

## **Food Pantry Update for PPC Meeting 10 May 2023**

### **Jackie Tominey**

The FP has been steadily operating in a low but increasingly active way since the last update in January. We thank Father Francis for delivering a small service and blessing at Easter – it was posted on the St. Bart's FB page. We have also had many positive responses for help from the newsletter/website/FB page.

#### **We are now supporting;**

- 2 families (One from St. Adrian's and one from St. Albans and St. Stephens) on a weekly basis
- 1 family (Via a parish grandparent with some children at St. Adrian's plus one school leaver) once every 2 weeks
- One other family (Not sure of background so Claudine from the parish office is aware of weekly pick ups from the back of the church) on a weekly basis
- Unknown amount of parishioners who take food from the back of the church for themselves/families/friends/neighbours

**Food most in demand** is tinned meat/fish, rice and pasta plus sauces, UHT Milk and puddings, tinned tomatoes, tea/coffee/squash, cereal

#### **Key Figures;**

I visit the FP about 2-3 times a week to take a snap shot and assess roughly what goes in and out but it can only be a rough guess due to the discretionary nature of our set up. I can see that there are steady inflows and outflows with a couple of regular larger donations in response to requests for support. All that is donated in this way is used and I have recorded roughly what has been taken from the table;

**From first week January to date    15 – 20 food items taken x 19 weeks = 285 -380**

Myself and a group of friends make a collective donation weekly which makes it easy to have what is needed – I keep back a core of this to ensure we have a basis for the 3 families we know to ensure continuity and reliability as best we can though we have had to up our donations occasionally.

Since the week beginning 10 April, I have recorded what has been given to the families which is easier to record - it is a mix of what's on the table/in the box plus my friends' donations:

#### **From 10 April to date:**

**15 approx food items given x 2 families x 5 weeks= 150**

**15 approx food items given x 1 family     x 3 weeks = 45**

So the approximate total of food items the FP has provided to date is;

**Total of "Recorded" food given out is 480 - 575 (Though this will be much higher due to incomplete data recording)**

As we improve recording the data including actual food items given as opposed to food items taken/handed out, we will begin to see a clearer impact of the FB though it will always remain an imperfect exercise.

**NB** I have noticed a tailing off/fluctuation of food items of late and, with the coming of the summer holidays, this is something to be aware of/address. I intend to ask Father Francis if I can speak at the 3 masses after half term, offering different ways to donate/donate regularly.

In addition to food items donated - I checked with Dawn - we have **a total of £100 of unsolicited donations in an earmarked parish account** – more of that later.

**Volunteers** now we have a clear idea of the need/take up of the pantry and it's potential expansion of provision and support, we will be able to allocate roles such as social media (Me, at present)/donations pick up and drop offs/management of the FP table and board/possibly future shopping (See later)/ storage (Ditto)/promotion/outreach for more individuals/families to support/general coordination

**Parish Groups** in a desire to reach those in need/hard to reach, we intended to work with leaders of all parish groups both practical and spiritual but this has proven slightly difficult as many of the groups are lightly supported so many now come under just Father Francis – we need to do more on this.

**Other** Lentils, peas and beans (Not baked beans) are rarely taken and it is encouraging me to leave out some of the nutritious, budget recipes that can be made with these – and other store cupboard foods – which I use in my community-based cooking sessions – watch this space!

I was also considering offering a few free budget, store cupboard cooking sessions at some point either through the pantry in the hall or with St. Adrian's in the school – thoughts, please!

Since the early days of the FP we haven't passed on surplus to the local St. Albans Food Pantry based at the new CCCC community centre as we have needed it all but, as a breadbuddie for them, I have passed on free rescued bread to the Monday warm hub and will continue to do so.

**Moving forward** There are many considerations we now need to take a look at as the FP is reaching at turning point.

As things stand at the moment, it is hard to see how we could confidently expand our provision without an increase in the volume, reliability and regularity of donations.

It would be good to have more individuals/families to support (The need is increasing and won't go away) from our parish school, groups and beyond (?? SS Albans and SS Stephens School in collaboration eventually??).

If we do expand, storage would be an issue as we can't encroach any more on the parish promotional activities at the back of the church – perhaps some shelving in the committee room/old Caritas room in the presbytery?? – any other ideas??

Also, we could go down the route of using/encouraging financial donations say, bulk buying key food items at Costco??

All of the above plus many other issues/ideas would also be in the mix so I would recommend the same slow, steady approach to any expansion so that, firstly, we can manage it in terms of resources and time commitment and also, manage/match expectations – the last thing we would want would be to let people down.

I am very mindful that the FP could take up a lot/too much time on a normally packed agenda so I hope this update helps.

To this end, it would be very helpful to have a couple of PPC members to meet up with in between this PPC meeting and the one in 2 months' time to chew over where we are and how we could improve and move forward. If anyone is interested, please just contact me directly – thanks you.

Jackie