



Staff Photo by Tom Sweeney

People lined up for bags of free Thanksgiving food outside Disciples Ministry Church Mission Wednesday at 1000 Oliver Av. N. in Minneapolis.

4,500 gather together, stand thankfully in line for food

By Pat Doyle
Staff Writer

Grace Kempkes stood at the end of a line that stretched nearly two blocks, waiting for a bag of free food for her husband and six children.

"All of us are either on welfare or don't have much," Kempkes said, gesturing at the crowd around the

Disciples Ministry Church Mission in north Minneapolis.

"We figure if someone is going to help us out and feed us this Thanksgiving, we'll wait five hours," she said.

The lines began early Wednesday and grew steadily until the church opened the doors for its fourth annual Thanksgiving food

giveaway. About 2,000 people had picked up 30-pound bags of groceries by late afternoon and the church expected to distribute 2,500 more later in the day in the largest single food giveaway in the state.

Many of the people were elderly, some holding canes or sitting on concrete ledges outside the church. Others held children in their arms or propped them on their

shoulders.

Elther Ruben, 73, brought a 70-year-old friend along for help in squeezing through the crowd. Last year, Ruben said, there was so many people "they pushed me right down" in the scramble for food.

William Jones, 41, did not want to get caught in the rush. He was the first in line. He showed up at 9 a.m.,

three hours before the doors were to open. He was laid off in August from a construction job in Madison, Wis., moved to Minneapolis and has been living on welfare and looking for work. "I've got a wife and two kids," Jones said.

Elisabeth Tealey, 30, arrived at 11 a.m. to find hundreds of people in

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