



## Where We Are

### The Pandemic and Lockdown

Bridge Bread, like just about everyone (except maybe Zoom) has had a couple of challenging years. First, we lost all sales channels when churches, restaurants, sandwich shops, hotels, coffee shops, our bake shop, and farmers markets all locked down. We shifted our focus to online ordering and home delivery and we encouraged our supporters to fund us making sliced sandwich bread for a bunch of food pantries. It worked! We didn't need to lay off any workers and we didn't run short on cash.

As the pandemic wore on, people went out to shop more and online orders with home delivery declined, but gradually a few things also opened up including farmers markets and restaurants, sandwich shops, and coffee shops that offered take-out. We adjusted and did just fine. Then more and more customers resumed purchasing and we even added a few commercial customers and our challenge shifted to our workforce.

### Staffing Shortage

Although people experiencing homelessness do not follow the patterns of most in the community, the number of people *becoming* homeless was dramatically reduced with supplemental and extended unemployment compensation, stimulus checks, eviction moratoriums, rent forgiveness and the like. There were still many people on the street and in shelters, but most were long-term homeless and long-term unemployed, and many were not ready to embrace the rigors of full-time employment. This staffing shortage severely limited product availability in our online store and forced us to cut back on bread for the pantries and curtailed expansion of our program.

### Returning to the New Normal

We have recently been able to recruit a full staff of Bakers (team of six) and we now expect to be able to meet rapidly growing demand from groceries (Fresh Thyme Market and Schnucks), restaurants, coffee shops, Washington University and others. Our online store is well-stocked and several churches have resumed consignment sales.

### The Year of Opportunity

We believe that 2022 presents us with the opportunity to significantly expand our program, hiring many more Bakers, adding paid administrative staff, and providing better communications with our supporters and working more closely with mission partners. We expect to be able to fund much of this growth through increased sales and we expect some economies of scale as we grow the business to the very large capacity of the Bakery. We have committed to a new Housing Incentive Program for our Bakers, becoming directly involved where necessary in securing safe and permanent housing.

We thank you for your steadfast support and welcome you to walk beside us as we embrace a very exciting future sharing "Hope in the Baking."