

Pastor marvels at Shelburne generosity

Although most people might be wondering how they're going to pay for the added costs of Christmas and the entire festive season, the Rev. David Howes, pastor of Trinity United Church in Shelburne, says it is truly the most generous season of the year.

The generosity of residents and merchants in Shelburne and area, along with the dedication of the all-volunteer staff, has meant that the shelves of Shepherd's Cupboard Food Bank are well stocked for the time being.

It seems to be a season when people open their hearts. There have been some wonderful donations. It speaks to the generosity of the community. He said he is really thankful to the food stores and to Giant Tiger. It's not just all about selling food, but of (meeting community needs).

Mr. Howes was speaking in the absence of Ardith Dunlop who, he said, is really the person in charge of Shepherd's Cupboard although he plays an active role as a person who has been active in such things since entering the ministry about 30 years ago in Montreal.

So the food shelves are okay for now but there remains a need for restocking non-perishable items such as pastas and peanut butter as the critical needs will begin all over again come February.

His lesson about stocking food banks is biblical, the seven fat years and seven lean. The lean months for Shepherd's Cupboard will typically be February and on through the summer.

And, apart from food, he said there is a vital need now and always for personal items for women. There's never enough of that on our shelves. He said the items are not luxuries but necessities and they are expensive.

The other imminent need is for younger volunteers. The current volunteers are all dedicated and reliable, but most are advancing in years. There is a lot of running around to pick up donated items, and tending to the shelves takes a certain energy level, so it would be nice to know that a younger generation would be coming on board as the years go by.

As a longtime food bank organizer and volunteer who began in an urban setting, it had been a rude awakening for the pastor to learn that there are food banks in just about every rural community in Ontario.

It's an appalling statement on the state of the economy. What is the next level? He spoke of the plight of young people seeking employment. No matter their level of academic achievement, they talk about finding a gig, and not so much about regular employment.

Rev. Howes wonders whether we could reach a level at which an entire new generation relies on food banks to survive.

By Wes Keller