



PRESS RELEASE

Executive Director of Loaves & Fishes of Tompkins County to Retire

ITHACA NY --- Loaves & Fishes announces the retirement of its executive director, the Reverend Christina Culver. Rev. Culver will step down in April 2025 after her fifteen years of devoted service, expanding the organization's reach and impact during a time of escalating needs among the county's food-insecure and vulnerable community members.

Since 2010, Rev. Culver has guided Loaves & Fishes through a period of unprecedented growth and numerous challenges, offering a critical, positive response to the rising numbers of individuals and families facing food insecurity and to the county's search for a suitable warming center during the COVID-19 pandemic. Every weekday the downtown Ithaca ministry at St. John's Episcopal Church offers free meals, hospitality, companionship, and advocacy for those in need regardless of their faith, beliefs or circumstances.

Since the start of Rev. Culver's tenure in 2010, the average number of daily meals served has more than doubled, increasing from 134 to 300. In Tompkins County, 1 in 11 individuals are at risk of hunger, according to the Food Bank of the Southern Tier. The New York State Community Action Association estimates the 2024 Tompkins County poverty rate stands at 16 percent, with 14,232 people living in poverty.

Heather Kolakowski, board president, reflects that "Christina's dedication, compassion, and tireless advocacy for our mission have made an indelible mark on our community. Her leadership has positioned Loaves & Fishes to continue providing crucial support to those in need for years to come. While we will greatly miss her presence, we celebrate her achievements and wish her the very best in her retirement."

The Board of Directors and staff are committed to ensuring a smooth transition and to continue providing the essential free meals and advocacy services on which so many rely.

Loaves & Fishes, established in 1983, is Tompkins County's only community kitchen serving free meals Monday through Friday. In addition to its small professional staff, the organization relies on the time and skills of hundreds of volunteers and steadfast support from the St. John's Church congregation.

Plans to celebrate Christina's leadership contributions will be shared in coming months.