



First Congregational Church of Ashfield ❖ United Church of Christ
Creating Community, Welcoming All

429 Main Street ❖ P.O. Box 519 ❖ Ashfield MA 01330 ❖ 413.628.4470
<http://www.ashfielducc.org> ❖ uccashfield@gmail.com ❖ [facebook.com/ashfielducc](https://www.facebook.com/ashfielducc)
Rev. David Jones, Minister

Hilltown Churches Food Pantry

Annual Report 2021

This past year has been full of many new challenges. The Covid isn't done with us yet it seems with the new variants spreading new disease among us. We spent the past winter doing drive-by distributions on the McDonalds model. Masks were mandated for all. We pre-packed all the bags of dry goods, dairy, fresh produce, breads and frozen meats. We were not able to pack each families bags according to their preferences as it had become a production line to get the food out as safely as possible. Thankfully we are now able to have clients back into the church and able to shop and choose the foods their families prefer, we also have the opportunity to interact with our clients which is a much more satisfying way to do the distribution.

As the winter continued our numbers began to go down. We have had a hard time determining why this has happened but it seems to be the case across the region. As best we can determine it seems to be the impact of the stimulus checks, extended unemployment benefits and child tax credits doing their intended jobs of helping folks get by.

We have formed a partnership with the Mary Lyon Foundation based at Mohawk Trail Regional School. They screen students for food insecurity as part of the intake process. When they find a family that needs food they contact us and we pack food for that family. The Foundation provides drivers to deliver this food to the families. At this time they have 12 families they deliver to. It's a wonderful outreach program that we could never do on our own. We still deliver to about 4 families that have no other way to get their food. Now that the world seems to be a safer place many of the folks we had delivered to are able to come and choose their own food.

At the beginning of October 2020, we had at total of 112 families signed up representing a total of 543 individuals. We distributed 871,000 pounds of virtually free food from the Food Bank. This does not include the thousands of pounds of fresh produce, yogurt, milk, and bread that we either buy or is donated to us. SideHill Farm has continued to provide as much yogurt as we can use. The Porter Family Farm has stepped up and donates their delicious grass fed meats. Many other families gave eggs, goat cheese, and food items from food drives that they hosted.

Our volunteers continue to be the backbone of our support system. They are incredible, coming each distribution no matter the weather, helping to stock, pack, distribute, unload trucks, stock freezers and the other endless chores that need doing to keep the light on.

Smith College has again stepped up to help support our Sharing Gifts program that helps to provide a joyous holiday for the children of our clients. They are sponsoring 50-60 children which is such a huge help. Our churches join in the effort with their support as does the community at large. It's a wonderful mission to help spread the joy of the holidays.

Pat Thayer for the Hilltown Churches Food Pantry