

Thanks Continued from page 1A

front of her. "I figured I'd get here early," she said. "It looks like everyone else had the same idea."

Teasley and others said they had heard rumors that demand for free groceries would outstrip supply.

People shouted and pounded on the door shortly before the giveaway began, but those at the front of the line allowed elderly and handicapped in first. Inside, the Rev. Paul Arnopoulos, founder of the Disciples Ministry, handed out bags with the help of 17 volunteers.

"He's a good preacher, Pastor Paul," said Ted Alford, 57, who said he would have hunted squirrels or rabbits today if the free food hadn't been available.

Some stopped to whisper in Arnopoulos' ear, pump his hand or embrace him. "Thanks a lot," said a man who patted Arnopoulos on the shoulder.

A young woman who picked up a bag turned to a woman in her 70s who was grappling with a cane and bag. "You want me to carry it for you?" the younger woman asked, and hoisted the bag to her free arm.

The bags were packed with turkey necks, ground beef, cheese, flour, butter, tomatoes, cucumbers, carrots, potatoes, onions, noodles, oatmeal, rice, raisins, olives and bread.

In addition to giveaways on Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter, the ministry each month distributes about 12,000 bags of free food in Minneapolis and St. Paul, serves 6,500 free meals at the church and gives away 6,000 meals from its "hobo bus" under Minneapolis bridges, Arnopoulos said.

Arnopoulos, 54, former owner of a janitorial and repair business, said he was an alcoholic and unhappy when "I came to know the Lord in 1972 in California."

He stopped drinking and began working with troubled youngsters in Minneapolis and, in 1974, started a nondenominational ministry in Brooklyn Park for born-again Christians. In 1979 he bought a former synagogue at 1000 Oliver Av. N., and moved his church there. The food giveaway program began modestly, with Arnopoulos going door-to-door with bags of groceries.

"Sometimes the heat was off, lights were off, two or three families were living in a house built for one," he said. "People were sleeping on the floor, people were hungry. Food stamps just weren't doing it."

Four years ago he began offering free meals and giving away large quantities of groceries in the church basement.

Arnopoulos asks grocery stores, food wholesalers, truckers and produce manufacturers for food. Some of his

biggest donors include Red Owl and Cub food stores. He uses a radio talk show on KUXL-AM to generate interest in the food drives and giveaways.

The program is supported in part with a \$59,000 grant from Hennepin County, and with about \$10,000 in annual profits from Arnopoulos' sale of tape recorded sermons.

His latest plan is to manufacture 16,000 stews and soups a month from meat and vegetables that are considered unacceptable for sale but not spoiled. He plans to fast-freeze the food in containers and stack them in freezers in the basement to give away.

Arnopoulos has weekly services at the church but said the ministry emphasizes social issues over doctrine. "To get dogmatic really misses the issue," he said.