

# What's Brewing|Lamoni Food Pantry

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

volunteers, community, church, food pantry, families, choice, kids, mission, poverty

## SPEAKERS

Carla Long, Gwen Simpson

### **Carla Long** 00:27

Hello, and welcome to the *Project Zion Podcast*. I'm your host, Carla Long, and today you're listening to "What's Brewing", where we talk about all kinds of different amazing and cool stuff that happened around the church that you may or may not know about. And today, I'm with someone whom I just met, but whom I'm already friends with and who I already really like a lot. Her name is Gwen Simpson. Hi, Gwen.

### **Gwen Simpson** 00:50

Carla, how are you?

### **Carla Long** 00:51

I'm so good. I'm so glad to have met you this morning, and I can't wait to hear more about what you do in Lamoni. But before we jump into that, why don't you tell us a little bit about yourself.

### **Gwen Simpson** 01:01

My name is Gwen Simpson. I live in Lamoni, Iowa, and I live in one of the poorest counties in Iowa. In fact, I always tell people, we really live in the wealthiest part of the poor county because Graceland University is located here, and with the university and their staff, that tends to push the poverty, the greatest poverty into other towns. I'm a member of the Community of Christ. My congregation is here, and I run the local food pantry, and I've done that for the last 13 years. I'm a social worker by trade, so it's kind of a natural fit for me.

### **Carla Long** 01:40

That's wonderful, Gwen. So, you mentioned the Lamoni food pantry and that is what this podcast is about, and so why don't we just jump into it and say, what is the Lamoni food pantry? Tell me a little bit about it.

### **Gwen Simpson** 01:51

When we first moved here, 22 years ago, I heard about this food pantry, and at the time the local churches, the Ministerial Alliance, ran the food pantry and it went from church to church every few years. They'd collect food from local churches, and that would be in the kitchen of the churches. They'd have a few cabinets, and when somebody called from the community and said, "I have a need", then the pastor would meet them and give them a few bags of whatever food they had at the time. The food

was brought in by church people, but also the Ministerial Alliance collected dues, and that was the budget that they had. You know, occasionally they would give certificates out to the local HyVee, which is our grocery store here, and people could go and shop for milk and things like that, because really, when you think about it, usually a couple sacks of food for a month does not get people very well. I got a job and when I retired from that job 12 years later, I happened to be in a Ministerial Alliance meeting in lieu of my pastor, and they were talking about, they wanted to move the pantry from the Baptist Church to the Methodist Church, and they needed volunteers, and so I said, "Hey, I'm free. This is something I can do. This is something I'm interested in." So, they moved the pantry to the local Methodist Church in the kitchen with three cabinets, and three cabinets of food. I was a volunteer at first. They switched pastors and the new pastor and I really had an affinity for each other. And she said, "Gwen, what's your dream?" And I said, "Well, my dream would be to be in a dedicated room for a pantry, not a kitchen of a church, and to be able to let people shop for their food." One of my experiences was, somebody had gotten a can of beets in their food one month, and they came back the next month, and they said, "What do I do with these because I don't like beets." And so, my favorite story is, I don't like beets and please don't give me beets, and expect me to be thankful for that. At the time that I started with the pantry volunteering, there were six families a month. We've come a long way. In November, we had 83 families. Back to the beginning; we got this dedicated room for the pantry. We wrote some grants. We decided at that time, it was loosely supported by the Ministerial Alliance, the town really didn't know much about it outside the churches, and so we decided we would write for nonprofit status. We did that, and we became our own entity, separated from any one church, but really, I sit on the Ministerial Alliance board because I represent all churches in that. So, we really came a long way. Didn't have volunteers before, last year we had over 50 volunteers help us in some capacity during the year. So, the exciting news is that in 2020, we decided we needed to be somewhere that was handicap accessible. We had to go down basement steps. We were in different rooms in the basement. The Methodists had been, I always say, "Thank God for the Methodists," they had allowed us half of their basement space, but there were several rooms. And so, you take food, anywhere from four to 5,000 pounds of food a month, down the steps, and then you took it up the steps. They were steep stairs, as only churches have, but we decided we were moving. And so, after a long process, we found a house, but it was a State Farm business on our main road in Lamoni, which is wonderful, not back with other houses, but it was right on the main road, raised \$230,000, bought the building and refurbished it to meet our needs, and we moved in last May. No stairs, unloading food with a pallet brought two feet from our door, and we carry it inside. So, it's been an exciting year, exciting.

**Carla Long** 06:07

Gwen, I am astounded by everything you're telling me. This is no small food pantry. This is huge. Like this is helping a lot of people, a lot of volunteers, this is a lot of work on your part.

**Gwen Simpson** 06:20

It is, but I love it. I love it. And since I'm retired, I have that, but I don't do that by myself. I've got an assistant, just a lot of people. You know what the neat thing is, Carla, that they kind of find their niche. I've got a group of men that come in twice a month, and they're just there to unload, and they stock the shelves. And when we're open twice a week, we've got people that pull food from the shelves, and then we've got people that lift it into people's cars. One thing we've changed since the very beginning, again people have choice, so on our choice list that, right now, and it varies, there's 81 choices of food. Now

that may include six choices of vegetables, five choices of canned fruits. And so, with COVID, we used to let people into the pantry and they picked things off the shelf. Pantries are usually small and closed rooms. And while ours is bigger now, we have people fill out the order sheet in a bigger room, and then our volunteers pull that food off the shelf. So, it's safe for my volunteers, which the average age is about 65, and they feel safe, and the clients still get the food of their choice. So, wow, it's exciting. And the thing that has been really, it couldn't be planned, when I started volunteering, the community was not aware of the pantry. In fact, I had one church lady say to me early on, "Why, I didn't know there were hungry people here." Now, I just think there's got to be a disconnect, and maybe that's middle-class privilege, that the poorest county in Iowa, that you didn't realize there were poor people that needed food. But one of the great things, and this has been one of the benefits of the pantry, it's created an awareness community wide of needs, of needs that they didn't even realize that people had. When I first moved here, 21 years ago, I went to church people and said, "Tell me about this poorest county in Iowa," and they could not do that. Our churches tend to be middle class, at least in Lamoni they do. So now there's a resource for people in the community. They want to volunteer. They want to donate something, either their time, their resources. They want their kids to volunteer. So, we are a resource to the community in ways that we've never been before or it was never possible before. That's been one of the blessings that's come out of this, I think, for the community. And so, whether it's city council, or now we're looking into Meals on Wheels, kind of a program, people come and they get statistics from us. They get information that is going to help them start their program. That's a benefit that none of us could foresee.

**Carla Long** 09:28

I mean, to grow from where it started to where it is now, it just seems like it's just been such a huge difference. And Gwen, I already feel like you're a humble person, so you probably don't wanna take all the credit, but I mean, I feel like because of you, it feels like it's just become what it is now. And raising \$230,000 to buy that building, that is exceptional work and just absolutely incredible.

**Gwen Simpson** 09:50

I learned something about myself. I don't want to be a funder raiser. That's very uncomfortable. It was very uncomfortable for me. And yet, interestingly enough, when we started, we didn't have a budget. Now, we have a money market. We have an endowment. We are very well funded because of grants, but mainly because of churches, and private citizens and some businesses. And we don't even fundraise right now, because we have adequate funds. People continue to give us funds monthly. So, you know what? I was at the right time. I think this was a God job. You know, I was at the right time, the right place, and I think this was, the Spirit was willing and ready to move in me and in this community, and in the people who were not volunteers 13 years ago.

**Carla Long** 10:45

I love hearing that. I really love hearing that when things just fall into place, and it just seems to happen in the way it should. I know you've had bumps along the way. I'm guessing you've had bumps along the way.

**Gwen Simpson** 11:54

Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

**Carla Long 10:58**

But I love that you can still say that this is, feels like a calling for you and a call directly from God. I think that's wonderful. How much time does it take? Are you open all the time? Or are you open a certain hour of the day? What is it like on a daily basis for you?

**Gwen Simpson 11:13**

Well, for me, it takes probably 20, 25, 30, depending on the time of year, of my time, and that's just my time, that's not other people's time added on to that. No one is, but the pantry itself. It's amazing. It's kind of like running a church. You're only open a few hours a week, but it takes a lot of effort to keep things running during the time you are open. We are open twice a week for roughly an hour and a half, hour and 45 minutes at a time. We do home deliveries once a month. There's people who either don't have a vehicle and don't have a friend to drive them to the pantry, or they're disabled, or they're senior citizens. And so, Tuesday afternoons or Thursday evenings we're open. People can come during that time and shop, or they can call ahead and say, "Can I get this ready at a different time?" I mean, you can't do that all the time for people, but when you know it's an unusual situation, you work. Last night, we were working and someone came half hour early on his way home from 25 days in the hospital, and he wanted food. So, it's like, okay, we were there. We were prepared. We weren't open, but we went ahead and got the food ready and got it to him. So, there's situations like that where you bend your rules. You always do that. But we've decided that if the 83 continues, you know, a month, 83 families, we can always look into increasing our open time, the amount of time we're there. Our volunteers know that. They might get home 15 minutes later because somebody came in at the last minute and we had to fill that order.

**Carla Long 12:58**

That's really wonderful, 83 families. That's a lot.

**Gwen Simpson 13:01**

I know, I know.

**Carla Long 13:03**

So how do the people who want to get food from the food pantry, do they have to do an application process, or do they just come? How does that work?

**Gwen Simpson 13:12**

We have a sheet they fill out and they come. On the sheet we say, "How'd you hear about us?" And most of the time it's word of mouth. It's other people that are in their situation, or occasionally they'll hear it from their mother, or they'll hear it from the teacher at school. But most of the time, it's friend telling friends. The only rule that I guess you could say is they have to live within Lamoni or Davis City, which is a little town next door to us. They have to live within those areas. We have a lot of resources, but we don't have resources to feed the whole county, and that's the tough part of the job. We get a lot of people that call, either call me or they come to the food pantry. I had a lady on Tuesday call, come and we were closed, and I, she knocked and I opened the door and said, "Hey, we're closed. I'm sorry." And she said, "No, no, that's okay. I just have a friend who lives in another town in the county and she

needs food.” And I said, “I’m sorry,” and I gave her the places that I thought would be able to help her, because you become aware of other resources. But they’re not anywhere near what the resources that we can give. You know, if you’re a family of one to two, and you can leave with 50 pounds of food once a month, that’s different than if somebody hands you three sacks of food, and these are foods that you choose, not that somebody’s packaged up for you. The only thing they have to do is prove where they live and they bring in an envelope with their name and their address on it. And once that’s there, they never have to do that again. We don’t ask for Social Security. We don’t want that kind of information. We do have a government form, USDA, they fill out, and course they have to meet the guidelines for that form. They don’t have to meet guidelines for us. If you say you need food, then you come in and food is available to you, which is a good thing.

**Carla Long 15:15**

It’s a really good thing. And I haven’t mentioned this, but I think it’s so empowering that you just don’t hand them food. You let them choose food. There’s a big difference of you being able to choose what you want and what you like, and like your story about the beets. Why do I have to eat beets if I don’t like beets? So, I think it’s really empowering what you’re doing. I think it’s a beautiful way to do it, and just really, really excited to hear this, because I told you before, Lamoni feels like a second home to me after going to Graceland. And every time I drive in and see the “Welcome to Lamoni” sign, my heart feels like it’s home. And this is such a beautiful, beautiful thing that I’m hearing all about. So, Gwen, I’m sure you have lots of stories. Can you tell us a few, or one or two stories about how lives have been changed by Lamoni Food Pantry?

**Gwen Simpson 16:00**

Yeah, I’ve got tons of stories from the past and recent. This was my Christmas story. The week before Christmas, I was at the pantry stocking and I got a phone call from a gentleman who introduced himself and he said, “My sister uses your food pantry.” He lived in another part of Iowa and was like four hours away. I knew her. She had used several of our programs. And that’s a neat thing about the pantry; you get to meet people, and you really form friendships, and you know the struggles of their lives. And so, he said, “My sister is in an abusive situation.” I knew that too because our paper publishes why people are arrested. Small town paper, you get those things. And he said, “She needs to get out of town, but I’m here and she’s there, and my car won’t make it there the two hours. What she needs is, she needs a gas tank full of gas, and she needs somebody to move her belongings downstairs and pack our car because she has heart problems.” I go, “Okay.” And you know, I’m thinking on the fly here, like, oh, we’ve got a storm coming in the next day and her car is not dependable. So, I’m going, oh my gosh, it’s one o’clock right now. How do we do this? So, I said, “I’ll take care of it. I’ll be in touch with you. I now have your phone number.” I called her, “Give me an assessment. You gotta do an assessment before you get help. How much stuff do you have?” And it was in an upstairs apartment over an old building downtown. I mean, steep, steep, lots of stairs. So, she told me how much she had, and I said, “Okay, well, we’ll get a gas card.” And she said, “Gwen, I don’t know that there’s enough gas in my car to get to the gas station, two blocks away.” I go, “Oh, okay. We’ll bring some gas, fill you up a little bit.” So, my husband and I went over, long story short, got her to the gas station, got her car filled up. She had no idea how much gas it would take to get her there, but we filled the car up and we were able to give her some money. We have an emergency relief fund. We’re able to give her some money to have in case she needed to stop. Interestingly enough, it’s the first time my husband has never stopped the car when

he's filling up, because it sounded so awful we did not think it would start again. That, I mean, that's how scary this situation was. I'd called a couple guys during the day that I knew were strong and able to do all the stairs. And I went up and, sadly to say, I said, "You know, this is about what you can take. You're gonna have to leave everything else." And we decided she was going to leave the next day. We would get her ready, the car packed, and she would leave the next day. And she and I talked safety precautions for her. But I went down and started talking to the guys and they said, "Hey," one guy said, "Let's put her up in a hotel. That way the spouse will not know where she's at." So, we decided, okay, that's what we'll do. We go up, she's coming out, and I said, "What are you doing out here?" And she said, "I'm leaving. I'm leaving now." And I go, "Wait a minute. It's gonna get dark." And she says, "I know but I have to go. I have to go now." So, she came down the stairs, she hugged the guys, I call them my three wise guys because they were the wise men, and she said, "Thank you. You've saved my life." She hugged me, and I said, "I'm praying for you the whole way to get there." She got in the car. It sounded awful. And I said, "Tammy, maybe you don't turn this car off the whole time if you don't need to." And she left. At 8:30 that night, because she told me it would only take four hours, I was concerned, so I called her brother, and he said, "Well, she stopped in a small town. My son and I came. He's driving her car. She's in the car with me." Four days later, she called me back, and she was in tears, and she said, "Gwen, this is, this is wonderful what you guys have done for me?" That's a connection the pantry made. We helped her with medicine. We helped her with emergency relief funds. If it hadn't been for the pantry, I don't know. When she felt like that we had a good enough relationship, she could do that. I've got another guy who kind of lives outside of our area, just a little ways, and I got a call from the Food Bank of Iowa and they said, "Hey, we've got a guy that has no food." And they told me where he lived. And I thought, well, it's right on the edge, you know. So, I called him. He's about 60 years old, lives by himself with his dogs in a 100 year-old farmhouse that is in much need of repair. But he comes in because we won't go out that far. He comes in and gets the food. I call him once a month, get his order. We have it ready when he comes. Every time he leaves, he texts me, and he said, "Thank you. You guys are godsend." Or every holiday he contacts me. "Merry Christmas, Gwen. Happy New Year." So, you form relationships. And I know the other people at the pantry that work, do the same thing. People are in tears so often. I had another man that came. First time I met him he couldn't even face me. He was with his wife. He was so ashamed, and we were helping them with rent, and I kept calling him by name and asking him questions. And finally, he, by the end of the interview, he was turned facing me. But since then, we've gotten to know each other. And just before Christmas, they needed some extra help. And we gave him some extra food and a gas card. Here's this man, 50 year-old former mechanic, just stunned me. He opened his arms and pulled me into a bear hug. And you're just stunned. And then you just, okay, I'm hugging God, you know. That's what you feel like. So, the stories could go on and on. Those are just a few. I think people trust us. They know. We started our school supply campaign because 10 years ago a mother came to me and she was single, a single mom, and she had two kids, and she says, "Gwen, I have to buy school supplies in a month. It's \$60. I don't have the money. How am I going to do that?" And so, out of that came our school supply campaign, that every summer we raise funds, and every kid that's on free/reduced lunch can come and get all their school supplies paid for and backpacks. The community supports that, whereas before, we never had those kind of funds going on.

**Carla Long** 22:54

That is so wonderful. I've actually heard, and this could be wrong, but after Christmas, school supply time is like the biggest shopping time of the year. Stores make all kind of money during school supply time. I have two kids, they're two and four. We've never done school shopping so I have no idea what that's like, but I'm already kind of dreading it. So, what a wonderful ministry that's offering to those kids. Another wonderful ministry you're providing.

**Gwen Simpson** 23:17

It's a voucher that we give to go to a local Dollar General, and they get to choose what color they want, again, it's their choice. What color folder do you want? Or your water bottle is pink or purple, and if you're a boy, you don't want those colors. You want what you want. And several years, and it's been several of the last few years, we've had extra money. So, what we do with that money, we keep it from year to year, it's in that separate fund, but we buy \$25 gift certificates to Walmart for every teacher in the school because we all know that teachers use their money. Is that a lot of money? No, it's not, but it's a start, and it's a good faith start that said, hey, the community cares about you and they care about the schools.

**Carla Long** 24:03

That is absolutely true. And what it does, it just reminds the teacher that they're cared about, what you're...

**Gwen Simpson** 24:11

Absolutely.

**Carla Long** 24:11

It just reminds them that you are thinking about them.

**Gwen Simpson** 24:12

Yeah, yeah, it does.

**Carla Long** 24:14

And going back to the choosing part, now that I have a toddler, if I give him perhaps the wrong cup at dinnertime, I don't stop hearing about it until bedtime, so I totally understand how important color is to kids.

**Gwen Simpson** 24:29

Well, we all want a choice as much as possible. There's times you have to take what you're given, but so much choice for the families that we deal with is taken away. You know, you have to be in this program, or you have to go to this doctor, or whatever. And we try to say, "Okay, it's your choice. You have a say in at least this part of it." One of the things that we started last summer, and again, it's because the community supports us so well, we realized we didn't have a lot of fresh produce, obviously. And so, in our gathering room where they come in, fill out their order sheet, there's some shelves, and so we started going last summer, we have an Amish produce auction, and I talked to the Amish guys, and they said they'll work with me, tell me what their lowest prices are. And we started buying produce from them once a week. And then we'd stock our shelves, and people come in, there's

other odds and ends that are on those shelves that they can choose from too, but they can choose the amount of produce that they would use. We're not worried that they're going to take too much because we know it's going to spoil, so. And, or they'll say, "I don't want to take for somebody else." I go, "No, no, we've got extras here. You take the produce. You need it." So, this fall, then, we decided that was so successful, I wrote a couple grants. We buy from our local grocery store now and work with them, and we will work with them on lowering, it's more expensive from them than the produce auction, but we are buying what their produce manager says most people buy during this season, the basics; potatoes, onions, squash, apples, oranges. And so, families can come in once a week and get that kind of stuff. But when they come once a month, they just load up on stuff.

**Carla Long** 26:23

That's really exciting. As I was thinking about your pantry and people coming in, like, produce is definitely, I would guess, you can correct me if I'm wrong, but the hardest part because lots of things don't spoil, but produce, you have to keep going and going and going and it can be spendy for sure.

**Gwen Simpson** 26:41

Yeah, and you learn, what do they like? You know, cucumbers, they like okay, just at the start of cucumber season, but through the summer, they don't necessarily want that. Zucchini? Everybody has too much zucchini. So okay, after the first initial zucchini run, they don't like that. But it's like, okay, people get a choice again, and it's a learning process for us. So going into this next summer, obviously, there's more produce in the summer that we can use. There's not as much choice in the winter, but at least it's produce that they will use.

**Carla Long** 27:17

Absolutely. And I gotta tell you, when I buy produce from my family, I always feel a little bit better about myself.

**Gwen Simpson** 27:24

Well, yeah, yeah. It's fresh, and it forces you to cook. And people have this preconceived notion that people that don't have funds don't cook. Everybody, there's all of us have times when we don't cook, that we take the easy route and get something that's really convenient. But we have, I noticed people that use our pantry, do cook because they want to make their meals go further. They want to make their family's bellies fuller to last longer, and so produce, a lot of produce does that.

**Carla Long** 27:56

Absolutely, you know, this is a little bit off topic, but I think pertinent. When I worked in Europe, I was the Mission Center Financial Officer for Western Europe, and one of our churches in Rotterdam in the Netherlands, they had a cooking class for lower income people, and because some of them didn't even know how to cook, and I thought that was so interesting. I'd never even thought about teaching people how to cook with raw vegetables and things like that. I've never even thought about that. So, I thought that was so clever, that somebody had been like, you know what? We need to teach people to cook because it's a lot cheaper to buy raw ingredients and scratch ingredients than to buy pre-made...

**Gwen Simpson** 28:33

Right, absolutely.

**Carla Long** 28:34

...food and put it together. So anyway, I just thought that was so interesting. It was really cool.

**Gwen Simpson** 28:38

As you're saying that my mind goes, you know, even though we're not in a church anymore, there's ways that churches, if you have a pantry in your community, those kinds of one-off things like, hey, could we have a cooking class? What could we do to help you? In a community near here, it's run by the Ministerial Alliance and the churches, each congregation takes a different day when it's open, and they staff it so they have a good idea of what's been used, or what is used and what people like.

**Carla Long** 29:14

So cool. Well, Gwen, this has just made me super excited hearing about this and hearing about this amazing ministry. So, my last question, well, maybe second to last question, what's the future for this ministry?

**Gwen Simpson** 29:26

I'm having more and more people, especially since we changed sites 'cause we're now in such a visible site location, but I'm having parents come to me with little kids, and they're wanting their kids to be involved in this, and there's an age limit on some of this stuff, so what we're forming this next month in our board meeting, is we're forming a youth council. One of our board members, we chose specifically because she is really involved in youth, has lots of ideas, and she will, she will get a council of six to eight kids from the community, and we've identified some of those kids 'cause they already volunteer for us. That Council is going to help raise awareness of the pantry, of its mission, and also look to ways, how can we involve kids? Because you're planting seeds for the future generations and kids are so excited to volunteer in the pantry. So that's one thing we're going to do. Along with that, one of my kids and his family came up on Christmas vacation, and they, they worked in the pantry. And so that was something new for me is to have a one-time volunteer. I usually have people that are consistently there, they know the rules. They came in that one time, and they volunteered, and they were so excited they're coming back this summer. But we're opening that up now to the community. I'm telling families that have kids, especially kids 10 and older, "Hey, bring in either one parent or both parents and the kids. We'll allow you that experience." In a couple weeks, we're gonna get together with our emergency relief team who do interviewing when we have an emergency need, and some people in the community who are great strategic thinkers, and think, alright, we've now met on Maslow's hierarchy of need and we've been addressing food insecurity, and that's basic. That is so basic. And then we're saying, okay, what else is a need in this community? And how might that tie in to either the resources of the pantry or what we can provide? And what would the budget be for that so we can look to getting funds to start that kind of ministry? So those are two big things for us that we're looking for in the future again. And one of the neat things that, in fact I was working on earlier this morning, for me is how can church people be more involved. There's a divide here. Most of the people I work with do not have a faith community. They did as a child, but they don't now. So, since I hear so many stories, I asked the churches in town, and we got a volunteer list of prayers, dedicated prayers that will pray three or four times a week. I send out a list of needs and concerns using either initials or first names only, and they

pray for a month for this family. I give updates as I hear them. Some updates we'll never know because people don't come back in, but as people share needs to those who work with the pantry, then we share those needs with confidentiality, to the prayers. And it's been really interesting. One of the first ones was a young boy who had been profoundly deaf all of his life. He had gotten a cochlear implant and a hearing aid and the people who were praying, the pray team, would see me on the streets and say, "How's Sammy doing?" I knew they were into it. I knew they were connecting. And so that, that we're looking for ways for churches to say how can we be more involved in this ministry if we choose to be? For us, as Community of Christ, the food pantry answers four mission initiatives? I think that's pretty good. You know, if a congregation wants to be involved in outreach ministry, and you've got a dedicated pantry already going, there's so many ways they can be involved.

**Carla Long** 33:42

Absolutely. And it sounds like to me that you got started with this, kind of organically, and it kind of just continues to expand into community organizing, which is very, very cool, that it just continues to be organically moving into something else and evolving into other things. Gwen, you're a community organizer.

**Gwen Simpson** 34:02

And I didn't know that.

**Carla Long** 34:03

You are.

**Gwen Simpson** 34:04

**Carla Long** 34:06

Never, never.

**Gwen Simpson** 34:07

You know what? All my life, and I remember sitting and hearing this scripture, "The fields are white and ready to harvest." We don't hear that much anymore. But I heard that and I go what in the world does that mean? My testimony is the field is white, and the Spirit is ready. And the mission prayer is one of my daily prayers. And I claim it because I need, our pantry needs, our community needs that kind of a direction. Absolutely. We can't do it by ourselves.

**Carla Long** 34:42

That is beautiful to hear. Thank you so much, Gwen. Thank you so much for being on the podcast.

**Gwen Simpson** 34:47

Thank you for having me.

**Carla Long** 34:48

And I have really enjoyed hearing about all the wonderful things that are happening in Lamoni, my second hometown, I like to say, and it's just been a wonderful opportunity to meet you too.

**Gwen Simpson** 34:59

Yeah, when you're in Lamoni next, look us up and look for the pantry sign. It's a big sign right next to our Casey's gas station.

**Carla Long** 35:06

Oh, wonderful. I will definitely.

**Gwen Simpson** 35:38

I'll give you a tour.

**Carla Long** 35:09

I'd love it. Thank you so much, Gwen.

**Gwen Simpson** 35:11

Thank you.