



Churches Together Around Ludlow

Newsletter

Spring 2015

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Thoughts from Tim Coles, CTAL Chair 2014-15

This is my first opportunity to wish all our readers a 'Happy New Year'. Trouble is, by the time you read this, we will all have forgotten what that was meant to feel like!! Actually we have moved on to Lent... Lent is a wonderful time as we prepare for the greatest event in the Christian calendar -- Easter. As a Pentecostal minister, I may want to look even further afield, but we cannot get there without going through the preparation that is needed. The story is told of a young boy who watched as a butterfly struggled to exit the chrysalis. He wanted to help, so he ran to his mother's drawer and fetched a fine pair of scissors. Carefully he snipped at the chrysalis to allow the butterfly to exit more easily. Trouble was, that the strength for the wings that the butterfly needed to fly would have been developed through the struggle of exiting the chrysalis; and without the struggle, the wings were weak. The butterfly was beautiful, it looked like a butterfly; but it quickly died because it had no strength to fly. Learn from that story! You need go through the preparation of Lent to make the most of the miracle which is yours through Easter. You need the struggle of being challenged to remove unnecessary things from your life, you need the struggle of being faced with unpalatable facts from how others have to live, you even need the

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struggle of joining in a CTAL Lent group to join in discussion with others from other traditions. All of these things will strengthen you and prepare your heart to cry HALLELUJAH on Easter Sunday morning. I thank God that CTAL, both churches and individual Christians, are seeking to make a difference in this town and area of Ludlow. For example, you will read a report from the Food Bank within these pages. We celebrate the success of HOPE2014, Hands Together Ludlow, and ACTS2. None of these things come easily, but as we do them together we discover that as 'The church' we fly... this is our calling! Focus on Christ through Lent, be prepared to put hands, lips, and feet to work so that the poor and marginalised are given fresh hope and suddenly your faith will not have been in vain. Happy New (work-filled, frustration-guaranteed, never-ending-problems-to-fix, will-I-be-loved?) Year. Your struggle helps you achieve what you were designed for!

Tim Coles

Unconfirmed minutes of the CTAL AGM 6 November 2014

The AGM was preceded by an open meeting to receive the Ludlow Under Pressure Steering Group's second report *Ludlow under continuing pressure: hope in troubled times?*

1. Welcome and prayer – David Roberts (DR).
2. The minutes of the 2013 AGM were agreed as an accurate record.
3. Chair's report– DR's report was warmly received.
4. Treasurer's report – Laurence Taylor's (LT) report was received with thanks.
5. Nominations for CTAL Officers:
 - a. Tim Coles was nominated as Chair.
 - b. There was no nomination for Vice Chair.
 - c. LT was nominated to serve as Treasurer.
 - d. Mike Beazley (MB) was nominated to serve as Administrator.
 - e. Tim Coles (TC) took the chair. He warned that there was a need to identify a Vice Chair well in advance of next year's AGM in order to ensure that there would be a potential Chair for 2015/16. The candidate should be a lay person.
6. Ludlow Under Pressure:
 - a. The latest report was commended and the Steering Group was thanked.
 - b. Neil Richardson was asked for his recommendations for the future. He proposed that:
 - i. The churches and CTAL should continue to support the work of the existing schemes that had emerged from Ludlow Under Pressure. In particular, he saw Hands Together Ludlow as being the main focus of future activity. There was a need for more people from within and outside the churches to support and get involved in the work of HTL and other voluntary schemes in the town.

- ii. CTAL should set up a small monitoring group to keep the local situation under review and report back to the CTAL Exec and AGM on local needs and how best to meet them.
 - c. After some discussion it was agreed that each church should nominate a person to join the new monitoring group, which would also include some members of the existing Ludlow Under Pressure Steering Group. The aim was to set up the new group before Christian Unity week (18th January 2015).
 - d. It was also agreed that there should be a Prayer for Ludlow for use by all the churches. Frances Biseker agreed to produce this.
7. CTAL Lunches and Suppers:
- a. MB reported on the changes made to the format of the monthly lunches. In future they would be bring-your own lunch meetings. They would take place on the last Thursday of each month. At the end of each meeting those present would discuss and agree on the subject and the presenter for the next meeting. They would inform MB of these so that the details could be publicised.
 - b. In response to a question, MB said that there appeared to be no interest in reviving the CTAL suppers.
8. Christmas events – The following events were announced:
- a. The Christmas Day Lunch would be run in the Mascall Centre again this year on 25th December. The Colemans would run the event as previously but need someone to volunteer to act as MC to be there all day to coordinate the work of the volunteers.
 - b. Saltmine has agreed to produce a pantomime 'The Snow Queen', to be run as a community event at Ludlow CE School at 6.30pm on 1st December. Tickets were £1 a head on sale from Wesley's and the Rockspring Centre.
 - c. The Living Nativity would be at 6pm on 16th December in the Market Square.
 - d. Christian Aid carols would take place at the Buttercross between 11am and 12md on Saturday 20th December.
9. Week of Prayer for Christian Unity – TC spoke about the arrangements for services and exchanges during the week of 18 to 25th January.
10. MB described the arrangements for Lent Groups for 2015 and asked for potential leaders and hosts to complete the application form. The York Course for Lent 2015 'Praise Him' had been chosen unanimously. Applications to join groups would be sought early in the New Year.
11. Quaker concerns:
- a. Colin Sheward and Cynthia Prior outlined their concerns at the way in which CTAL seemed to have outgrown its constitution, requiring it to make decisions and allocate funding in ways which had not been foreseen when CTAL was a less active organisation.
 - b. After some discussion, it was agreed that there was general support for CTAL's timely involvement in social action within the town and that this necessitated properly defined decision making authority and procedures and financial delegations for the CTAL Exec.

- c. It was agreed that MB should chair a small group to redraft the Constitution and circulate it around the churches for agreement prior to ratification at the next AGM. Membership of the group would be decided at the December CTAL Exec meeting.

12. AOB – TC announced that Elim has put in an offer to buy their current premises, which has been accepted. The meeting expressed its pleasure.

13. TC closed the meeting with prayer and the Grace.

Mike Beazley

After the AGM the Executive Committee appointed Colin Sheward to the role of Vice-Chair.

CTAL AGM 2014: Chair's report

First of all my thanks to the Executive Committee and especially to Tim, Laurence, Mike and Wendy. CTAL is expanding and getting ever more multi-faceted and it was good to have such an experienced group willing to give time and thought to discussing the issues that arise when an organisation is rising to the challenge of broadening its scope to serve the evolving needs of both the community and the wider world. My thanks too to the whole Executive Committee for doing their part to make sure each of the churches is involved in CTAL. One word of apology from me. My intention at the start of the year was to be present at the ordinary Sunday worship of each of the churches in turn. I managed most but unfortunately not all.

For many years CTAL has had its programme of regular events, each building on the achievement of the previous year. Christian Aid Week and Wesley's Café are a valued meeting point for joint activity. So are the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Fairtrade, and the Lent Groups. The Last-Friday-in-the-month Lunch Club, an important opportunity to discuss issues that benefit from being explored in a wider forum, came to the end of its time and has been reborn on a different basis on last Thursdays. Work in schools develops and in our changing world is ever more important. There is Young @Art. There are times of prayer too for the Persecuted Church. One of the things that has slipped out of focus is the annual Quiet Morning. This is partly because times of quiet reflection with a leader giving short addresses for meditation are not viewed with equal weight in all churches. I think this is something that should not be squeezed out of our timetable by the pressure of other activity.

The number of nursing and residential homes is increasing and even though ministry in them is difficult because conflicts can arise between the commitments of the nursing staff and the needs of those providing the worship, some of the staff are Christians and that could be used to our advantage. Some of those who organise the programme of medical care may not be, and may not appreciate the value that a time of quiet reflection and prayer has. Those residents particularly who have been part of their church in the past and who have their faculties and their memories need to be catered for in a way that at the moment is too easily bypassed. Those who give of their time to providing worship are to be thanked for persevering with what is an important monthly occasion.

There are many other projects that are part of CTAL's programme and we shall hear about them. Some reflect our Christian response to national or international events. Others arise because of local needs and the experience the Christians of Ludlow have had in responding to such needs elsewhere. As time goes on, the way things are done changes. When CTAL began, its vision was limited more to events and projects that all churches could recognise and become part of. Now, quite rightly, changes in society have been identified and responded to by Ludlow Under Pressure and Hands Together Ludlow. The need for Street Pastors has been raised. There are other initiatives too where Christians are reaching out to the community. I hope that those I have not mentioned will speak during this meeting. I have mentioned a few projects in order to indicate the width of what we do and to show that in a sense CTAL is reaching out to the wider community not just to become involved in meeting the needs people have, but also to embrace the skills and experience that exist in the community for initiative and leadership in responding to those needs.

This means that there are bound to be times when it will be necessary to resolve any possible tensions there may be between what is appropriate for CTAL to respond to and what is not. This is inevitable and a sign of CTAL's importance and our awareness of our calling to respond to wherever the Gospel may be leading us. CTAL is experiencing pressures that arise from its success. There is so much taking place. Not everyone can possibly do everything. Not everyone feels comfortable with personally taking an active part in everything. But it is important that we all own everything whether or not we are personally taking part. Whatever is done in CTAL's name is part of who we are.

Churches Together in Shropshire is changing too. I mention this because it is important. Ged Cliffe who has been County Ecumenical Officer for the past eighteen years is retiring after a long period of faithful work. Churches Together in England has done a review of CTS. The result was presented to the church leaders covering Shropshire. Their decision in response to that was that the County Ecumenical Secretary would be replaced by an Ecumenical Mission Officer. The church leaders would support and sustain CTS and the church ecumenical officers would meet twice a year to support local partnerships and Churches Together groups. Thus the tenor of the work has moved on from encouraging churches to relate to each other to undertaking joint missionary activity in an increasingly fragmented society. That change is significant.

You would be disappointed if I failed to mention interfaith. What the church leaders have done is to recognise the growing importance even in our area of the other world faiths. We are no longer 'the only kids on the block'. We have to justify our place and can no longer take anything for granted. That means that it is important that our togetherness as Christian brothers and sisters is lived out for all to see. We are one body even though we may have our own traditions and express our worship in our own way. We recognise the validity of those who express their worship of the same Lord differently and whose beliefs and ways of doing things may vary. In our growing unity as Christians over the last fifty years we have learnt a lot from each other and many of the barriers that used to exist have come down. We give thanks for that and pray that that may continue as together we work out what it means to be a Christian in today's world. We must not take the easy way of thinking that we know the answer so well that we do not

need to ask the question. The Lord Jesus has the surprising knack of arriving ahead of us at the place where he wants us to be and he waits there, calling us to join him so that he may lead us forward together.

David Roberts

CTAL AGM 2014: Finance report

CTAL operates a very modest General Expenses account plus a separate New Initiatives Fund.

The General Fund is supported primarily by subs from our member churches and fellowships, averaging £880 per year. In the year just ended our general expenses came to £792, and I therefore recommend that the annual sub remains at £110 for most denominations, but £220 from the larger Anglican group of parishes. For the coming year we have a balance forward of £1,744, but £450 of this is committed to part-funding the printing costs of the new Ludlow under Pressure report.

The New Initiatives Fund was set up some years ago to provide resources that would make it possible to respond swiftly to new challenges and opportunities. It has been funded mainly by an annual donation from the Wesley's Cafe of 10% of their operating surplus, plus various one-off gifts from member churches. For several years income has exceeded expenditure, but this past year there have been major grants to four new initiatives

- local action under the national HOPE2014 programme;
- pump-priming for Hands Together Ludlow launched at our AGM last year;
- costs of exploring the possible need for a Street Pastors scheme here in Ludlow;
- publicity for a new Messy Church initiative.

The Fund has also been used temporarily to receive and bring to account external grants for HOPE2014 and HTL work. The end-of-year balance forward is £5,566, but part of this is committed to HOPE2014 and HTL, with only £3,344 available for future new initiatives.

Laurence Taylor, Treasurer

HOPE2014

HOPE2014... a year of words and actions to show and explain our Christian faith. I consider it was a success: we held a pancake race to show that the church could have fun, we did at least five litter-picks with Ludlow21/Pride of Place, we did a charity car wash and raised £600, equally split between the Fire Service Benevolent Fund, Home-Start and South Shropshire Youth Forum. We put on a full day's activities at the Telford International Centre to include School Choir competition, Saltmine drama presentation, British Youth For Christ running mega events for young people, prayer times, and brought a major speaker in to explain the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. We put on a high tea and sing-song for Seniors on Armistice Sunday and showed *The Cross* (Billy Graham DVD). We organised a family Panto (oh yes we did!!) and also organised the Living Nativity. Churches Together around Ludlow newsletter, Spring 2015

At the end of all that we gave a further £200 to Home-Start and the South Shropshire Youth Forum.

What we achieved was just as successful in the monthly breakfast and briefing meetings that we held, with community groups and churches sitting around a table talking to each other and helping each other make a difference. This is what the Christian life is... helping our churches take the message in practical terms to where it needs to be heard. HOPE2014 did that, and some of you were involved... thank you, and thank God!

Tim Coles

Company at Christmas

A family Christmas can be greatly enjoyable, but when bereavement leaves us on our own and with family far away, Christmas can be a particularly lonely time. For a number of years now, this event, under the CTAL banner, has been bringing lonely people into the warmth of the Mascall Centre on Christmas Day to enjoy company and sit down to a traditional meal.

Three years ago John and Pam Aitken, who were running it at that time, wished to spend Christmas with their daughter in Australia. An appeal went out for someone to organise it and I offered to do what appeared to be a 'desk job'. Little did I know. I am quite deaf and unable to cope with the telephone so Brenda was soon involved. Since she and her sister Joan had run the event some ten or twelve years back, she was an 'old hand' and an experienced organiser anyway, so she naturally took on the major responsibility while I carried on with the desk work, getting all the names on to the computer, writing to folk who could help, organizing the drivers and so on. None the less my 'desk job' soon grew into much greater involvement when we took on the shopping this year, our cook Jane Deakin being unable to do it, for she works full-time.

It's so heartening that each year folk telephone to ask if they can help. Mostly they have seen the notices we post at each church but some have no church allegiance. Practically all the churches of the town are represented and it has been so enjoyable meeting and working with these new friends. However we are both much less mobile these days and so we have indicated that this has to be our final year; our report to CTAL lists the things which must be attended to before it goes ahead next year. The general feeling is that somehow it *must* go ahead for it means so much to the folk who come.



So, what happened on the day? The Mascall Centre is undergoing some structural changes including a new kitchen, so the equipment we used is old and about to be replaced; it has to be said it gave the cook a few problems. Panic set in early as the first people into the kitchen found that the gas oven refused to light. After Churches Together around Ludlow newsletter, Spring 2015

much wandering around tracing the gas pipes and trying promising-looking levers it was eventually coaxed into life and the event was on. Due to the changes taking place it was no longer possible to serve the food directly from the kitchen as in past years so an alternative method was set up, with the food being taken into the dining hall and served from tables there. Not ideal perhaps, but it worked and everyone enjoyed a well-prepared meal.



As the guests arrive they are welcomed and ushered into the Severn Room where a new arrangement with the chairs set round small tables made sure that everyone found themselves in a conversational group; all the helpers who were not busy on other tasks sat with them and made sure that no-one was left out. This worked much better than previous years. The name 'Company at

Christmas' really says it all. Coffee and mince pies helped things along and a quiz kept things going until a session of carol singing followed, with a few well-known songs thrown in. At 1.00 the guests were helped into the dining hall and the servers got to work. Many of the helpers were able to sit and enjoy the traditional turkey meal and there were warm words of appreciation from a number of the guests.

Maurice Coleman

CTAL Emergency Food Parcel Scheme (Ludlow Food Bank): 2014 statistical report

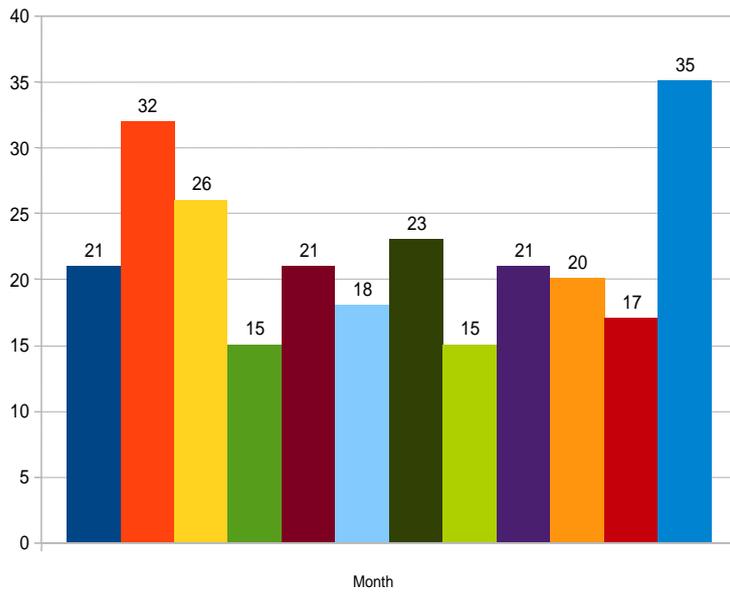
Ludlow Emergency Food Parcel Scheme is run from Ludlow Baptist Church purely by volunteers who give up their time to help people who are in emergency situations and require food to help them 'get by'. Either social services or the CAB refer all food parcel recipients. On occasion a previous recipient may request a further food parcel, and these requests are taken on a case-by-case basis: sometimes a request for a food parcel may be turned down. In these cases, the

recipient is referred to Hands Together Ludlow who offer help with learning to cook, hotpots and other practical assistance.

In 2014 we continued to be busy, although there were some quiet times. April and August saw fewer referrals than any other month. December was our busiest month. Altogether we gave out 264 food parcels helping 618 individual people. Numbers have increased over the years:

2008	Around 30
2009	Around 50
2010	73
2011	85
2012	108
2013	260
2014	264

Number of food parcels given out each month



We have come across some heart-rending cases, and are happy to be able to offer some hope where there was none.

Number of food parcels given out by Ludlow Food Bank 01/01/2014 - 31/12/2014

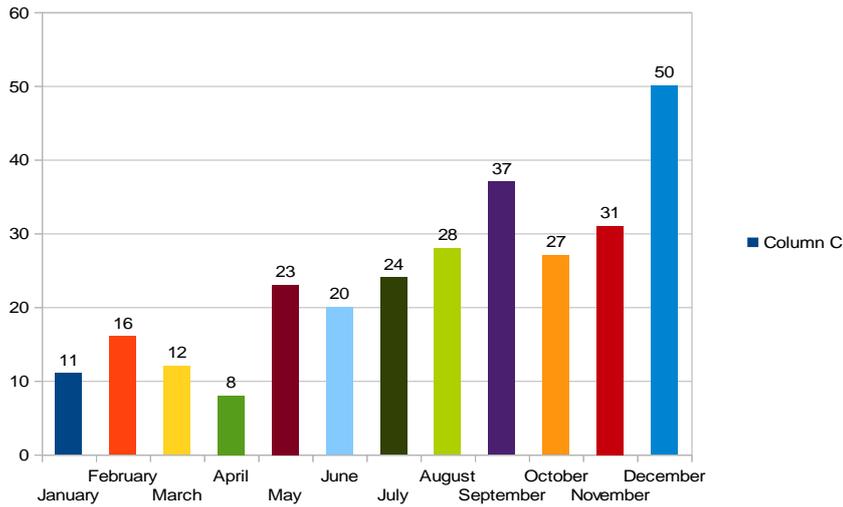
Family	49
Single Male	71
Single Female	46
Single Parent	80
Couple	18
Total	264

Total Number of people helped	
Single adult	197
Married adult	134
Children	287
Total	618

Repeat parcels	105
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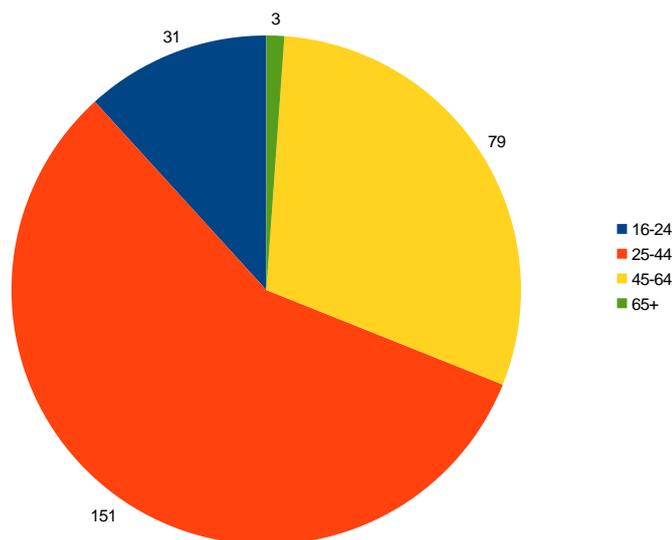
This year has seen an increase in the number of families needing help, and we have helped 287 children.

Number of children helped by month:



A food parcel contains enough food for about one week, so parcels for large families are considerably bigger than parcels for single people. It is interesting that the age group, which has needed the most help is the 25-44 age range. People in the 65+ range are either coping well, or are not being recognised as being in need.

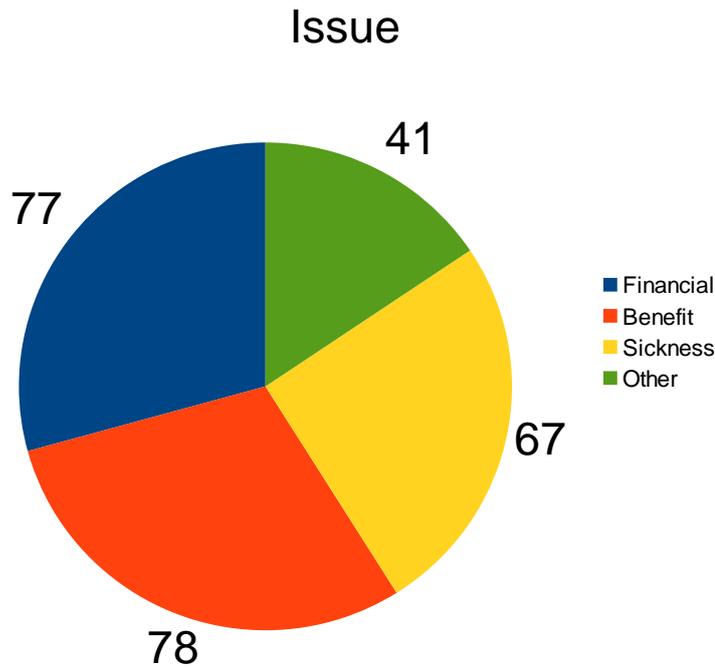
Age range of food parcel recipients



We have been categorising reasons for needing a food parcel as:

1. Financial
2. Benefit
3. Sickness (including mental health problems)

4. Other

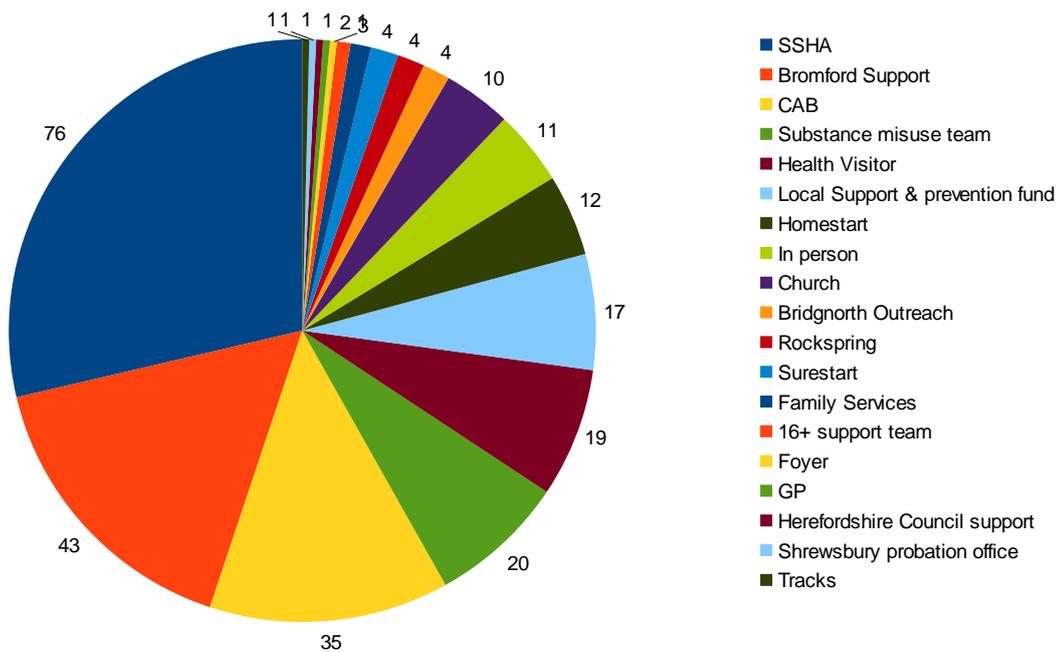


5. 'Other' reasons for needing a parcel have included:

- Fire
- Flood
- Fraud victim
- Burglary victim
- Domestic violence victim
- Homelessness
- Bereavement
- Redundancy
- Bad debts

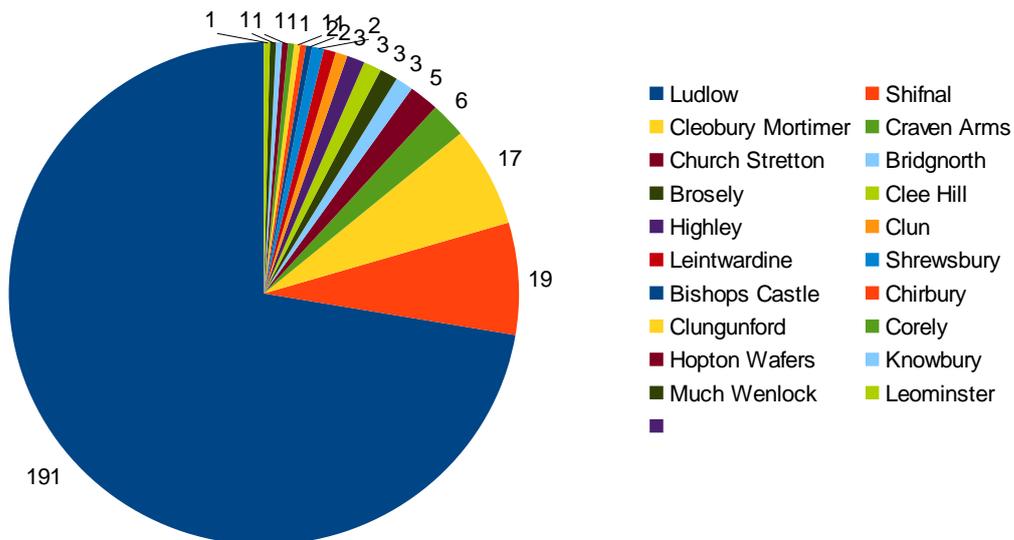
Where the reason 'Benefit' is given, this is because benefits have been stopped (often in error). It has taken up to 8 weeks for benefits to be re-instated, although this has improved recently, since we received help from our local MP.

We receive referrals from a number of agencies, as seen in the following chart. Please note that the Substance Mis-Use Team only refer people who are actively trying to overcome their addictions.



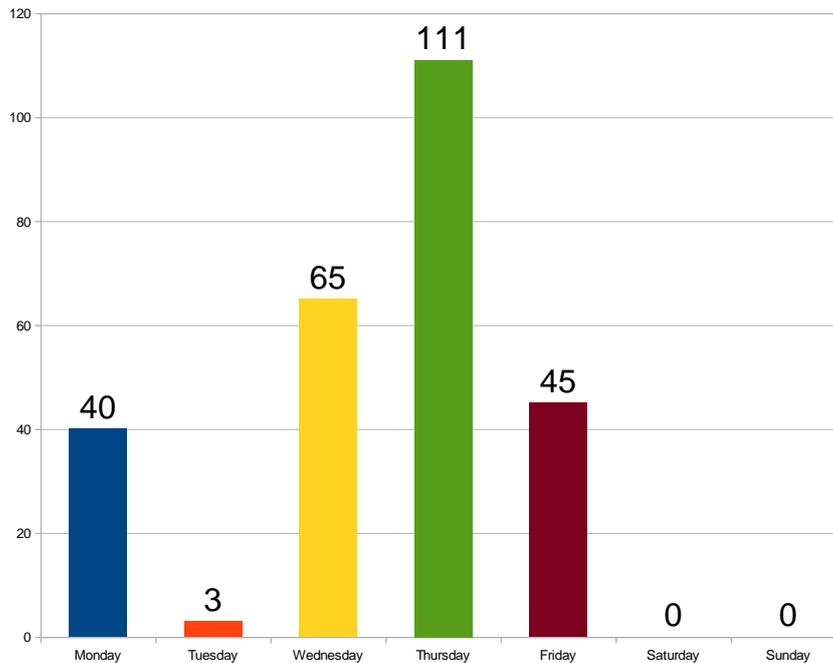
All food parcels given out by us go to local people, the vast majority live in Ludlow itself, but some of the agencies cover South Shropshire and are based at the Rockspring Centre on Thursdays. We are happy to help these professionals as they seek to support some very needy people.

Home address for food parcel recipients:



For completeness I include a chart which shows which are our busiest days. This is for the benefit of our volunteers who do such a good job of making up parcels, and handing them to people.

Day Collected



Where has the food come from?

This is the other side of the story, and is a story that deserves to be told. The generosity we have witnessed from churches, groups, businesses and individuals has been amazing. We have had a steady stream of donations coming in, much of which has been donated on a week-by-week basis in the churches in and around Ludlow. We are so grateful for this faithful giving. We have also had periods of flood-like proportions, where food has been coming in in great abundance. This occurred particularly at harvest and Christmas. Those times have been very joyful. We have had dry times also, but have been given generous donations of money so that we are able to buy food at such times.

There have been many donations that have been particularly moving such as:

- a harvest donation from a nursing home in town
- a disabled lady who brought in a donation
- a company in Cleobury who bought Christmas gifts for children who needed a food parcel
- previous food parcel recipients who have donated when they are 'back on their feet'
- a man who brings in a considerable donation of food every month
- and a young Brownie who inspired her whole school to raise funds and donate food.

We have not had to turn anyone away because of lack of resources, and we feel so blessed to be in such a position. Thank you for your continued support of this scheme – it makes such a difference to so many people.

Ruth Davies
Food Parcel Scheme co-ordinator

Alcoholics Anonymous in Ludlow, spiritual groups of a special kind

Did you know that we have quite an alcoholism problem in our area, and that it affects people from all backgrounds? AA offers help. There are three Meetings in Ludlow.

The heart of the suggested programme of personal recovery is contained in Twelve Steps describing the experience of the earliest members:

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol - that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Newcomers are not asked to accept or follow these Twelve Steps in their entirety if they feel unwilling or unable to do so. They will usually be asked to keep an open mind, to attend meetings at which recovered alcoholics describe their personal experiences in achieving sobriety, and to read about the AA programme. AA members will usually emphasize to newcomers that only problem drinkers themselves, individually, can determine whether or not they are in fact alcoholics. At the same time, it will be pointed out that all available medical testimony indicates that alcoholism is a progressive illness, that it cannot be cured in the ordinary sense of the term, but that it can be arrested through total abstinence from alcohol in any form.

An AA member talks about his hesitancy in taking the first step in joining AA:

More than a door?

Shaking, gagging, totally skint and all alone,
cold, wet and no credit on the phone.

Where the game of shame has launched into the stratosphere
and all that's left is humiliation, self-cruelty and fear.

We know that feeling here,
we are not too grand to understand
your plight,

but we're not powerless,
we can fight,
and we do,
with secret tools we can give to you.
You're at your lowest ebb,
look on the web,
there's a meeting close by... all you have to do is try.
A place where we're all alike,
so get up from the gutter and get on your bike.
Nothing is ever easy,
and you may be feeling queasy...
it doesn't matter,
come in, sit down,
have a brew and a natter.
You'll get honesty and care in amounts thought rare...
in this cruellest of worlds.

So you're outside of the meeting place,
with a bright red face in case
you're recognised and demonised...
but what about being a little bolder
and ditching the demon sitting on your shoulder.
It's only a door...
nothing more
and beyond it sits a normal room,
without any gloom.
All those there are your kind,
waiting for you to find the answer
to the question of the NO ALCOHOL direction.
In the warmth across the threshold
we have riches more valuable than gold.
Experience and humanity
to guard against the ravages of drink's calamity.
AA is not a sect,
were only here to protect,
and perhaps in our rescue of you,
we ensure our resolve will never dissolve,
and we can never sway,
for to keep the secret,
is to give it away.
To find out the score,
to really bounce back once more,
come and see what we once saw,
grab that handle and open the door.

To find out about AA: alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk, 0845 769 7555,
help@alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk.



For obvious reasons the author wishes to remain anonymous

Member churches

Ludlow Baptist Church	Mr Simon Lambourne 01584 874076	LudlowBaptistChurch.co.uk
St Laurence's, St John's, St Giles', Church of England	Venerable Colin Williams 01584 872001	stlaurences.org.uk
Living Waters Church	Mr Andy Summers 01584 879297	bluebox.talktalk.net/Living_Waters_Ludlow/start.html
Ludlow Methodist Church	Rev. Frances Biseker 01568 612406	ludlowmethodistchurch.org
Ludlow Quaker Meeting	Cynthia Prior and Colin Sheward (CTAL representatives) 0870 7656 980	ludlowquakers.co.uk
St Peter's Roman Catholic Church	Canon Christopher Walsh 01584 872906	stpetersludlow.org

Associated church

Elim Christian Fellowship	Rev. Tim Coles 01584 878634	ludlowelim.co.uk
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Editor's note: The newsletter welcomes expression of a range of views. Those expressed in articles are those of the contributors. They do not necessarily represent the position of CTAL.

For a large-print newsletter please use the version on the CTAL website, or for a printed copy contact any of the churches.

Contributions for the next newsletter should be sent to the editor, Wendy Bartlett, at wendy.bartlett@hmqquakers.org.uk. The last date for items for the next issue is 14 June 2015.

Sustainability: Please print out only as much of the newsletter as you need. On the Print menu state which page you want. Your printer details will say if you can use the back of already-used paper. And using the Fast Normal or Fast printing settings on the printer Properties menu will save ink.

To make it easier to read the newsletter on screen, you can change the font size: if you are using Word, click on View, then Zoom, then type the size you need (eg 125%) into the box.