

Several Devon churches have become busy hubs despite being closed for public worship after stepping-up to host foodbanks.



St Luke's, Buckfastleigh, began accommodating the existing foodbank after the town hall and school closed in line with the Government's coronavirus guidance.

It is now providing a storage facility, space for packing and a distribution base inside the church itself.

Since mid-March, Vicar Tom Benson and the rest of the clergy team have led recruitment, training and management of 205 volunteers, saying, "If not us, then who?"

They have also been liaising with GPs, councils, schools and other partners.

In their first month, the new team responded to hundreds of helpline calls, delivered 162 medication prescriptions, food parcels for 177 people and 18 sets of hearing aid batteries, among other items.

Down the road in Ashburton, the church hall at St Andrew's Church is now hosting the town's expanded **foodbank** and has been working closely with the team in Buckfastleigh.

The town's Covid-19 response team, including several people from the church, now has 250 volunteers.

With support from the *Ashburton & Buckfastleigh Hospital League of Friends*, they even bought a black cab – which volunteer drivers use to transport health and care staff to work and take people to health appointments.

Team Rector, Mark Rylands, describes the aspiration, "to love one another as God has loved us."

"In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus says that when we tend to those in need of any kind, we are tending to him."

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