



A food pantry set up in the Parish Church of St. Peter and St. Paul in Rustington, West Sussex opened its doors to eight people on 6 October 2021. A month after opening, the headteacher at the local primary school asked if a 'Pop-up Pantry' could take place in school every week..

Now, eighteen months on, St. Peter and St. Paul has become a community hub for locals, supporting over 80 people regularly, including 31 families at the school Pop Up Pantry every week. The numbers are increasing week on week.

Rustington is a vibrant coastal village in West Sussex, but you could be blissfully unaware of the deprivation and despair that had been steadily growing, as local people, affected by the rising food and energy prices, struggled to survive the cost-of-living crisis.

But, God is clearly on the move in the Church, helping people navigate through these difficult times.

One volunteer said: "We have got to know our Pantry users, they're our neighbours and our friends. They open their lives to us, they ask for prayer, for fellowship and some have also started coming to Church services."

The feedback from all sides is a testament to God's grace. Those who give food talk about how much it means to them to know they are doing something practical to help their neighbours.

One of the volunteers said, "I want to come every week, this is the best thing I've ever done. It's what community and church should be about."

The Pantry users who receive food, kindness, and spiritual support feel they are a valued part of the community.

A local woman who has been using the Pantry since it opened in October 2021 recently said, "Since coming to the Pantry things have happened to me. They say God works in mysterious ways and I believe that now. I remember when I didn't have washing powder and one of the volunteers said, "I have washing powder for you". Then I had holes in my socks then we went to the Pantry and there were some socks going free. This might be a coincidence but I'm starting to believe it's God."

Grace and Charlie Sims (pictured above with Assistant Curate Laura Darrall) helped set up the Pantry and are now volunteer coordinators. From starting off with a handful of volunteers, the hub today has 23 dedicated volunteers giving their time and gifts to reach out to its community in need.

Representatives from Christians Against Poverty, Citizens Advice Bureau and Southern Water attend the Pantry to give information and advice to users to help alleviate some financial and social pressures.

This has all been achieved because God has given the church a strong leader in the vicar of St Peter and St Paul Church in Rustington, Rev.

Natalie Loveless, an enabler with a vision to put into practice the tenets of the Christian Faith.

Rev Natalie said, "We are all hugely grateful for all the love that Charlie and Grace have poured into this project, which comes from the heart. The Pantry demonstrates how much the whole community cares about one another and they have used their gifts and experience with great generosity to serve God and neighbour."



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