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# Orphan Grain Train †

Relief for Human Need Worldwide

## *OGT Spotlight*

### *New England Branch*

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***YEAR ESTABLISHED:***

2014

***BRANCH MANAGER AND  
BACKGROUND:***

*Pastor Joel Kotila*

I have been a pastor since 1995—a graduate of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN. I have been serving Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Terryville, CT for over 16 years.



Pastor Kotila is on the far left with volunteers after loading for a ministry that serves families in Myra, Kentucky.

I also have been serving St. John's Lutheran Church in Waterbury, CT for the past 4 years as their John's Lutheran Church in Waterbury, CT for the past 4 years as their vacancy pastor. I was asked to serve as branch manager this past fall. I was elected in November 2021. I was first exposed to the Orphan Grain Train by one of our sister congregations when I served a dual-parish in West Central Minnesota. While I was not very active then, yet I learned a bit about OGT. Since our branch's startup 8 years ago, I have been very involved with the branch. I have served as a pastoral

advisor to the branch since it began. Also, the warehouse managers and assistant manager and many others who work at the warehouse are members of Holy Trinity. I have been happy to be involved as much as I can, based on my pastoral duties. I enjoy a very active, enthusiastic, and dedicated bunch of volunteers. They work hard and carry out many of the tasks that might or could fall on me. It makes sense for me to serve in this capacity.

### ***LOCATION & HOURS OF OPERATION:***

The warehouse is located very near our church here in Terryville at 33 South Main Street. Mr. Bill Allread owns an old five-story warehouse building, and he has kindly and graciously allowed us to use the first floor. We are open for packing and sorting and for drop-offs for donated items and walkouts for local people in need on Mondays and Wednesdays or Thursdays from 9:00AM—Noon.

### ***WHAT INTRIGUED YOU TO VOLUNTEER AT OGT:***

What an opportunity for mercy-work and to encourage mercy-workers! (Although, our volunteers are already very highly motivated.) How the Lord opens doors for us to be a blessing to people in need both locally, domestically, and to overseas locations is so very thrilling—so very uplifting! And as the Lord Jesus Christ has said: “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these My brothers, you did it to Me” (Mt. 25:40). Because of the Lord’s mercy upon us, so I am thrilled to serve. I believe and pray that this is what motivates our volunteers as well—the Gospel!



New England Branch volunteers load food and aid for Manna from Heaven, a ministry in the Appalachian Mountains in Kentucky. They serve families living in severe poverty from coal mine and other business shutdowns.

### ***CHALLENGES YOU HAVE FACED:***

Covid-19 did impact us for a number of months, especially back in 2021. I am concerned that our volunteers do not over-commit themselves. There is a time for *needful rest* from OGT and other life activities as well. But I do not see the passion waning. In today's world of shipping and logistics, we have needed to be patient for truck-loading events. The big challenge is connecting our mercy-work in a simple but clear fashion to Jesus Christ and His Good News of salvation.

### ***BIGGEST REWARDS:***

What joy to provide over one-hundred pieces of medical equipment every month to people in such need in our surrounding communities! People leave our warehouse with a grateful spirit. What joy to hear the reports and even see pictures of those who have benefited from our shipments! Joy is painted all over the faces of those who have completed a load, the container doors are shut, and the driver pulls away. We love seeing the inventory going out to be a blessing to many. And we celebrate and give thanks to God in prayer or we sing: "Praise God from Whom all blessings flow." It is also so very uplifting to see so many people passionately serving and also a constant trend of more and more people wanting to help in some way. An incredible network of caring people has been established within our surrounding communities in Connecticut and elsewhere, namely southern New England. And we are truly blessed by the high level of excited volunteerism from our LCMS congregations in our District and local area. We also enjoy a good number of volunteers who are not members of our LCMS churches. Praise be to God!

### ***SOMETHING UNIQUE ABOUT YOUR BRANCH:***

This may not be unique to New England, but we are surely blessed with an incredible awareness and participation of a massive medical community. Over the past 8 years, we have seen an ever-increasing involvement of more and more hospitals or care facilities referring clients to our OGT branch. And most of the time, we are able to help their clients with the equipment they need.

### ***WHAT ELSE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SHARE WITH OTHERS?***

We have typically every August held an OGT New England Open House/Picnic here at Holy Trinity in Terryville. We have a brief worship service, we eat some good food, we provide tours of the warehouse, we offer the opportunity for more donations, and we have wonderful

fellowship. Due to Covid-19, we needed to cancel this event for the past two years. However, this August (August 20<sup>th</sup>) we are hosting this delightful event once again. Thanks be to God!

It is my personal desire to have a quality, professional-grade DVD made to promote our OGT New England Branch to the congregations of the New England District—LCMS and beyond.

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## New England Branch

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