

Christ Church Outreach During Covid-19 Crisis
Prepared by David Thompson 9th June, 2020

The Outreach Feeding programme started on the 4th April in response to a need from the community suffering economic hardship primarily caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic. The Third Sector was established as a crisis response team led by Bank of Bermuda Foundation and Bermuda Charity Fund to respond to Community needs. It reached out to the local charities and churches who would focus on assisting people in crisis. They quickly distributed funding to support programmes such as Christ Church Feeding programme and our Loads of Love Laundry and shower facility. We received a total of \$7,500 from this support to provide food and continue the laundry.

A community Meal programme was also created as a joint initiative by The Loren (who provided the meals) and the Bank of Butterfield (who funded the meals) They allocated a number of daily lunchtime meals to various charities who then managed the distribution of those meals to vulnerable people. Christ Church received 25 meals a day from this initiative, and then distributed the food either through delivery by volunteer drivers or made available for people who were able to come to the Church for collection. At this time “Shelter in Place” was being enforced and so the volunteers had to receive permission from the Ministry of Health to travel to and from the church to run the programme. Many of the existing LOL clients were being housed initially at Berkley Institute and currently at Cedarbridge Academy to meet Government curfew regulations. So our feeding programme extended to members of the local community in Warwick and we continued the laundry programme supporting the homeless clients by collecting and delivering laundry to and from Cedarbridge Academy.

Demand for food quickly grew and in response to this need Christ Church prepared more meals in the kitchen for distribution. The Loren/Bank of Butterfield programme expanded their services and were distributing 1,000 meals each day through the churches and other organizations across the island. We decided at the time to expand our own meal preparation and turned down the offer of additional meals from the Loren/BNTB programme. We have the facilities of a well-equipped kitchen so asked them to distribute the meals to churches where the need had not been fulfilled. Many of the other organizations were totally dependent on this programme distributing as many as 150 meals each day. The Loren/BNTB programme finished on the 29th May. Our response, with the help of private and corporate funding, has been to increase the number of meals prepared and distributed to include 75 meals each day to Eliza Doolittle as well as meeting the increased demand for food locally. Last week on 4th June we reached a record daily total of 240 meals prepared and distributed. Our total meal preparation and distribution since the start of the programme on 4th April is almost 8,000 meals, all of which were prepared/distributed through the kitchen at Christ Church.

Our clients include many hotel workers currently on furlough; seniors who have suffered with the decrease in the Meals on wheels programme and economically vulnerable families who have approached us for help. In addition to the meals we have distributed over \$6,000 in food vouchers. Of this, \$4,000 came through the Anglican Cathedral from a number of donors who wish to support the community in crisis. The Cathedral distribute food vouchers weekly to several churches which help to transition them from the Loren/BNTB feeding programme. We have been very cautious in food voucher distribution by looking at the recipient situation closely to minimize abuse of this donation.

The kitchen is run by a small team under the leadership of Chef Gallage Amaradasa (Galli). Galli is a chef by trade and married to Barbara Jones who is a member of our church and edits the newsletter and volunteers to distribute meals. He was laid off during the crisis and joined our kitchen to cook the food. Alistair is there daily working in the kitchen as well as overseeing the distribution of food vouchers. Jill Bosch De Noya and I assist Galli in the kitchen to help prepare meals and cook when Galli is not available. We have 34 kitchen volunteers and have a roster to permit up to 6 or 7 volunteers in the kitchen each day. They help to serve the meals and prepare for the distribution of food. We try to ensure social distancing in the kitchen as much as possible. Also the roster is being updated regularly to try and separate the teams from each other. In this way if any one team member tested positive we would have to quarantine that team but could keep the programme going. Julia Kempe (and more recently Barbara Outerbridge) handle the logistics side of the programme coordinating volunteers for the kitchen and driving and supporting the distribution efforts.

Over 100 meals each day are driven on three different routes by volunteer drivers and their assistants. We have over 42 drivers (6 per day) for food delivery.

The meals are basic and wholesome: protein, vegetable and starch, along with a dessert (cookie, slice of cake etc). Jill ensures every meal goes out with a dessert, all of which are donated along with many of the starch sides (Macaroni and cheese, peas and rice etc). We have 50 people donating food, and more recently have been the recipient of large vegetable and salad donations from Wadson, Pacheco and Amaral farms. Last Friday we took delivery of 150 lb of potatoes - as you can see this has become quite an operation! For example: Sunday we offered roast turkey, stuffing, roast potatoes, vegetables, gravy and a dessert cake; Monday was cottage pie, salad, piece of french bread and a dessert cookie.

Funding to purchase the food (mainly the meat and fish) has come from many generous donors both inside and outside of the Church. Some make direct donations either on a "one off" or on a regular basis and some donations are made through the Friends of Christ Church Charity Trust (for-corporate donors who wish to give to registered charities). To date we have raised \$130,944 for the programme, Our total food spend for the last 2 months has been approximately \$25,000. So at the current demand we could continue the programme well into autumn. Through our volunteers and donated food we can keep the cost of each meal to below \$5 per person.

Laundry for Cedarbridge continues: Three to four times each week washing clothes for the people who are accommodated there plus towels and sheets for the facility. Our Saturday programme has grown in recent weeks as people are able to travel on the public transport again. We have not called the volunteers back to LOL yet as we wanted to wait until things reopen.

Finally a huge thank you to the organizers; Alistair Bennett; Jill Bosch de Noya; Galli Amaradasa; Julia Kempe; Barbara Outerbridge and the team who support this programme 7 days a week.

Where do we go from here? Since the Loren/BNTB programme stopped we are receiving requests for more meals. Eliza Doolittle receive 75 meals from us on the three days each week they are open. They would like us to increase the number of meals. Some other churches have approached us to supply meals (in small quantities) for distribution to their most needy families. So the likelihood is a short term increase in demand, The furlough

period is coming to an end (mandated as three months by government). Bermuda is about to enter phase 3 of reopening and the social benefits being paid to people is also coming to an end. All things being equal Phase 4 meaning the complete reopening of the island will hopefully occur by July which will mean resumption of commercial air traffic and reopening of hotels. It will be difficult to predict what a post-Covid Bermuda will look like economically but the predictions are for a lot of changes. We may not have a big tourist season as people hesitate to travel. Employers may downsize or even shut their businesses. The world as we know it will change drastically as we embrace new health regulations governing how we live our lives. Even our Church is faced with big issues which we need to discuss at our meeting on the mechanics of re-opening services. All this uncertainty will mean that the hardships will continue for many families in our community for the foreseeable future. Our feeding programme will also need to adapt to the changes. We may hopefully see a decrease in the numbers asking for food but it is unlikely that the programme will stop for sometime unless we have to close due to lack of funding.

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