

# Lent appeal to help urgent good causes

THE Bishop's Lent Appeal for this year will raise funds to help those affected by the conflict in Israel and Gaza, as well as those who use Foodbanks across our diocese.

Each year, the bishop invites churchgoers and members of our communities to donate towards good causes during Lent, often one global and one local charity. Kind parishioners either donate money or hold fundraising events during Lent, raising thousands of pounds to help those in need.

This year, the global recipients of the Lent Appeal will be Tearfund's Middle East Emergency Appeal, which is supporting churches and partners in the region that are responding to those affected by the humanitarian crisis created by the conflict in Israel and Gaza.

And the local recipient will be the Trussell Trust's work in our diocese. The charity runs Foodbanks that help vulnerable families and those in need across south-east Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

Among those being helped in the Middle East by your donations will be those living in Lebanon and the occupied Palestinian territory. Tearfund is supporting the Anglican Diocese of Jerusalem to meet emergency needs in the West Bank.

And Lebanon, already scarred by multiple wars, is currently grappling with its worst socio-economic, financial and political crisis ever. The Gaza-Israel conflict has resulted in tensions escalating along the Israel-Lebanon border over recent weeks and more than 86,000 people



have been displaced from southern Lebanon as a result. Families have received food, mattresses, blankets and hygiene kits.

Claudette (pictured right) who volunteers with her local church, said: "During the first weeks of the conflict alone, about 19,000 people were displaced, and the ones who stayed live in constant fear. Bombs are falling on them.

"They lost all their harvest,

including the harvest of olives which they heavily relied on economically. People came to us devastated. They are emotionally tired because they left everything. So, we try to comfort them and provide them with a shoulder they can cry on.

"No matter how tough things become, we are



Photo: Ibrahim Zannoun

certain that the Lord is with us and we believe in the promise that He will never abandon us."

In Portsmouth, the main Trussell Trust Foodbank is at King's Church in Southsea – the former St Peter's Church – with subsidiary Foodbanks at Paulsgrove Baptist Church and All Saints Church in Commercial Road. They feed around 250 people each week, including single people and families. Demand keeps going up, and they see around 30 new clients each week.

Individuals and families are given packages including tinned meat, beans, soup and tomatoes, plus pasta, milk, tea bags and cereal. It's designed to be enough to feed them for three days. They rely on donations from the public and contributions from supermarkets.

Leanne James, Foodbank manager, said: "Since the end of Covid, numbers have been steadily increasing. There's always something – energy bills, cost of living increases, or winter.

"Because we're based in a church, we don't just give people food. We also have support workers and support groups to help them emotionally and socially. Some even come to church services because they see it as a safe space."

There are also Trussell Trust Foodbanks in Fareham, based at the home of Waypoint Church, and on the Isle of Wight. The island Foodbanks are in Cowes, Ryde, Newport and Shanklin. The Foodbank in Freshwater is closed, but hopes to re-open soon.

To make digital donations, see: [www.portsmouth.anglican.org/lentappeal](http://www.portsmouth.anglican.org/lentappeal). Or make donations to your PCC treasurer, who can then pass them on. Any cheques should be made payable to 'Portsmouth DBF'.



Sarah Donaghy with Olympic athlete Iwan Thomas

## Tragedy led to project that feeds thousands

WHEN Sarah Donaghy's daughter Katie was stillborn in 2022, she was overwhelmed by the support from her local church.

Worshippers from Holy Rood Church in Stubbington cooked meals for her family every day for two weeks. It inspired her to launch a project that is now feeding thousands of needy families across the country.

For three years, her running club selected one date each February when they brought donations for their local Foodbank on a training run. In 2018, 2019 and 2020, runners from Fareham Running Club brought piles of food to Holy Rood Church for Fareham Foodbank – one of the Foodbanks that our Bishop's Lent Appeal is helping this year.

The Covid pandemic meant this couldn't happen in 2021. But in January 2022, Sarah's baby Katie was tragically stillborn. The loving response from her church prompted her to expand their Foodbank Run idea across the country. In 2023, more than 500 running groups took part and more than 336,000 meals provided.

And even more joggers from across the country carried donations for local Foodbanks on a training run in February 2024.

For mum-of-four Sarah, who also works at St John the Baptist C of E Primary in Waltham Chase, the project has become bigger than she ever imagined.

"It started in 2018 when the running club secretary James suggested we ask runners to bring Foodbank donations on their training run," she said. "We were at Holy Rood waiting for people to arrive, expecting a couple of bagfuls, and they just kept coming – 70 runners each carrying dozens of tins and packets of food. It blew our mind.

"We did it again in the next two years in Fareham, and then Covid stopped us. When I was pregnant in 2022, I remember not being sure whether we could do it. Then Katie was stillborn, and we came home from hospital feeling very low.

"Ethel from church knocked on the door with a meal, saying they'd organised people to bring us meals each day for two weeks. The fact that we received help and food when we needed it made me think we should help others. So two weeks after giving birth we organised another Foodbank run, this time to Waypoint Church. It was the biggest response yet.

"A week later, at Katie's funeral, I told our children the Bible story of Joseph. He had some low points, but ended up feeding a nation. We decided to go nationwide and get other running groups involved, to help feed our nation. It was a real God moment, as I could visualise people who needed food being given it."

Sarah's idea won the National Running Show's best charity initiative of the year award.