DIOCESE OF ST ALBANS

Living God's Love

PARISH PANTRY

OPEN CHURCH – OPEN TABLE



The Coronavirus has changed our country and our church in ways we could have never anticipated. The Church of England, being present in every community, is well placed to lead and co-ordinate efforts to help those who find themselves in need. 2020 will be a year of adaptation and innovation for the church and we all need to be part of it.

It is becoming clear that the country is heading into a recession that will have deep and lasting effects. This will be felt most keenly in the poorer areas of our parishes. There are people in every parish that may get to the end of the month and find that there is nothing left; we need to be there for them. Jesus told us that we are to feed the hungry and reach out to the isolated – this we can do with the Parish Pantry.

The Parish Pantry is a very simple concept and it works best when it's kept simple. Using our open and church buildings, the Parish Pantry can nurture and facilitate practical generosity at the heart of the community and help those in real need. The advantage is that the Pantry is unattended and anonymous, which means that in smaller communities people are able to access the help that they need without the fear of judgement or shame. We trust God to provide, we make the church the place for His provision.

It works like this:

PEOPLE ARE INVITED TO DONATE FOOD IN THE CHURCH BUILDING

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FOOD IS PRESENTED IN THE PARISH PANTRY

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PEOPLE HELP THEMSELVES

DONATIONS

- The church can help people express their generosity and desire to help people in their community
- Ask for donations regularly on social media, include photos of your church building and Parish Pantry
- Locate the donation box in the church
- Specify what donations you need (non-perishable items)
- Keep posts up to date and suggest items that are in demand
- If you find you have more given than the present demand, set up a relationship with a local foodbank
- Say THANK YOU again and again

THE PANTRY IN CHURCH

- On a regular basis (perhaps in the morning when the church is open) get someone to make sure everything is clean and tidy.
- Keep the Pantry (and the church) looking nice and fresh
- Have a clearly labelled donations box into which people can donate (that way you can check items for sell-by-dates and suitability)
- Make the space for the pantry obvious and attractive ***(consider fairly lights, bunting, for churches with bats a gazebo is a great idea and helps with a market stall effect, consider quiet classical/taize music on in the background)***
- Have inviting signage telling people to take what they need for themselves or neighbours
- Make sure there are shopping bags (people always forget)
- Give clear details for the Vicar and other organisations who offer help in difficult times
- Make it clear and clear again that the parish church is there for ALL in the community
- In general make everything obvious, don't leave people to hunt around for contact information
- MAKE PEOPLE FEEL WELCOME AND AT HOME

OPENING THE CHURCH

- Have regular opening and closing times (people will be upset/annoyed if the church is locked when they expect to find it open)
- Volunteers should be encouraged to take all appropriate precautions
- Do not allow older or vulnerable people to help. Ask for help in your community – there will be people out there who can be trusted to lock/unlock. It is a great way of enfranchising people into the life of the church and building new relationships in the wider parish
- Ask your insurers about opening the church for an open table foodbank/ parish pantry. Ecclesiastical have been very happy to allow this in Flamstead and Markyate
- Prop the church door(s) open so people don't have to touch the handle
- Consider providing hand sanitiser
- Display clear advice reminding people to keep their distance (although it's unlikely there will be more than one person in the building at a time)
- Display clear signs for 'donations' and invitations to 'help yourself'
- Give contact details for the Vicar or pastoral team who will be happy to talk or help with other needs
- Do not take risks, stay alert!
- While the church may be open to facilitate a Parish Pantry it is still closed for other activities (flower arranging, cleaning etc should not resume). Any public worship is still prohibited (date of writing May 2020).

WHAT WE HAVE FOUND IN FLAMSTEAD AND MARKYATE

- The Parish Pantry system allows people who would like to help an opportunity to do so
- The Parish Pantry is being used on a daily basis
- People are being fair – we are not being abused or raided
- The church and the church building are at the heart of the community and are now seen to be actively engaged with people's physical and spiritual needs
- The Parish Pantry system allows complete anonymity which is important in villages or small towns
- We have engaged more people in the church community
- We have built new relationships with younger and more diverse people in our parish
- People have been pleased that we are offering this practical help which they see as being the 'essence of good Christianity' : it's not just about believing – it's about doing!
- In six years we have never had so many people wanting to help with an activity in the church
- Times are going to get tough for some – but we are here and we're here to lead the whole parish in helping

ASSESSING YOUR EFFORTS AND FINAL WORDS

- Every parish and community is different and will have different needs
- Even in an affluent village there will be pockets of deprivation
- Even if your Parish Pantry is helping just one person or one family then you are making a difference
- Invite and advertise. Advertise and invite. Keep going again and again and again
- Do not loose heart, offer everything to God.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Below are some photographs from Flamstead and Markyate with a few tips alongside. The poster has a good form of works that may help with advertising. Note that we have now called our 'Foodbank' a 'Parish Pantry'.



COVID-19

Help for you and those you know

One of the best things about living in a village is that people are prepared to look out for one another and lend a hand
I know everyone is helping to do their bit and the church is here to help too
At the moment we are able to offer help with the following:

Local Foodbank

In St. John's Church (Markyate) and St. Leonard's Church (Flamstead) there is an 'open table' Foodbank. To avoid any embarrassment the **Foodbank is unattended and those who find themselves in need of some food should feel able to go into the church and help themselves to the food that they need. Please also take food for neighbours if they need help.**

The church is open – please help yourself

If you are able to donate towards the Foodbank then you would be very welcome to do so. Items that would be useful are non-perishable items of food and toiletries. Donations for the Foodbank can be left in either of the churches in the donation box. If there is an excess we will pass donations on to another local foodbank.

Buddy System

There will be some who find themselves alone at home and unable to get out the house to do the things that they would usually do. This may include shopping, paying bills, collecting medicine. Above practicalities will be the reality of worry and loneliness amongst those who live alone.

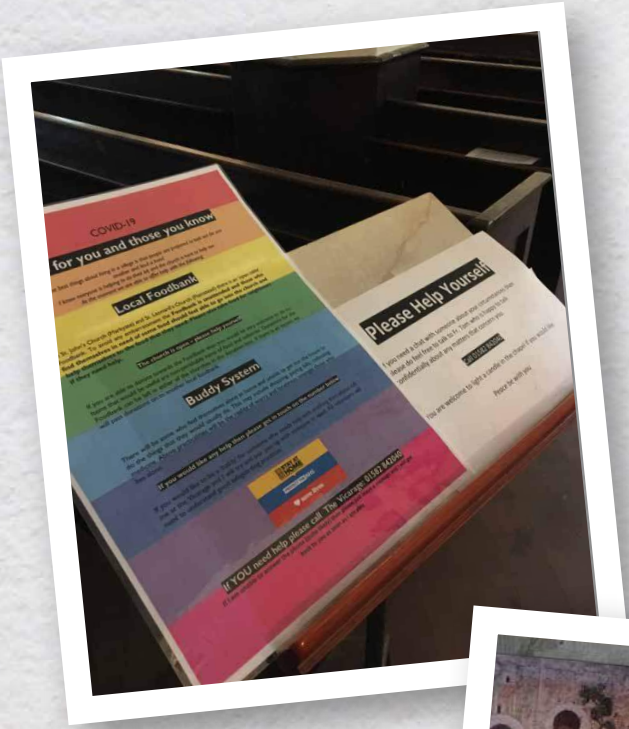
If you would like any help then please get in touch on the number below

If you would like to be a 'buddy' for someone who needs help with anything then please call me at the Vicarage and I will try and pair you up with someone in need. All volunteers will need to understand good safeguarding practices.



If YOU need help please call The Vicarage: 01582 842040

If I am unable to answer the phone (quite likely) then please just leave a message and I will get back to you as soon as I am able



- Have signage on the church door and in the church
- WELCOME people to the church
- Remind them of the need to keep the appropriate distance



- Make the Pantry look nice
- Consider quiet music in the chancel of the church (it's better from a distance)
- Use fairly lights / bunting
- Have a notice with the Vicar's number on



- Have the Pantry in a part of the church that is visible – not tucked away in the corner





- Donations box next door to the pantry