

A church in Eastbourne has become a radically different kind of church since the coronavirus pandemic and UK lockdown.

The *Matthew 25 Mission* (M25M) – a provision for the homeless and vulnerable – has been operating from Christ Church hall for almost twenty years. (The name comes from the Bible Matthew 25 verses 35-36).

Fr David Charles, Vicar at Christ Church explains that “originally the proposal was to use part of the church to accommodate guests who come to M25M for meals.”

But with many outreach services in the town ceasing to operate due to the COVID-19 pandemic, M25M has seen an unprecedented rise in demand.

Fr David Charles describes the way they had to adapt “to meet increasing demand and to conform to Government guidance relating to social distancing”, which, “necessitated an entire re-think

Transforming part of the church to “store all the food that is being donated by the local supermarkets for M25M to prepare in the hall itself. Meals are then served from outside the Centre (i.e. from the church path/car park area).”

“The queueing system, with seats spaced at 2.5m intervals, ensures that social distancing is upheld, and the standards of hygiene and safety are rigorous.”

Remarkably, by adapting in this way, M25M is now serving up to 200 meals a day, through daily breakfasts and afternoon meals, alongside food parcels which are distributed across the local community, and evening takeaways on a couple of nights of the week

The Archdeacon of Hastings, Edward Dowler, hailed the efforts, “The Matthew 25 Centre continues to do heroic work in a very poor part of Eastbourne and you will see the church itself is now being used as an integral part of the operation to provide hot meals for the increased number of people who use the Centre.”

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