



aces for people struggling to pay their energy bills this winter.

More than 300 households shop at 'food clubs' each week in Church of England parishes in Wigan, in the Diocese of Liverpool, for low cost fresh and tinned goods.

The small shops, based at St Stephen's Church, St Thomas, St Nathaniel, St James and Christchurch – rely on surplus food from charities and donations from supermarkets.

All five of the churches in the network are now extending their opening hours every week to provide a 'warm space' this winter for people in the area.

Revd Mark Wade said: "The heating might not go on full blast but we are still offering this service, there is a need for this.

"I know there are parents working three jobs in order to cover their bills who are now fearful for what they may face financially over the winter. We have buildings with kitchen facilities – we aim to offer a beacon of hope."

- The Wigan food clubs have been developed as part of a larger food security project supported by Church Urban Fund's Together Network. Members pay an annual fee of £5 and can shop for 20 items each session, worth between £20 and £30. Under schemes operated by Wigan Council and the Credit Union Unify some membership fees are waived and shopping sessions offered for free.
- The Wigan church network is also offering 'pop up' food club shopping from a van, along with a weekly hot meal service, on two estates in Wigan.

[Information for churches about keeping warm this winter.](#)