

ENGAGE

out of the church and into the world

Manna Bags

Coram Deo touches the homeless in Reno by Jose Skinner



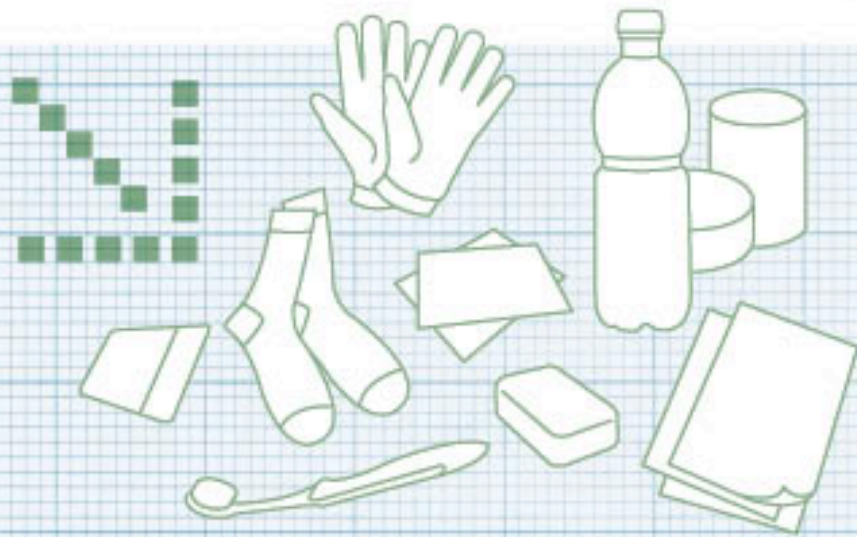
HOMELESSNESS IS A CONSTANT PROBLEM IN RENO. Nevada's homelessness per capita is twice the national average. Some homeless people stand on off-ramps holding signs asking for help. As Christ-followers, what do we do?

Here's one option: Give them a Manna Bag. It's a Ziploc® bag filled with some daily essentials for those in need—kept in your car for such an occasion. It's not enough to last them a month, but it might be just enough to get them through the day, like God's gift of manna to the Israelites. Most recipients are grateful and surprised that you're giving them your "lunch."

This past spring our EFCA church plant (Coram Deo) packed enough bags for each family to have two—one to keep, one to give to a neighbor. Soon, people were asking when we would make more, so we've decided to pack these during our potlucks four times a year.

Manna Bags address a real frustration. We are committed to serving the city twice a month (washing cars for free, serving at the AIDS Walk), but homelessness overwhelms us because of the tension between wanting to give to those in need but being concerned about how money might be spent. Most of us were frozen into inaction, but Manna Bags have freed us to act. ■

Jose Skinner plans service projects and leads worship at Coram Deo, a church planted in 2007 in Reno, Nevada. Jose is excited to be part of a church that keeps dreaming of ways to show kindness and compassion to its community.



> WHY MANNA BAGS?

- » They are an alternative to doing nothing.
- » They won't solve the greater problem of hunger, but it's something you can do for one person right now.

> WHAT GOES IN A MANNA BAG?

- » bottled water, food
- » socks, gloves
- » toothbrush/toothpaste
- » soap
- » social-services info
- » phone card (check the dollar store)
- » note of prayer