



England parishes in Wigan, providing low cost fresh and tinned goods to

The small shops, based at St Thomas, St Nathaniel, St James and Christchurch churches, as well as food deliveries from St Barnabas Church, are supplied by surplus food charities.

A 'Faith café' run at St James Church on Saturdays, serving on average 40 people week, relies on enterprising volunteer cooks working with supplies donated that morning. 'You never know what you are going to get each week' says Revd Mark Wade, who oversees this work for the churches. Guests can pay as they feel they can – including through voluntary work in the café.

Typically, members of the food clubs can choose 20 items per shop for the cost of a small annual membership and a small fee per visit. Research into similar food clubs by Church Action on Poverty, [Dignity, Choice, Hope](#), showed that they save households an average of £780 a year on food bills.

Revd Mark said that the churches are already observing an increase in demand and this was expected to rise over the winter. The long-term, collaborative nature of the food clubs and café, with members acting also as volunteers, means that they give a greater sense of choice and ownership.

People who had never previously visited church before have also attended worship and signed up for Christian enquiry courses such as Alpha after coming to the clubs.

He said: "We have had people come to Alpha who had no connection with the church previously through the love, care and relationship building of the food ministry work.

'We are getting many regular volunteers who valued having been looked after over the last couple of months who have come in and said: 'how can we help? and are now giving their time.'"

More information:

- The Wigan food clubs have been developed as part of a larger food security project supported by Church Urban Fund's Together Network.

Source URL: <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/stories-and-features/how-church-run-food-clubs-one-town-are-helping-more-200-households-save>