toward the building, the woman said, “This place helped us. We return now. Can we bring things we don’t take back?” Sylvia said their items would be very welcome and be shared with others free in Jesus’ name.

Helping Referrals

“At the present time, your plenty will supply their need ...”
- 2 Corinthians 8:14a (NIV)

A couple was temporarily out of work and fell behind on rent. They were concerned about the part of their back rent that they could not cover. Jobs had restarted, but they could only pay part of their rent. empty tomb was able to pay the rent.

Senior Fund

“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people ...”
-Galatians 6:10a (NIV)

A senior man had surgery that kept him off work for four weeks. He had kept up with other bills but was behind on his mortgage. He had returned to work but was worried about the back payments due. empty tomb was able to catch up the amount due for the mortgage.

Medical Fund

“The entire law is summed up in a single command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” - Galatians 5:14 (NIV)

An expectant mother needed a prescription to prevent problems with the pregnancy and ease her associated discomfort. She would soon have a medical card, but needed the prescription immediately. empty tomb was able to cover the cost of the medication.

Statistics for December 1, 2024—January 31, 2025	
Christian Health Services	
New cribs shared	8
Layettes shared	5
Number who received Medical Fund Assistance	9
Medical Fund Assistance	\$6,189
# children for whom parents received diapers	71

Clothing	
Visitors to the Clothing Room (including onetime, occasional, and regular visitors)	1,946
Bags/boxes sorted, estimated	2,399
Volunteer hours	186
Free Food	
Deliveries coordinated through empty tomb	84
Number of people in households receiving deliveries	297
Number of times 1-pound bag of beans shared	12
Number of times bags (make 3 qts) of powdered milk shared	23

Furniture	
Items delivered	76
Items shared through Display Room	7
Volunteer hours	145
Helping	
Times assistance given	75
Helping Fund shared	\$11,175
Number of Seniors helped through Senior Fund	1
Senior Fund shared	\$127
Office and Other Volunteer hours	600
Total Volunteer hours	931

The following information is shared by empty tomb, inc., with our friends outside of Illinois, as we have been advised to do.

UNIFORM DISCLOSURE STATEMENT: empty tomb, inc. (“empty tomb”) is a §501(c)(3) organization, gifts to which are deductible as charitable contributions for Federal income tax purposes.

California: empty tomb’s audited financial statement is available upon request to empty tomb. 100 percent of your gift may be deducted under Federal and State income tax laws. Florida: A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING TOLL FREE WITHIN THE STATE, 1-800-435-7352, OR AT WWW.800HELPPFLA.COM. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL, OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE STATE. empty tomb’s registration number is CH30798. Georgia: Upon request, empty tomb will provide a full and fair description of this and its other programs, and a financial statement or summary. Maryland: A copy of empty tomb’s current financial statement is available on request to empty tomb, inc., P.O. Box 2404, Champaign, Illinois 61825-2404; (217) 356-9519. For the cost of copies and postage, registration documents, and other information are available from the

Maryland Secretary of State. Minnesota: 100 percent of your gift may be deducted as a charitable contribution under Federal and state income tax laws. Mississippi: The official registration and financial information of empty tomb may be obtained from the Mississippi Secretary of State’s office by calling 1-888-236-6167. Registration by the Secretary of State does not imply endorsement. Virginia: A financial statement is available from the State Division of Consumer Affairs in the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services upon request. Washington: The registration statement required by the Charitable Solicitation Act is on file with the Secretary of State. Additional information can be obtained by calling 1-800-332-4483. West Virginia: West Virginia residents may obtain a summary of the registration and financial documents from the Secretary of State, State Capitol, Charleston, West Virginia 24305. Registration does not imply endorsement.

