

## FUEL HISTORY

FUEL is a homegrown initiative of the Church of the Redeemer created to provide weekend food to alleviate food insecurity for school children. The FUEL food drive came into existence in the spring of 2017 after a chance conversation in Panera with the manager of Centre Street Food Pantry. She mentioned that some middle school teachers were distributing food on Friday afternoons from their car trunks to needy students. This just didn't seem right in this relatively affluent city. After speaking with the Rector, it was decided to see what could be done.

FUEL, with the support and advice of the Centre Street Food Pantry, began distributing backpacks of food in mid-April 2017 in a pilot project. We began with a middle school and a high school in Newton, and the Easter offering that year funded the pilot. Parishioners made financial contributions and donated food for the program. We learned a lot in those first few months! By the fall, we were serving seven Newton schools, three middle and four elementary schools, having had very little success in the high school.

By the fall of 2019, FUEL had grown to delivering backpacks to six elementary and two middle schools in Newton. We had also established a presence in one of the Newton high schools as well, directed by a student who is also a Redeemer parishioner. The students developed a FUEL website for the high school students.

In addition, in February 2019 FUEL began delivering backpacks to the Redeemer's longstanding mission partner, St. Stephen's, for the after school students and families they serve. All were receiving free or reduced price meals in school. Some live in homeless shelters.

In September 2019 FUEL began delivering backpacks to another longstanding mission partner of the Redeemer, the Epiphany School in Dorchester. Deliveries were made on Thursdays to coincide with a cooking class for students and parents on that afternoon. Suggestions were given on different ways to use the food in the backpacks as well as any fresh vegetable deliveries they have received.

FUEL has historically supported food insecure students in two other ways. In the summer FUEL provides snacks and water for four weeks during July to Newton children in the Title 1 program. During the academic year FUEL provides snacks for food insecure students in after school programs, primarily a Title 1 program at one of the elementary schools.

FUEL has also provided some personal care items to students at St Stephen's and Epiphany. The initial request came from a teenage boy at St Stephen's wondering if we ever provided toiletries as he would very much like some deodorant.

With the coronavirus crisis in the spring of 2020, demand from food insecure students and families has risen dramatically. Thankfully, due to the generosity of parishioners and other nearby churches, the combination of food donations and financial contributions, and the work of many tireless volunteers, FUEL has met the challenge and expanded its output. To learn more or to help please contact us at [FUEL](#).