

ANNUAL REPORT 2024





A WORD FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In 2024, United Christian Ministries continued its mission of service and experienced significant growth in its operations. Every day, families in Jackson County rely on our organization for essential support, including food assistance, financial aid, and community resources. We remain steadfast in our commitment to addressing these critical needs with compassion and efficiency.

The success of our pantry operations is made possible by the unwavering dedication of our volunteers. These individuals play an integral role in managing deliveries, sorting donations, and ensuring that resources are readily available to those in need. Our approach prioritizes dignity and respect, creating an environment where clients not only receive necessary provisions but also experience a sense of belonging and support.

Beyond food assistance, we collaborate extensively with community partners to provide financial relief for families facing hardship. Through partnerships with organizations such as the Department of Social Services, Mountain Projects, and Jackson County Neighbors in Need, we offer crucial aid for overdue rent payments, utility bills, and winter heating expenses, helping individuals navigate difficult circumstances with stability and hope.

Our programs are sustained entirely through generous donations and grant funding. We extend our sincere gratitude to all contributors who support United Christian Ministries, whether through financial gifts, volunteerism, or the donation of essential goods. Your generosity enables us to serve our neighbors with integrity, ensuring that our mission continues to uplift and strengthen the community.

ANN SELBY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Pictured on front cover:

- **First United Methodist Church of Sylva hosts Annual Christmas Food Bag Event**
- **WCU Fraternity brothers helping UCM stock the pantry with a Food Drive**
- **Lovedale Baptist Youth helping out at our Food Pantry**
- **Matt Stillwell holds a Concert at Bridge Park to Benefit UCM's Community Assistance**

IN THE PANTRY



United Christian Ministries was primarily established as a food pantry for Jackson County residents. The pantry has grown from one small room in 1989 to over 1,000 square feet today. Our shelves are packed with dried beans, canned vegetables, rice, soup, pasta, spaghetti sauce, cereal, oatmeal, pancake mix, syrup, macaroni and cheese, ramen, SpaghettiOs, canned fruit, canned tuna and chicken, breads, fresh fruits, potatoes, onions, lettuce, carrots, frozen meats, deli items, bakery items, and more!

Our neighbors can visit the pantry as often as every two weeks. A family of four typically takes home 12 grocery bags of food. Our pantry also offers personal hygiene products such as soap, toothpaste, shampoo, toilet paper, feminine products, toothbrushes, diapers, wipes, and deodorant. We also assist Jackson County's unhoused population - between 80-100 individuals. Many of these folks come to UCM on a regular basis to get something to eat. We provide them with bottled water, deli sandwiches, snacks, and personal hygiene items. We welcome our homeless neighbors to come every day for a meal.

We offer additional food support at Thanksgiving and Christmas. At Thanksgiving, we provided food vouchers in lieu of our traditional meal kit that contained vegetables, stuffing, cake mix, frosting, bread mix and a holiday ham.

Our largest food project of the year is the "Christmas Food Bags for Jackson County Schoolchildren" project. Local schools let us know how many families need extra food support for the long winter break, churches donate the thousands of items needed, then volunteers fill the bags and deliver them to the schools. In 2024 we provided over 625 bags of food to local families.



Did you know? The food in the pantry comes from MANNA Foodbank (we order every 2 weeks); Food Lion (donations 4 days per week); WalMart (donations 3 days per week); Starbucks (donations twice a week), and Dollar General Stores (donations 2-3 times a week); Donations also come from individuals, churches, student groups, and others.

HELPING OUR NEIGHBORS

Any Jackson County resident is welcome to come to United Christian Ministries, regardless of income or any other factor. In 2024 approximately 59 % of our clients report a household income of less than \$15,000 per year.

Approximately 31percent of our client households include someone disabled. Roughly five percent of our client households are homeless.

WHAT OUR CLIENTS THINK

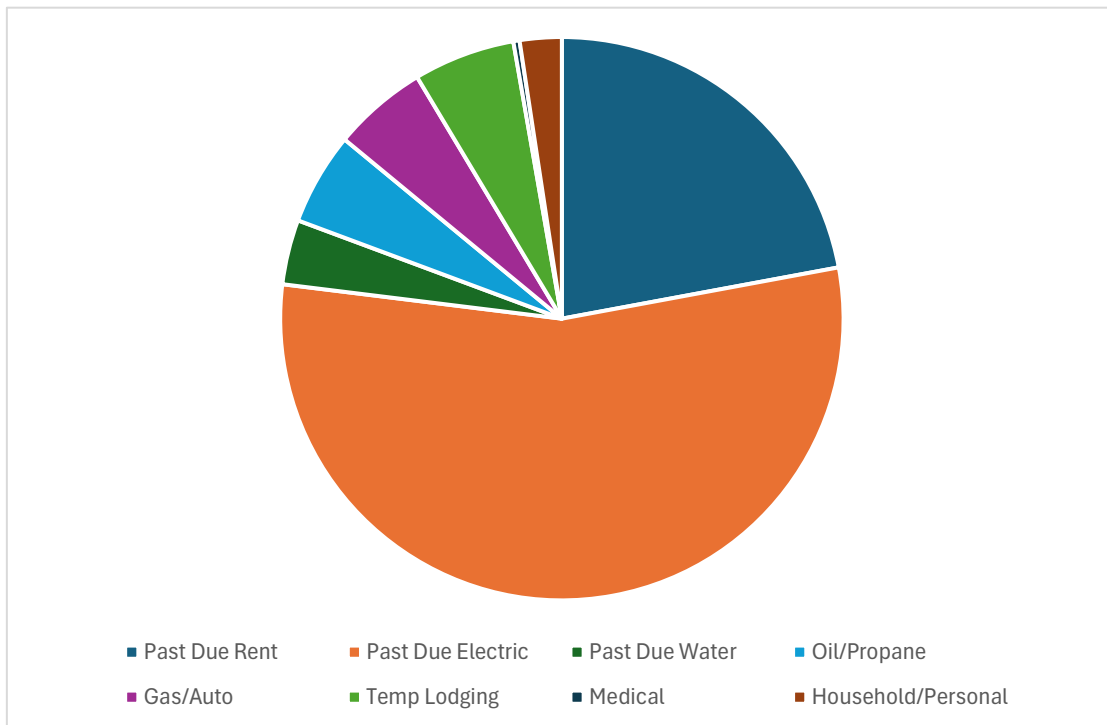
We conducted a client survey in the fall of 2024 that was completed by over 100 families. Here are their responses:

- *Has UCM treated you kindly and with courtesy?* 96% responded 'yes'
- *Does the food you receive help you maintain a healthy diet?* 94% responded 'yes'
- *Are there other foods you prefer or would be better for you?* 66% said 'no.' Of those that said 'yes,' they asked for more gluten free and organic options, more diabetic options, cheese, and milk.
- *Are our open hours adequate and enable you to receive our services?* 98% responded 'yes'
- *Are you aware of other agencies in our community that provide services that might be useful to you?* 92% said 'yes'
- *In which community in Jackson County do you live?* Responses included Sylva, Savannah, Pumpkintown, Whittier, Dillsboro, Tuckasegee, Ochre Hill, Balsam, Dicks Creek, Addie, Wolftown, Allen Branch, Cope Creek, Wilmont, Grants Creek.
- *What is your greatest ongoing need?* Clients identified food and financial aid as their greatest needs.
- *What comment and/or shares do you have for UCM?*
 - "UCM does a great job of being friendly, helpful, and non-judgemental."
 - "You guys are the best."
 - "Everyone has always been so kind and go over the top to help and provide. You have given me socks and gloves for my kids."
 - "Everyone is so friendly and helpful."
 - "Always feel so welcomed and unashamed."
 - "Stay amazing."
 - "I LOVE YOU ALL!"



FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

In 2024 we provided critical financial assistance to families totaling over \$74,000



\$ 20,700

The amount paid to local landlords to prevent evictions due to past due rent for 67 families and to provide temporary lodging for an additional 25 families and individuals in 2024.

193

The number of families protected from utilities disconnection in 2024; UCM paid \$40,700 toward past due electric, \$3,900 for heat/propane, and \$2,800 for water.

FOOD SUPPORT

38,750

Number of bags of food items distributed to families in 2024.

5,200 visits from 1,260 unique households, over 4,000 family members, a third of whom are children.

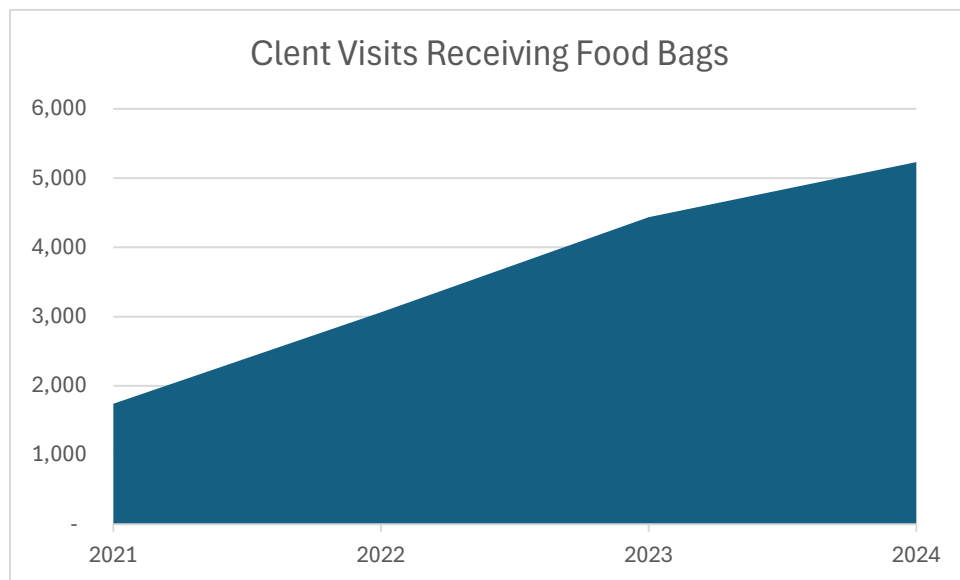


1,800

Number of bags of household or personal items distributed to families in 2024.

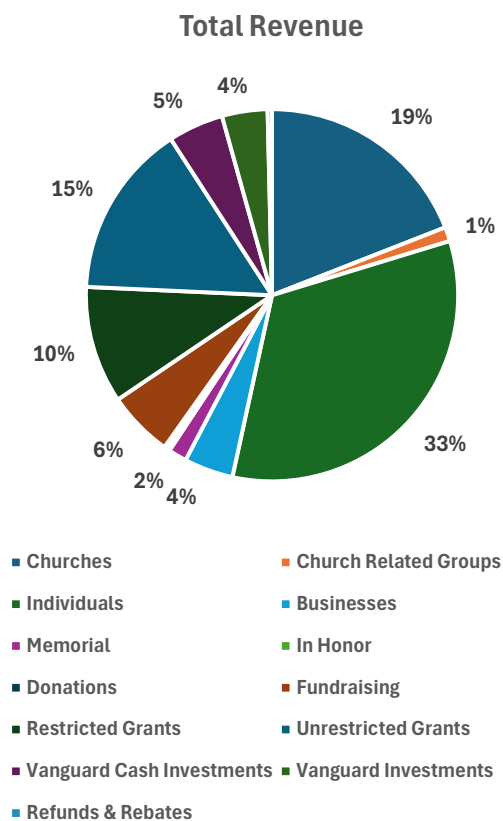
472

The number of first-time clients to UCM in 2024. The number of families who visited UCM for the first time has risen steadily from 187 in 2021, an average annual increase of 36 percent.



In 2024, we distributed over 230,000 pounds of food.

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS



United Christian Ministries is supported by a combination of donations, grants, and fundraising.

While Grants account for roughly a quarter of our total income, two thirds of our funding come from Donations.

A full third of our financial support come from Individuals. Countless hours are also donated by our volunteers who answer calls, greet clients, fill food orders, take requests for assistance, and offer referrals. No individual is turned away hungry from our food pantry.

Churches and church related groups account for a fifth of our financial support, and are a vital source for our pantry operations through food donations and volunteers.

Grantors of long standing include the Church of the Good Shepherd (Cashiers), The Jackson County Community Foundation, The Sisters of Mercy of North Carolina Foundation, and the Rotary Club of Sylva. Food Lion and Walmart generously provide substantial support to our Food Pantry for which we are grateful.

Every donation, no matter how big or small, has a positive impact on our community. With your help, United Christian Ministries has consistently provided Jackson County neighbors in need with food and financial assistance for over 35 years.

Executive Director
Ann Selby

Assistant to the Director
Andi Green

Outreach Coordinator
Eric Schmitz

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