

A Big Thank You

Thank you to everyone for your support, generosity and thoughtfulness throughout 2019. Please know that if you don't get a mention in this newsletter, that you are not forgotten, there is just not enough space to include you all!

All those involved with Foodbank are enormously thankful for the food stuffs given to help those in need and always the comment will be made that: "this should not be happening" or: "what would people do without this service?" With a new Government just formed, there will be new policies to action and we must pray for new hope. A hope to pass on to people that is secure: that the living wage is exactly what it says on the tin, that working does pay, and benefit changes do not have to put a claimant out of pocket for weeks on end.

If you watched *Channel 4 Dispatches* recently you may still feel the pain of those who are desperate – those who are in need of foodbank support. The camera gets close to a few coins on the table and the mother sweeps them out of reach – "don't put the heating on, we need that £2.23 to boil the kettle for hot water bottles later", and then to listen to a 10 year old discuss the Universal Credit appointment her mum has to attend. Our 10 year olds should not need to know this language and definitely should not be wasting valuable energy worrying about it.

Together, let's continue to strive to #StopUKHunger

Cathy Wright – Project Director

Stop Press

We have just received the green light for funding of an exciting partnership with Citizens Advice Rural Cambs which will see an advice worker visiting some of our distribution sessions where there is no local CA provision. More details in the New Year!

Community Spotlight

A very successful Ladies' Lunch hosted by Hot Flush in March raised over £ 1,000 for Foodbank. Just as

importantly, following the lunch, offers of significant help have been forthcoming. D & J Transport have offered to help with packing of hampers from the items given by Neale Wade College. With social networks promoting this project, every Like will trigger another item to be purchased.

Volunteers braved the weather outside Tesco Ely and March asking shoppers to shop a bit extra for those struggling this winter. A wonderful 1.5 tonnes collected from Ely and 1.3 tonnes at March! The biggest thank you to customers and staff at the Tesco stores helping us to fight poverty this winter. With the donations given the foodbank has put together approximately 300 hampers to give to those receiving a food parcel.



Neaves and Neat Employment Services purchased our hamper bags for us this year. They have been an enormous support to us using social media, word of mouth and above all taking a genuine interest in our work, and they are always looking for ways to boost our work in the community.

Cromwell College in Chatteris invited our Project Director over to show her the plans the GCSE DT group had for Foodbank Collection Points in Supermarkets as part of their course work. Conveyor belts, spinning wheels and fabulous signposting were all being planned to entice the shopper into giving more, and giving easily. Watch out for refurbished crates when you shop!

Looking forward to seeing the futuristic mock ups – get ready 2030 shoppers!

Burwell Guides planned a shopping trip to the local Co-op recently. Cathy helped them with the shopping lists and explained what would happen to the food once they had purchased it.



Thank you to the Co-op for making this happen and to the Guides for using their initiative when thinking about others less fortunate than themselves.

Kings Ely recently completed 12 Days of Christmas – the donations were staggering and Ashley and Steve grabbed the van to collect the wonderful food items. Thank you to all the staff, parents and students that support the foodbank year on year.



Thank you to our volunteers

Thank you to all our volunteers in Centres and Stores across our Partnership. This couldn't happen without your efforts, your love and your commitment to this work. It's estimated that 14 million people volunteer in some capacity each year – we have about 200 of these

and how grateful the community is for having people such as you! Have a very happy, peaceful Christmas and a blessed 2020.

Election Reflection

A new government has just been elected. During the campaign season, all parties made big promises. Unfortunately many of the issues faced by the people we help each week will not simply be solved by 'big spending promises', for the problems are complex and deep rooted. For example take Universal Credit: we know this is directly linked to hardship experienced by many, but it is not just fixed by increasing the money available for the benefits it pays out (although that will make a difference). Rather it will require significant modifications to the way the system works (most notably a reduction in the initial waiting period). More than that though, it also needs an *ideological* change to the way the potential recipient is viewed.

Some 2,500+ years ago there were political commentators who were just as frustrated about the rulers and politicians as many people are today. They had harsh words for those rulers. Zephaniah, for example wrote: 'Woe to the city of oppressors... her officials are roaring lions, her rulers are evening wolves'. They didn't mince their words! These same commentators also understood that there was a section of society that was left behind and forgotten in all the machinations of the state, and their writings accord those people a certain dignity and hope. Zephaniah goes on: 'I will leave within you the meek and humble', and concludes 'I will rescue the lame, I will gather the exiles'.

Interestingly this same theme of 'turning things upside down' is picked up by Mary when she is told that she will give birth to the baby Jesus – she breaks into a song that talks of scattering the proud and lifting up the humble, filling the hungry with good things.

Politicians 'big promises' will no doubt continue, but our hope is a deeper hope, a God-inspired hope inscribed in ancient writings and sung of as we celebrate Christmas. It is "God with us", a reality which makes a difference from the bottom up! – Karl Relton