

I asked Major Lynne Clifton of the Salvation Army to share a little of the work of the Food Bank with us and this is what she told me. I also know that there are plans being discussed for a double decker bus to be purchased to provide a delivery service of food (including fresh food) to all parts of the Island. The bus will be a mini supermarket downstairs and then on the upper deck there will be a café where advice will also be on offer. There are similar schemes in other parts of the country. This is in the very early planning stage at the moment and is being led by the Sheppey Community Development Forum which is part of the Oasis Academy. I believe that Travelmasters are helping with the purchase of the bus.

Sheerness Foodbank

Greetings to you all and thank you for inviting me to share with you about what's happening at the Sheerness Foodbank which is based at Holy Trinity Church.

It's deeply sad that in 2021 across the UK, there is such a heavy need for Foodbanks. But that is the way it is right now and nationally as the impact of the Pandemic has affected more and more people the need for this practical support for those struggling financially has not surprisingly increased.

On the Island currently, to the best of my knowledge there are 6 foodbanks currently operating which I think speaks volumes and added to that most of the schools are also trying to support their families in need with food at this time.

I would like to take this opportunity to say a huge thank you to those of you who support the foodbanks with your prayers and financially. Your support is deeply appreciated! Thank you!

There is a little team of us at the Holy Trinity Foodbank who are currently providing between 50-70 food parcels a week to those who need this practical support. Holy Trinity Church is open for people to collect Food parcels on a Monday and we have a delivery service to those who can't get to the Church on a Friday with emergency deliveries also carried out in between for those who find themselves in desperate situations.

Before every foodbank session we have a time of prayer, giving thanks to God for His provision and praying for all those who will receive parcels and for anything else that God lays on our hearts!

I want to take a few moments now to share some of the things that God has taught us through the foodbank over the last few months!

1. The first lesson learnt is that truth we find in Philippians 4:19 "My God will meet all of your needs according to his riches in Christ Jesus"

A year ago we were deeply concerned about how we would manage to meet all the needs for food parcels from the supplies that we had. We have a God who promises that he will never fail us or forsake us. We have always had enough to give to those who need it.

Last week we were even able to give food away to another foodbank who were running short of supplies from the abundance of God's provision!

2. The second lesson learnt is that God's thoughts are not our thoughts and God's ways are not our ways as it says in Isaiah 55:8-9. This year hasn't looked anything like what we thought it might, but amid all the confusion and struggle God has given us many opportunities to share His love, comfort and hope and to bring His light into some of the dark situations that those we are seeking to serve find themselves in. We have had multiple opportunities to pray with people on their doorsteps, through windows and down garden paths. God has amazed us as people have been healed and found the joy of knowing Christ through this season of struggle. We have regularly been able to encourage people who are feeling desperate with the love and good news of Jesus on the doorsteps of our community – what a privilege!
3. Thirdly, God is faithful and we are not consumed – At the beginning of the pandemic, I thought that our tiny little team was going to be overwhelmed – but God has been faithful all times just as he promises.

Lamentations 3:21-24 says

²¹ Yet this I call to mind
and therefore I have hope:

²² Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed,
for his compassions never fail.

²³ They are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.

²⁴ I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion;
therefore I will wait for him."

New Foodbanks have opened and share the load, people have volunteered to help out at just the right time, our relationships with other organisations and businesses on the Island has strengthened.

Lastly I have been reminded of the fact that we worship a God who brings beauty from ashes.

I want to bring you some words from Isaiah 61 which speak so powerfully about just what I believe God wants his scattered Church to be in these challenging days.

Let's change the word 'me' to 'us' as we read it and allow God to continue to excite us about the mission that he is calling us to partner with him in.

The Year of the LORD's Favour

61 The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release from darkness for the prisoners,

² to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour
and the day of vengeance of our God,
to comfort all who mourn,

³ and provide for those who grieve in Zion—
to bestow on them a crown of beauty
instead of ashes,

the oil of joy
instead of mourning,
and a garment of praise
instead of a spirit of despair.

They will be called oaks of righteousness,
a planting of the LORD, FOR THE DISPLAY OF HIS SPLENDOUR.

Let's be all that God wants us to be in the various ministries that he has called us to in these days.

May God continue to make you aware of his presence with you and bless you at this time.

Thank you once again for your prayerful and financial support of Sheerness Foodbank at Holy Trinity. It is deeply appreciated!