



Pantry report for 2023

We have had another very busy and successful year in the pantry. God has blessed us abundantly, not only with provisions but with opportunities to talk to people and share with them. God has always provided beyond our needs, and we are so thankful.

The pantry is run from the main atrium of the Ark, and we open on a Wednesday morning from 10-12 noon. We offer food and hygiene parcels to residents of Isleham and Fordham and members of our congregation who may not live in these two villages. We also deliver up to 7 parcels to each village for clients that are unable to come and collect them in person.

Our provision of parcels has grown over the year, and we have given out between 24 and 41 parcels a week. The average is 35 per week. In doing this we are supporting up to 69 adults and 49 children a week.

This year we expanded our Christmas parcel scheme. We contacted the heads of both Isleham and Fordham Primary schools and offered a parcel to all pupil premium families. This resulted in 40 for Fordham and 30 for Isleham. In addition to this we also packed a further 49 for our own clients. This meant that we gave out 119 Christmas parcels to families and singles in our community. This scheme would not have been possible without the support and help of many individuals and companies.

During the year we also received harvest produce from the parish churches in both Isleham and Fordham. This was used to supplement our regular food parcels. Our thanks to both churches for their continued support of the pantry.

We have increased the size of our team to 26 volunteers. We have also said farewell to 5 others during the year. All our volunteers regularly commit to helping the pantry. The pantry would not be possible to run without the willing service of our great team. The team are involved in dating and storing the produce that comes in, packing parcels, collecting produce from the Coop's and Asda, welcoming and talking to people, making coffee and delivering to the villages.

We use Fare Share every week which provides us with approx 100 kg of produce that has been rejected from the supermarkets. This is provided at a significantly reduced cost (£150 per month)

We also collect 'best before' produce from the coop's in Isleham and Fordham and Asda in Soham which helps us to bless our clients. This would not be possible without those who go and collect it. Thank you.

In addition to these contributions, we spend approx £500 on Asda online orders monthly. We are very grateful to all the individuals who contribute financially or with donations to the Pantry, we would not be able to do it without their help. God has blessed the pantry through many individuals contributing.

During the year we have been fortunate to be the beneficiary of coop funds and a grant from East Cambs. All of these contributions, which we are extremely grateful for, enable us to provide the food parcels for our community. It is very helpful knowing we are supported by our wider community, and we thank God for these blessings.

As part of our networking with the wider community the Pantry is part of East Cambs Food Action Network (ECFAN) We attend a regular meeting which helps to raise the profile of the Pantry. From this we have been able to connect with Ely food bank and are now able to issue food bank vouchers for clients to collect from Soham. However, if you do not have transport, you cannot collect food from Soham, so are reliant on the pantry's provision.

We have built relationships with other food providers and have been able to share any extra that we have. These include:

Still good food

Soham and Ely hygiene bank

Ely food bank

Lighthouse Church

Red lodge food bank

Boomerangs pet food bank

Ely baby bank

We now provide tea and coffee to our clients if they would like one. We have sofas that allow us to sit and chat with people. We have built up good relationships with many of our regular clients. We have provided a listening ear and been able to help folk in many ways. Sometimes just listening is enough, for some we are the only people that they get to talk to in the week. We have also been able to help in practical ways too, for example we have given a washing machine, a microwave, coats etc. One of the other ways we help is by signposting to other agencies.

During the past year we have had some wonderful testimonies:

“Coming to get the help provided by this altruistic group over the last few months has helped immensely.”

“Thank you so much for all you do! We look forward to the parcels every week and they are always a huge help to keeping our main food shop down as much as possible.”

“Thank you for welcoming me to the scheme. It's very special and everyone is so kind and friendly”.

We are all continuing to seek God for guidance in how we run the Pantry. We all know that this is God ordained and we want to serve the community, honour God and provide more than food.

Sharon Holloway

Deputy Pantry coordinator