

Loving our neighbour



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As we engage with our community, we see the great need for practical help. We see many who struggle financially when they face job loss or when their benefits are delayed. Many families struggle to make ends meet with the increasing costs of living. As a church, how can we help and support those in need and the vulnerable in our community? How can we love our neighbour well?

Over the years, we have tried a number of initiatives. For example, we had a freezer ministry where our congregation would supply freezer meals to those who were going through challenging times. We also began a Christmas hamper project where our church family would bring in hamper items in the weeks leading up to Christmas, and we would then liaise with the local primary schools to see who may require these to keep them going over the festive season.

Our heart as a church was always to do more as we saw the needs in our community. When we heard about Christians Against Poverty (CAP), we thought that it would be useful to run the CAP Money Course. We ran a number of courses in 2013/14 to help people manage their finances. Around that time, the idea of a food bank ministry was birthed and began to be investigated.

By February 2017, our Shore Street Food bank was established. The team includes many volunteers – some manage the donations; some prepare the parcels and others do the deliveries. The ministry has grown through the years and has served Donaghadee and beyond. The local shops have baskets for the community to contribute necessary items. Through generous donations, we have been able to supply meat and fresh produce vouchers, as well as help with electricity and gas top-ups. Occasionally, the team has been able to source household items

to those in desperate need. Firsthand we have been overwhelmed by the generosity of businesses, schools, community groups, as well as individuals. We have also seen people give back to the food bank when their situation has improved.

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The past months have seen an increasing amount of food parcels being sent out and we anticipate the need getting greater as cost of living increases for us all.

The team is praying about what is next. What does God want us to do with the financial resources that he has provided? How can we develop the relationships that we are forming and meet not only physical needs, but also emotional and spiritual?

As a deaconess, I stand in amazement of the gifts and abilities that God has given people within the church and see the fruit of gifts being used well. I am privileged to have a food bank to refer people to, knowing that alongside the food parcels that are being delivered, God's love and care is being shown, and that people are being prayed for and with. I wait in expectation to see how God will use this compassion ministry in the months and years ahead.

Please pray:

- Give thanks for the opportunities that Shore Street congregation has to reach out to the community, providing much needed practical help and support.
- Give thanks for the generosity of the community through donations to the food bank.
- Pray for Sonya and the many other volunteers as they engage with those in need, that as they show love in action, they would also have opportunities to share their faith.