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## Construction to begin on new home for Glen Ellyn Food Pantry



A former church parsonage will be turned into the new home of the Glen Ellyn Food Pantry.  
(Brian Hill | Staff Photographer)

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5/26/2021 5:30 AM

An old plaque on the front door of a former church parsonage in Glen Ellyn was inscribed with a Gaelic greeting, "Céad Míle Fáilte," loosely translated as "A Hundred Thousand Welcomes."

It's unclear how the sign got there, but it's foreshadowing what's to come.

The Glen Ellyn Food Pantry will extend thousands of welcomes when it serves families out of the 100-year-old building, starting later this year.

The nonprofit pantry is renovating the parsonage to the north of Faith Lutheran Church into its first permanent home after raising \$900,000 to fund the project.

Once the work is complete, the food pantry will be able to move out of shared space within another church downtown and into its own headquarters on Park Boulevard, just north of Roosevelt Road.

The new site will allow the pantry to grow, have greater control over operating hours and put services closer to two bus routes.

An existing two-car garage on the property also will be torn down and replaced with a two-story warehouse for food storage. With the warehouse, the renovated building will provide 5,609 square feet of space, Executive Director Laura Glaza said.

The pantry will distribute groceries within the house itself, while a master bedroom will be converted into a community room with a \$25,000 donation from the Glen Ellyn Rotary Club. It's envisioned as a space for nutrition classes and other programs.

Construction is slated to begin soon, but pantry leaders and village officials have already held a groundbreaking ceremony to mark the start of a project three years in the making.

In its original location, the pantry had run out of room inside Grace Lutheran Church, where it was founded by a youth group in 1979.

"The whole idea is that we'll have more space to sort, more space to store, more space for clients," Glaza said. "We don't really even have a formal waiting area here right now at the church, but we will at the new space."

The \$900,000 capital campaign was publicly announced amid the pandemic, but an outpouring of donations and socially distant fundraising events helped the pantry reach its goal in mid-March.

"It's a great opportunity for us to expand our reach, expand our services," Glaza said. "And in the face of the pandemic, we're just thrilled that we met our goal and are able to move to the next chapter of the pantry's life."

Bricks purchased by donors will line the walkway at the entrance to the pantry's new home at 55 N. Park Boulevard. And the plaque on the blue front door will be relocated inside the building when the pantry officially makes the move -- expected by the end of the year.

Faith Lutheran Church gifted the former parsonage and plans to lease the land to the pantry for \$55 a year, a nod to the pantry's new address.

The pantry predominantly serves the working poor, families that struggle to pay higher living costs, senior citizens on a fixed income who would otherwise have to skip food to pay for medicine or utilities and people with temporary or permanent disabilities.

In the last year, the pantry saw an increase of 800 new clients and made Villa Park one of the 12 communities in its service area.

To meet the continued need, the Glen Ellyn Park District hosts monthly drive-through food drives. The next one will be held from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Thursday at the Ackerman Sports & Fitness Center.