**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**THERMAL BELT OUTREACH MINISTRY BEGINS THANKSGIVING AND ANGEL TREE DRIVE**

Each year, during the holiday season, Thermal Belt Outreach Ministry (Outreach) supports the needs of families that find it difficult to provide the simple blessing of a holiday meal or a Christmas gift.

Many families are struggling to make ends meet and facing unemployment, depressed economic conditions and a rising cost of living. Can you imagine children anxiously awaiting a special meal at Thanksgiving and finding none or waking in anticipation of gifts under the tree only to discover that Santa was unable to provide gifts this year? It is a difficult thought to ponder, but it is very real for many families this year.

Fortunately, Outreach is focusing once again on raising funds for this special need. Outreach will use contributions designated for the Holiday Fund to provide families with grocery store food cards that can be used to purchase Thanksgiving and Christmas meals. The Holiday Fund also provides Outreach with the opportunity to secure at least one Christmas gift for each eligible child (0-13) or senior citizen (60+).

Additionally, Outreach is beginning its Angel Tree Drive. Angel Trees will be adorned with cards that have a child’s first name, age and gender for those that wish to “adopt” a child for Christmas. Last year, Outreach served over 400 families representing over 2,700 individuals through this special holiday program. This year, we anticipate the need to be even greater.

The community support for the Angel Tree program is widespread.  “Churches, businesses, community organizations and individuals have adopted children and seniors in previous years.  The delight on the gift givers’ faces when they deliver their gifts to Outreach is one of sheer gladness that comes with being Santa’s helpers and being a part of the Angel Tree program.  Christmas joy abounds for everyone involved,” explained Carol Newton, Outreach Executive Director.

If you would like to help make this a very special holiday season for families and children in need, please send a check to:

Thermal Belt Outreach Ministry

PO Box 834

134 White Dr

Columbus, NC 28722

Please write in **HOLIDAY FUND** in the memo section of your check. As always, your gift is greatly appreciated.

If you would like to know more about how you can participate in the Angel Tree Program, please contact Michelle Reedy at 828-894-2988.

**Outreach is accepting applications for Thanksgiving and Christmas assistance from 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday. The last day to apply for Thanksgiving assistance is October 29th, for Christmas assistance the deadline is November 15th. Proof of Polk County residency; food stamps, Medicaid and/or proof of income for everyone in the home are required.**

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