

Church Recycles to Reduce Poverty

When members of Bear Creek Community Church in Lodi, Calif., come to church on Sundays, they don't just bring their Bibles. They bring their trash too.

In 2009, the church launched Bear Creek Water, a nonprofit that raises money—about \$500 to \$1,000 each week—by collecting aluminum cans and plastic bottles to bring clean water to the rural poor in impoverished countries.

The church partners with Living Water International, an organization that installs life-saving water systems and brings the gospel to people in more than 20 countries around the world.

“There are too many children dying from diseases from drinking unsafe water,” says John Nadolski, the southwest region director for Living Water International.

Since its inception, Bear Creek Water has funded more than 50 projects, including new wells in countries such as Namibia, Haiti, Peru and Angola.

More than 37,000 people have already benefited from the church's recycling efforts.

“We had an audacious goal—that the need for water would be eradicated by recycling,” says Ann Pacheco, the children's director at Bear Creek Community Church who initially started the program with church kids back in 2008.

But it hasn't been an easy task.

“Digging through garbage cans is really humbling,” she says. “You have to get your hands dirty. This isn't a clean job.”

Still, the reward is more than worth the effort, no matter how humbling.

“There is so much blessing in every part,” Pacheco says. “Jesus wasn’t above doing anything for people. To see the face of a child who now has clean water running through their hands is awesome.” –*Sarah Breed*