

Pumpkin Patch Ministry by Jeanne Tagge

The Pumpkin Patch started out small in 1992, with only ¼ truckload of pumpkins and a lean-to shelter during the last two weeks of October. My children, James and Coral, were in the Youth Group at the time, and of course, like any parent, I helped out with the project. I did not know much about pumpkins at that time and I had only ever used canned pumpkin to make pies. I'd



never heard of pumpkin bread, chewed on pumpkin seeds, or experimented with myriad ways of using pumpkin in various dishes. Oh, how times have changed. When Richard Lawrence, the youth minister who started us on this pumpkin trail, left in 1995, it became my “baby” as I was also taking over the sponsorship of the youth group. Since then it has continued to grow and become a real Pass Christian tradition and ministry.

Yes, pumpkins are our ministry. Rev. Colby, former minister, mentioned that he did not really understand this until after Hurricane Katrina when we returned to the front lawn to sell pumpkins in 2006. The bridge was not even rebuilt yet, and we were about the only thing still functioning that far west. That year, I was working my shift at the patch when a lady stopped to visit. She did not even buy anything but gave us a \$100 donation because she said that it was the first happy thing she had seen all day as she drove up and down the coast surveying the damage. We had people take the long way around to get to us to buy their pumpkins. It brought smiles and a bit of normalcy back into their lives.



But even before Katrina, we were bringing joy and tradition to peoples' lives. Children measured how much they had grown from year to year by seeing how big a pumpkin they could lift. Parents commented that some of the best pictures they had of their children were taken at the patch. Families and friends gathered to share the experience of pumpkin picking, and a pleasant time spent together playing and talking.

We have visitors who came as children now bringing their own children to experience the love that Trinity and our congregation shares. We have had visitors from Europe, Mexico, Canada, the Middle East, and Australia. Our Australian visitor took a picture of the pumpkins with a shrimp boat in the background. There are not many places where you can find beautiful orange pumpkins resting on the green grass by the white sand with pelicans diving into the water and seagulls drifting over shrimp boats just across the road.



We also provide an opportunity for students, scout groups, missionaries, and volunteers of all walks of life to provide service to others by working together to unload the pumpkin trucks and tend the field. Volunteering to work at the patch provides time for members to work and talk with others that they might not see regularly every Sunday because they attend a different service or even a different church. This helps strengthen our congregation and our community as we all work and pray together to provide this seasonal experience.

With the proceeds that we earn, we have been able to provide scholarships to special sessions for Camp Bratton Green, contribute to the building fund, the organ fund, a new fire engine for the community, the Boys and Girls Club, the Food Pantry, Little Roses Orphanage in Honduras,

animal rescue and shelters, local needy, family and youth projects, the rector's discretionary fund, scholarships for Pass Christian students, playground upkeep, and other outreach projects. So, yes, ministry can come in all shapes, sizes, and colors. Pumpkins are our ministry—a way to share God's love and what he has given us with others in our community—near and far.