



St Matthew, Redhill Food Bank

The food bank at St Matthew, Redhill, has been helping people in food poverty since 2012 when Maureen and Peter James, members of St Matthew's congregation, had the idea to begin the project. They began by storing food in a small cupboard at the back of the church; now, in order to meet demand, the food bank has to use two Portakabins in the church car park for storage.

Clients are referred to the food bank by the local council or other local agencies such as Welcare, the Diocese of Southwark organisation that works with families and children. This may be for a number of different reasons including benefit delay, redundancy, sudden illness, an unexpected bill, bereavement, or because clients' income is too low to enable them to make ends meet. St Matthew's food bank aims, without judgement, to provide local families and individuals with essential food supplies to keep them going until a longer-term solution can be found.

It is an independent charity which is also a part of the life of the church, and has more than 40 volunteers, all of whom work together to help to feed more than 100 households per week. The average cost of a food parcel for each household is £30.

David, who has been supported by the food bank, says: "I was in a desperate situation after going without food for six weeks and the food bank deliveries to my home helped saved my life. The volunteers do a magnificent job and I can't thank them enough. Without them I would not be here today. They have given me confidence and hope to carry on."

St Matthew's food bank offers 93 types of food, depending on a household's requirements. Each week it receives donations of around £2,200 worth of food but even this is not enough to meet the continued rise in need.

The members of the food bank say that demand keeps on going up, especially during the pandemic, even though Surrey is the second wealthiest county in the UK: hidden poverty is an acute problem in the local community, and the work of the food bank in Redhill is a reminder that there is need everywhere, something that is important to remember when thinking about and praying for our parishes. The fact that the food bank operates out of the church helps to ensure that those who worship there are very much aware of what is happening in the local area and this helps to focus prayer and action.



A visit to the St Matthew food bank from the Lord-Lieutenant of Surrey, Mr Michael More-Molyneux.

The food bank also helps the church to reach out to, and to become more of a part of, the local community. As a result there has been incredible support and regular donations from local businesses, schools and other community organisations. Dedicated local fundraisers have also helped in generating donations.

The work of St Matthew's food bank carried on through the COVID lockdowns and need continues to be acute. Despite regular gifts of food and goods, more are needed each week. As a result, the food bank buys in an extra £700 of food each week and a further £200 of fresh food so that households can be helped.

The food is sorted by three volunteers, three times a week, who make up bags of different sizes for those who live alone, couples, families of four and families of more than four. Nappies and other items needed by individual families are added at the point of distribution and a small treat is added to each bag.

The food is sorted in one building and distributed from the church so 150 boxes of food are moved around church premises each week, with a total of 13 volunteers involved in packing and giving out the food and other household goods. The food bank offers the service three times a week. Where necessary, parcels are delivered to those who, for whatever reason, are unable to visit the premises.

As well as the practical help that the food bank gives to those in need, the volunteers provide a much-needed listening ear for people experiencing difficulties. For some, the volunteers at the food bank are the only people they see or feel they can confide in. Such help is part of the way in which the church at St Matthew's can provide a support structure for those in need in their area.

Another of the food bank's clients, single mum Sandra, says: "The food bank staff are amazing. My family and I would not have survived without them over lockdown."

Please pray for those involved in working at the food bank at St Matthew, Redhill and those who use the service. Give thanks for their work and pray for justice so that those who are in need can return to being able to support themselves. If you can give to support the work of the food bank, please consider doing so through the Bishop of Southwark's Lent Call: southwark.anglican.org/lentcall



Wandsworth Food Bank

The Wandsworth Food Bank provides emergency food, support and advice to people across the Borough of Wandsworth who have been pulled into poverty and hardship and who are referred in crisis. It is part of the Trussell Trust nationwide network of food banks, which together campaign to end destitution.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the need has more than doubled as an increasing number of local households have been swept into severe

hardship by the loss of jobs or of working hours, or illness. This has been exacerbated by benefit payments that do not cover the cost of essentials such as rent and food.

During the first lockdown in March 2020, the Wandsworth Food Bank provided emergency food and essential supplies to 1,200 individual households, seven in 10 of whom had never had to use its services before.

In November and December, Wandsworth Food Bank provided nearly 300 seven-day emergency food supplies a week to local people and families. Four in 10 of these are for children, three-quarters of whom are primary school age or younger.

Wandsworth Food Bank also runs an advice project in partnership with Citizens Advice Wandsworth and this saw a similar huge spike in need in 2020. The service provides expert advice and undertakes casework to try to help people resolve the problems causing crisis and hardship, including problems related to housing, benefits, employment, domestic violence, and rights of refugees and asylum seekers. It is a vital part of the provision offered by the Wandsworth Food Bank.

One older lady was helped after a bill to fix her boiler left her without enough income for food. She lives alone, has a very low income and severe long-term health problems. In addition, she had just come out of hospital. The Food Bank Advice Project looked for extra financial support for her.



She says: “My boiler had gone and I had no heating or hot water, and I thought, ‘I’ve got to fix it’. But when you get an unexpected cost like that – £150 – when you’re living hand to mouth anyway, it’s so hard. I didn’t know what to do. The food bank helped me out so much. I’m completely overwhelmed by everything they have done for me, it’s making me emotional. I’m so touched that there are so many kind people out there. The food they brought is just fantastic, and their support has taken so much pressure off me. I want to say a big thank you to all the people who have donated, and all the team and volunteers who put it together for people.”

Norwood & Brixton Food Bank

It is not just at the Wandsworth Food Bank that people are grateful for the help and support they are being given.

One of the clients at the Norwood & Brixton Food Bank, who was referred by Thames Reach, says: “I just wanted to thank the volunteers personally for their kindness and generosity, and to let them know how touched I was to receive the urgently needed help and support. They really did help me out of a dire situation and I cannot thank them enough for the work they do for myself and others.”

The Norwood & Brixton Food Bank started more than nine years ago and was originally based at St Luke, West Norwood. It is also part of the Trussell Trust network. The project has gradually expanded as the need has grown, working also from St Paul’s Brixton and Beacon Church, Brixton (when it was possible).

Gradually, those involved in the food bank came to realise that food poverty was a symptom of other underlying need and they developed a signposting and advice service to offer to clients alongside the provision of food.

When COVID-19 hit, the food bank quickly realised that face-to-face sessions were no longer possible and it moved to a completely new model of operation from the beginning of the first lockdown. This necessitated reorganising the warehouse to allow for social distancing and, following the generous loan of vehicles from a local firm, the distribution of food is now done by vans.

Further generosity from local community and individuals has allowed the creation of a Lambeth-wide food bank warehouse, and the Norwood & Brixton Food Bank has managed to integrate the stock from Waterloo and Vauxhall food banks within its newly expanded and fitted-out warehouse. It has implemented a new stock control system and facilitated a much broader geographical spread for its delivery service. The food bank is now delivering 80 to 100 food parcels a day – over a tonne of food. This is five times more than before lockdown and a remarkable tribute to the dedicated and professional project leads who coordinated and managed the whole process on behalf of the participating food banks.



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The food banks we are supporting run on the faith and generosity of all those who donate and volunteer. Please pray for them and consider what you can give to help to ensure that this wonderful life-giving and life-changing work can continue. You can donate through the Bishop of Southwark’s Lent Call: southwark.anglican.org/lentcall



LewCAS

LewCAS is a small charity which is completely run by volunteers. It aims to support the many people in need in the area and was set up in 1996, becoming a registered charity in 1998.

It organised food collections for asylum seekers who were stripped of access to state benefits.

Originally, it also raised funds to enable asylum seekers to attend English classes. Sadly, the classes are now subject to fees and the asylum seekers can no longer afford to attend. As a result, LewCAS now concentrates on

providing food to those who are destitute, taking referrals from the Refugee Council, Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network (LRMN) and Action for Refugees in Lewisham (AFRIL). It provides food parcels, clothing and basic household supplies, such as toothpaste and soap, to destitute asylum seekers. It also campaigns on their behalf, and prays for justice and a loving response to their needs.



On a Tuesday morning food is distributed from 11.00am to 1.00pm at St John, Lewisham Way. People who come receive a collection of dried and tinned goods and some fresh food plus cash for travel expenses. Most often they receive corned beef, tuna and small fish such as sardines or mackerel, 1kg each of rice and pasta, a tin of tomatoes plus beans or pulses, tea, biscuits, long life milk, cereals, two toilet rolls, razors and a bar of soap. Once a month they get flour, oil and sugar. FareShare supplies LewCAS with fresh produce and each week those who come to the food bank will get a selection of bread, potatoes, vegetables (for example, onions, carrots, greens) and fruit (apples, perhaps, or oranges or bananas).

From time to time, those who use the food bank receive extra items such as more toiletries and cleaning products, including shower gel, shampoo, deodorant, toothpaste and brushes, washing-up liquid, bleach, or washing powder. Feminine hygiene items and nappies are distributed every two weeks.

The pandemic has changed the way in which LewCAS works and has doubled the number of people seeking help. The need is now much greater than ever. LewCAS has

worked hard to ensure that individual boxes are pre-prepared for collection so that those visiting the church spend as little time as possible inside. They have also started to deliver boxes to asylum seekers who are shielding, self-isolating, or who have new babies.

The asylum seekers want to thank those who have supported LewCAS over the years. They also say: “We want to work, but we are not allowed to. We are not lazy. We are not criminals.”



Lunchbox Library

Many of you will be aware of the campaign by the footballer Marcus Rashford in 2020 to ensure that the government continued to give food vouchers during the summer holidays to schoolchildren in receipt of free school meals. His campaign helped to highlight that, for parents who are on a low income, school holidays are akin to a juggling act: balancing the family budget in order to be able to put an additional meal on the table, taking care of household duties and looking after children. They also often need to try to find free activities provided in or close to their areas.

Recognising this need, Together Southwark started to run Lunchbox Library in 2016. This programme is designed to offer a safe and warm space for children and an accompanying adult during the day. It offers a combination of a warm main meal, often accompanied by a dessert, and activities and reading for fun with the children. The latter helps to prevent the trend for children’s reading skills to dip over the school holidays.

Children are read stories by volunteers in a happy and relaxed atmosphere and are encouraged to take a storybook to read at home.

In 2020, St Katharine with St Bartholomew, Bermondsey, supported around 50 children and young people aged 7-16, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), Tuesday to Friday, from July to August. They offered 1,200 meals, 50 activity bags, 150 breakfast packs and 300 Take and Make boxes. The last of these contained raw ingredients and a recipe card for children to learn to prepare meals with their families.



St George, Camberwell, initially planned to support 69 children and young people aged 4-11. However, the need increased and the church supported 116 children three days a week in July and August. The need in 2021 will be no less great as the long-term effects of the pandemic continue to be felt. Lunchbox Library helped to serve more than 2,000 meals in 2020, and the need for the work of LewCAS also increased because of the pandemic.

Please pray for all those who volunteer to be involved in this work and those who receive help from the projects. If you can, please think of those who would otherwise go hungry just as the 4,000 would have done without the loaves and fishes, and support the work of those involved in offering food and hope to the people of the Woolwich Episcopal Area. If you can give to support the work of these services in Woolwich please consider doing so through the Bishop of Southwark’s Lent Call: southwark.anglican.org/lentcall



Over the past decade, Zimbabwe has experienced a number of unprecedented economic, environmental and political shocks and stresses. A sharp drop in GDP, hyper-inflation, deindustrialisation, closure of industries, large-scale lay-offs and disruption of public services, coupled with recurrent drought, floods and poor harvests, have contributed to chronic food shortages. Poverty, food insecurity, malnutrition, and environmental degradation are serious challenges, particularly in rural areas.



Food insecurity has been exacerbated by climate change. Whilst the rains have come this year after previous droughts, there is now a danger that the crops will be washed away because of too much constant rain. No matter what efforts are made it is a complicated process to keep Zimbabwe food secure and it is with this that the Bishop's Lent Call will help.



The **Diocese of Masvingo** is largely rural and so, with the right amount of rain, its people can produce plentiful crops. However, the effects of climate change mean that they are finding it very hard to feed everyone. The Diocesan projects team has already planted some of the farming land at the Daramombe Mission. This land is near a river to help with irrigation so long as there is rain. They want to purchase two cows for dairy farming, too. The Chidzikwe Training Centre has market gardening, a piggery, poultry production and the trainees keep goats and sheep.

In addition, the Diocese is working to provide feeding programmes through its schools and wants to expand the provision of school gardens, designed to help feed families nearby and to provide an income for the school. It especially needs help to sink boreholes.

In the **Diocese of Manicaland**, almost a million people are in need of help to have enough to eat. The people of this area have been much affected by climate change and the effects of 2019's Cyclone Idai. In addition, COVID-19 has affected the economic situation of many. The Diocese wants to offer food assistance to 2,000 households in Mutare, the fourth largest city in Zimbabwe, providing them with food hampers. Mutare is the capital of Manicaland province and home to the Cathedral and Diocesan Offices. Those who will be particularly helped are the disabled, elderly, single parents, orphans and other vulnerable children.

It is estimated that US\$96.7 per month is needed for each household – about £72 a month. We cannot offer all the money that the Diocese needs but any amount we give would be gratefully received.

The **Diocese of Central of Zimbabwe** has also been affected by climate change, and, like the Diocese of Manicaland, by Cyclones Dineo, Idai and Charlene. Many households, especially those with school-age children, are in need of food assistance. The Diocese, working with the Mothers' Union and the Anglican Women's Fellowship, have established kitchen soup points in both urban and rural areas where children aged 12 or younger are being fed when resources are available.



Surveys have determined that many boreholes are not functioning as well as they might and the provision of reliable and clean water is a great challenge. The Coronavirus pandemic has further worsened the situation as there is greater demand for clean running water, which cannot be met. The Harben Park Diocesan Farm plot is being upgraded to become a Climate Smart and Food Security Training Centre. It will be a model for supplying clean domestic water, driven by solar power; a home for capacity-building, income-generating projects, and for the promotion of Church and community resources management.



The **Diocese of Matabeleland** is one of the driest regions in Zimbabwe and many households in rural Matabeleland struggle to have a single meal a day. To help communities cope, the Diocese has implemented a rural food security programme in partnership with Episcopal Relief and Development.

Many urban households are also food insecure, so urban parishes distribute foodstuffs to vulnerable homes when they can. Cyrene Farm, a Diocesan Trust farm located some 30km south of Bulawayo, aims to provide affordable vegetables to urban households. This enhances food security and good health. However, sustainability is key so the produce is sold so that the Diocese can recover its costs and keep the project running.

The Church of the Good Shepherd, Rangemore, is a semi-rural parish with land and borehole water. The Diocese has started growing sugar, beans and sweet potatoes there. It is not far from the urban population and has helped greatly in achieving food security locally. More progress can be made if water from the borehole can be piped and an irrigation system established.

The Diocese is also restoring St Clare, Parklands, a former hostel, in order to provide an income to contribute financially towards food security in the Diocese. However, provision of water is necessary before the rooms can be rented.

For all these projects to succeed they will need help from us in the Diocese of Southwark, through our prayers and to purchase the materials that they need to keep things running. Please will you help by donating through the Bishop of Southwark's Lent Call? southwark.anglican.org/lentcall



The Diocese of Jerusalem

On 20 January 2021, the Bishop of Southwark, The Rt Revd Christopher Chessun, and the Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem, The Most Revd Suheil S Dawani, will sign a covenant between the two Dioceses. We have had close links with the Diocese of Jerusalem for many years and the Bishop and the Dean have led three Diocesan Pilgrimages to the Holy Land.



In 2018, The Revd Canon Richard Sewell, formerly Team Rector of Barnes Team Ministry in the Diocese of Southwark, became the Dean of St George's College, Jerusalem. He remains an Honorary Canon of Southwark Cathedral which has further strengthened our link.

The Jerusalem Bishopric was first established in 1841; in 1976, a Province known as the Episcopal Church of Jerusalem and the Middle East was constituted which extends across five countries (Palestine, Israel, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan). The current Bishop of the Diocese is Archbishop of the Region.

The Diocese, which contains 27 parishes with 8,000 members, focuses on four main areas of work: health, education, youth and the empowerment of women. As part of its work, the Diocese runs more than 33 institutions which focus on the poor and needy and provide high-quality services to all people without prejudice or discrimination on the grounds of religion, social class, gender, education or political affiliation. The institutions include 20 schools and vocational training centres, seven health centres and rehabilitation centres, two hospitals, and four guest houses for pilgrims. The Diocese also runs a Women's Empowerment Programme and a Youth Leadership Programme.

The Most Revd Suheil Dawani became the 14th Bishop in Jerusalem in April 2007. His vision for the future of his Diocese is to engage in the ministry of peace and reconciliation by strengthening the Christian presence in the Holy Land. His focus is on working together with overseas partners and collegially in ecumenical inter-faith affairs, as well as encouraging the faithful to join efforts for reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians.

In referring to the importance of Jerusalem, Bishop Suheil emphasises that he sees it as his duty, and that of all Christians, to make Jerusalem a model for peace between the three Abrahamic faiths. He says, "It is our task to give hope to the hopeless. In our daily lives may we be guided by the star of God's love."

The situation of the people in the Holy Land has been precarious for many years. Unemployment amongst the Christian population and the Palestinians has been high for some while and those who are employed often spend hours reaching their places of work.

The Coronavirus pandemic has made life much harder. In the Holy Land, the situation has been exacerbated because much of the economic activity and employment for people there is related to pilgrimages, and the tourism industry has been decimated by the pandemic. For instance, at Christmas we know that many pilgrims would usually be in Bethlehem

and other parts of the Holy Land, and the shops and street vendors would be able to make a living. In 2020, however, pilgrims and tourists were unable to come and those who rely upon them found themselves without an income and no longer able to feed and clothe their children or meet the needs of their families.

In early March 2020, Bishop Christopher and The Very Revd Andrew Nunn, the Dean of Southwark, led the first Ecumenical Pilgrimage to the Holy Land with Bishop Paul Hendricks and Fr Philip Andrews from the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Southwark. Nearly 70 people accompanied them around the holy sites and shared the experiences of seeing where Jesus lived and had his ministry. It was a wonderful time and we were so sad to have to leave a little early because of the pandemic. Whilst we were there, however, we also saw the hardship which many were experiencing and now the situation is much worse.



Southwark pilgrims in Jerusalem before the pandemic.



One of the Comboni Missionary Sisters talks about their work with people on the other side of the Wall.

The Diocese has experienced a sharp downfall in income because of the lack of pilgrimages and because outpatient clinics had to close in all medical centres and hospitals. As well as this, the Diocese has been unable to collect school fees during this time.

In the past, the Diocese has helped those unable to provide for their families through its schools, hospitals and other institutions, but with the fall in income brought about by the pandemic it can no longer do this. So, with our help and some resources of its own, the Diocese of Jerusalem hopes to be able to offer \$100 (about £74) to up to 50 vulnerable families so they can feed themselves for about a month. This would enable them to buy basic food such as rice, sugar, beans, tomatoes, lentils, sardines, tuna and cooking oil.

The main aim of this project will be to ensure food security among the families of the parishes of the Diocese; families with no income, families which are large, and families which contain members suffering from chronic illness will be prioritised.

Please pray for the people of the Holy Land and for peace with justice in this holy place. Please also consider whether you are able to show compassion for the people in the parishes of the Diocese of Jerusalem by offering enough money to pay for a month's worth of food for a family, or something towards this, by donating through the Bishop of Southwark's Lent Call: southwark.anglican.org/lentcall