

St Bart's Food Pantry Update

PPC Meeting, Tuesday, 4 July 2023

Jackie Tominey

NB Just a note to put all we're trying to do in perspective...

Comments from 2 of our families;

"I collected family 2 bag on Saturday and still appreciate this help. I spread items over my household and my daughter's house so everything is used and useful to provide food for 4 adults and 4 children. I know this support won't be unlimited but at present it is very much appreciate,"

"Thanks for all your support. Truly been a great help in our time of need."

Plus just one example of the overwhelming evidence of the challenge we face;

June 2023 1 in 7 households are experiencing food poverty The Trussell Trust
<https://www.trusselltrust.org/>

Update since last paper to the May 2023 PPC Meeting

NB re Porch Displays/Book Shelving/Food Pantry Space Sinead Hughes has sent the carpenter's drawing for the info displays and will send over the Food Pantry suggestions shortly. Once Father and Christine have seen these and approved, installation will take about 2 weeks.

There has been a slight increase in the food donated and taken rising to approximately 30 items in and out per week. We are still supporting 4 families.

We are just about managing to provide for the 3 families who collect their labelled bags from the church 2 families collect on a weekly basis and the other on alternate weeks. Family 4 usually collect a bagful themselves from the table on a Wednesday.

I'm sure you all have noticed that the offerings on the Food Pantry are looking very thin of late – this is very worrying as the long summer holidays approach. The children of these families will not have the daily nutritious school lunch nor fruit snacks they receive at school putting an extra burden on the families to provide enough food.

This coupled with parishioners who donate food being away, it is unlikely that the Food Pantry will manage to support as in previous months.

A small group of my friends agreed to a weekly collection to support the Food Pantry as it started out but sadly, for some, this can't be sustainable in the long run.

There are some issues affecting the current level of support and hope of expanding the number of households we support.

Moving Forwards

Complex issues such as food poverty are very challenging and need an organic, responsive approach hence we have started in a small way and in a low key manner so as not to get driven by the mechanisms of support but rather to evolve a fit for purpose response to this pressing issue in our parish.

That there is a need for food support in our parish/community is not in doubt. So too, is the welcomed response to the parish support.

Initially, several parishioners were keen to donate money. In fact, we have £100 in the parish Food Pantry account.

It is becoming obvious that we've reached the point where, although we can still work on increasing the food donations, sustaining and, hopefully, expanding, the reach of the Food Pantry will require a mixture of physical donations and for those who can/want to /find it easier, the facility to donate money.

I'm very mindful of the important and significant fundraising project for the new church heating system however, opening financial donations **WILL NOT BE A FUNDRAISING ACTIVITY** but another, more convenient way for some to support the Food Pantry as a part of our parish outreach.

I will be talking at all 3 masses next week to update the parish generally and will attach a Food Pantry flier to the newsletter (Followed up by an entry in the newsletter , on the website and on our FB page) so it is important to seek the backing of the PPC on this suggested way forward .

With even limited financial reserves, I can bulk buy some basic provisions from Costco to ensure we can support our vulnerable families during the summer holidays and hopefully, in time, expand our support to other needy individuals/families as the cost of living crisis continues/worsens.

We'll need to see what Sinead and her carpenter come up with re storage for the food pantry but we might need a little space— all up for discussion!

However challenging this initiative is, we need to keep the balance between open, dignified, free access to food and the earmarking food for specific families who can't take easy advantage of this setup.

That's it for now –working towards a way forward that is clear, supported and can facilitate the sustainability and possible expansion of this initiative.

Jackie Tominey 30 June 2023