



## God's Closet: More Than Free Clothes



*One shopper chooses free clothing items for her family.*



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No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted" (Aesop). This is the sentiment Jesus shared in Matthew 25:36-40, emphasizing the importance of tending to the basic needs of others.

The Sunland-Tujunga and Living Stones churches have been doing just that for the past two years, working together to host God's Closet for the community. "In the time of COVID, sometimes we become introverted, and we worry about ourselves," noted John Aitken II, pastor of Living Stones and Sunland-Tujunga churches. "It's good to become extroverted as a church, to care about the outside, those around us, and the community."

After reading an article on God's Closet in 2017, Lily Cirstoiu, Sunland-Tujunga church member and God's Closet - Tujunga director, became convicted to introduce the ministry in her community. As a school nurse, she encountered families needing even basic necessities, and she saw God's Closet as a way to help, ultimately applying for chapter status. To date, the team has held four events, three of these during COVID.

Each event brings families to the church to shop for new and gently used children's clothes, shoes, toys, and more—all for free. Yet, it's about far more than giving away clothes. At the latest event, shoppers also received free Christian literature, lunch, and information about local community resources presented by Glendale Academy Principal Israel Olaore and his wife, Augusta.

Numerous partnerships, including L.A. Kids Consignment, Comprehensive Community Health Center, First Baptist Church of Sylmar, Bombas socks, Costco, and more, make this event possible. Church members get involved by volunteering their time or donating needed items. Volunteers from multiple churches and schools also participated, including Altadena, Glendale Filipino, Glendale Academy, and more.

Countless personal connections were made. "A single mom brought her two teenage kids in hopes they could pick out new clothes," recalled Melissa Romero, La Voz Sylmar church member and volunteer for God's Closet - Tujunga registration. "Their therapist had recommended God's Closet as a resource for them. Filled with grateful anticipation, they went on to explain their story to me as I greeted them. I am in awe of the wonderful privilege we have to serve our community!"

Maylen Naranjo, Living Stones church treasurer and God's Closet - Tujunga volunteer, was stationed near the exit of the event where shoppers picked up free food and literature. "My favorite part was to see the look of gratitude on their faces as they collected their things and walked out the door," she shared.

"My favorite part," Cirstoiu shared, "is when shoppers ask, 'I would like to come to this church. When are you



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open?"

"The thing I love the most is being able to pray with people," Aitken shared. Some shoppers said this was the only event they'd attended where someone prayed for them. "That moment when you're able to do something for someone who could never repay you is the biggest blessing a human being could experience."

To learn more or volunteer, visit [scc.adventist.org/godscloset-stls](https://scc.adventist.org/godscloset-stls).

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*By Lauren Lacson*