

## 'AFRESH IN EACH GENERATION'

CELEBRATING THE NEXT GENERATION MINISTRY IN WIGAN



**Written by Revd. Neil Cook**  
*Team Rector of Church Wigan*

**The vocation of the Church of England is, and always has been, to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ afresh in each generation.<sup>1</sup>**

In this it follows the ancient tradition founded by Moses nearly three and half thousand years ago, to pass on the greatest commandment to our children. Deuteronomy 6.4-9 instructs God's people to love the Lord with all our heart, soul and strength, and to raise our children in the same faith, 'when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise.' The tone of the scripture is very insistent: we must share our faith with emerging generations, and in this way the worship of God has grown over the centuries so that nearly a third of all human beings acknowledge Christ as Lord.

Yet the challenge facing us to fulfil this age-old mandate is grave. In the Church of England there are now very few younger people. We are getting older: nationally, over one in three (35%) Anglican worshippers are over 70, whereas only 14% of the population is in this age category. In 2024 a third of our churches had no under 16s, compared to a quarter just five years earlier. It doesn't mean no young people are attending church; but they are concentrated in a few of the largest churches (just 10% of our churches have 59% of young worshippers).<sup>2</sup>

Acknowledging these sobering facts, the Church of England has declared its 'priority of priorities' is to double the number of young people involved in its activities by 2030.

This is not to say young people are more important than older people; we are all God's children. But it does recognise that we must focus more attention on the next generation. This is not just to fill our Sunday schools. It is about raising a generation of bold and hope-full Christians to lead the church in an uncertain and divided future. We must take Moses' call in Deuteronomy seriously.

### **And we can take heart, for God is leading the way!**

First, talk of a 'Quiet Revival' among young people is real. It's not a surge of young people exploring faith with us, but here and there, in ones and twos, we are witnessing young souls seeking a better hope in a way we haven't seen for a long time.

Second, we have a well-established network of creative, faithful and effective outreach to young people in Church Wigan. We have brilliant relationships with our many church schools. There are youth groups, café churches and messy churches in different places, as well as schools-based worshipping communities reaching young families that otherwise would have nothing to do with church. New national church funding will enable us to better connect and support the leaders of these ministries.

Third, we have our Wigan Next Generation team - youth mission enablers Andy, Aishe, Dan and Janie working alongside some incredible volunteer youth leaders. [Article Continued Overleaf...](#)

For more information visit...



/NextGenWigan

## Article continued....

Up to now their work has focused on the 11-30 age bracket, with over 165 young people regularly involved in discipling activities, and in the future their work will also encompass 0-11s.

Our two full time professional counsellors, Georgia and Amy, work at The Deanery CE High School in Wigan and Byrchall High School in Ashton. In a year they help 550 students who are struggling with their mental health, with over two thirds reporting a noticeable improvement.



## Next Gen - What's On?

For the most up-to-date information about Next Generation groups, events, and activities, please follow the Next Gen pages on Facebook and Instagram. These channels share news, updates, and opportunities to get involved. There are a number of regular groups meeting in schools, churches, and across the wider community, offering young people a range of ways to connect, take part, and get involved.

 /NextGenWigan  /WiganNextGen

For further info on Next Gen contact Andy Brown  
andy.brown@wigandeanerytrust.org

## Safeguarding Audit

INEQE are conducting safeguarding audits throughout the entirety of the Church of England and now it's the Diocese of Liverpool's turn.

To help them with their audit across the entirety of our diocese, they have asked for as many people as possible to complete a short anonymous survey to help them conduct a fair and proper audit of our safeguarding.

We want to ensure that every voice is heard and represented throughout this audit. Scan the QR code to fill in the survey



## Prayer Points for Jan/Feb

This year, we want to commit afresh to the core priority of prayer across Church Wigan. More resources will become available soon via our social media and website to help us to unite together in prayer, but we would love to invite you to join us in praying for the following topics throughout January and February. [Scan the QR code for more in-depth breakdowns of these prayer points.](#)

**This January & February, we are praying for...**

1. **Workers for the Harvest** | For 2 more full-time ministers, more lay volunteers and refreshment for our teams.
2. **A Swift and Fair Conclusion to the Right Buildings Review** | For God's comfort and future plan to be tangible.
3. **Wigan Next Generation** | Particularly for the financing of the youth mission enabler roles and



**So thank God and thank YOU for helping us fulfil all this amazing ministry. As we enter 2026 we will face challenges, most notably funding. So please reflect seriously on how you can personally invest in our leaders of tomorrow as we work towards the 'priority of priorities.'**

<sup>1</sup> From the Declaration of Assent, a foundational statement of faith made by all ordained and lay ministers when taking up office in the Church of England.

<sup>2</sup> Annual Statistics for Mission 2024, Church of England.

## Next Gen Team Fundraising

Andy, Aisha, Janie and Dan are our amazing Wigan Next Generation team (WiNG). They've been active in high schools, churches and communities, offering leadership training, mentoring, and organised groups to introduce young people to Jesus.

**We now need funding for two of our team members to continue this important work, enabling young people to grow in Christian faith and turn the tide of the mental health crisis and post Covid Trauma into empowering our young people to realise their full potential.**

If you feel able to financially support this crucial work, please either scan the QR code, or email Christiane Cook at  
Christiane.cook@wigandeanerytrust.org



## What the Young People Have to Say

We recently asked the young people that attend the Next Generation activities about the impact of the groups on their lives. Here's what they had to say...

"I love coming to After School Klub because I always have a good time and it has great food! I have lots of fun with my friends and we get to discuss things and have deep conversations"

"Since I have started coming here, I have started to pray and talk to God. I'm not sure if he is listening but I still talk to him"

"I would now identify as a Christian, if anyone asks, that's what I would say"

"Even though I have finished high school, I get to come back and help out, I love it because its always so much fun and I get to meet new people"



## Happy New Year & the 2025 Christmas Wrap-up!

As we begin the new year, we look back on Christmas with deep gratitude for all that God has done across Church Wigan. Over 130 Christmas services and events took place, creating welcoming spaces for worship, reflection, and celebration, while hundreds of food parcels were shared with families and individuals, offering practical care and kindness at a time of need.



Alongside joyful gatherings, memorial and Blue Christmas services provided compassionate spaces for those carrying grief, reminding us that God meets us exactly where we are.

**None of this would have been possible without the faithful service of our church and pantry teams, whose generosity, prayers, and commitment have been a blessing to so many. As we step forward together into 2026, we do so thankful for Christmas just gone and hopeful for the year ahead.**

## Ashton Pantry Café Opening!

At the end of November 2025, the Ashton Pantry Cafe was officially opened by Andy Burnham! Scan the QR code for the full article, written by the Liverpool Diocese!

Turn over to the back page for Pantry & Cafe opening times, to see when you can pay them a visit!



## Sports Chaplaincy Update

Written by Lizzy Cook

'In December, Church Wigan Sports Chaplaincy had the privilege of leading two carol services at the Laithwaite Park training facilities—one during a children's Christmas party and the other for families on a regular training night. On both occasions, two of our sports chaplains shared the true meaning of Christmas: that Jesus is the reason for the season. Alongside the services, we offered free hot chocolates and small seasonal gifts to those present.

Both evenings concluded with a time of prayer, blessing the local community, and it was a wonderful opportunity to truly "spread the gold" at Christmas. One of our chaplains mentioned seeing children smiling and joining in with the carols. On one evening, a family who would usually rush off chose instead to stay and take part, sharing that they felt a sense of peace while listening to the carols and the nativity story.



## A Fond Farewell to the Keeleys

This February, Revd John and his lovely family will be moving to Middlesbrough! They will be very much missed by all who have known them in Wigan and we pray for God's abundant blessing to be with them as they explore God's calling for them as a family in the North East. In reflection, John writes:



*Dear friends,*

*It is with both joy and sadness that we say goodbye to our Church Wigan family. God's call brought us to Wigan over five years ago, and He has faithfully led us through a season that has shaped us deeply.*

*As this chapter ends, we feel God's clear call to begin a new one in Middlesbrough. Wigan will always be part of our story, and you will remain in our hearts and prayers as God's mission continues here. With every blessing,*

- Rev John, Laura & Ted Keeley

## A Warm Wigan Welcome to Revd. Annie Houghton

We are delighted to wish Revd. Annie Houghton a warm Wigan welcome as she joins the Chapelfields Hub team as a curate in the third year of her training. Annie says:

*"I feel truly blessed that God has called me to Church Wigan to complete my curacy. I have received the warmest and most generous of welcomes and look forward to establishing close relationships with my colleagues and the people of Wigan."*



-Revd. Annie Houghton

As well as blessing the wider community, we were encouraged to connect with two believing families who, in turn, encouraged us in our work. It's amazing how God not only uses us to reach out to others but also brings people alongside us to strengthen and encourage us in return.

**As a team, we are deeply thankful for these opportunities God provides, and for the support of those around us who make it possible to shine God's love in Wigan. As we look ahead to the new year, we are excited to see what God has in store next for our team.**

**If you feel encouraged by these stories and would like to get involved in any way, please get in touch at [lizzy.cook@churchwigan.org](mailto:lizzy.cook@churchwigan.org). God bless.'**



/ChurchWiganSportsChaplaincy

**COMING UP IN JAN/FEB!**

**Turn over for a Calendar of events for the months of January & February.**



To scan a QR code, open your phone's camera and point it steadily at the QR code, making sure that it's clearly visible on your screen. A notification or link will appear—tap it to open the content in your browser or app.

# Events

## ACROSS CHURCH WIGAN THIS JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2025

### The Well - Dates & Speakers

 **Sunday 1st February | 7pm - 9pm**  
St Mark's Church, Newtown

#### Coming Up at the Well this February...

The February 'Well' service will be led by the Next Generation team. Come along for a fantastic evening filled with worship and encouraging stories of God at work within the younger generation. It's one that you won't want to miss!

#### Other Dates:

**Sunday 1st March 2026 & Sunday 5th April 2026**



 YouTube

Talks from the Well are available to watch on the Church Wigan YouTube Channel. Scan the QR code, or search 'Church Wigan' on YouTube for more information.

### Lifted Prayer & Worship Night

 **Monday 19th January 2026 | 7:30pm**  
Ashton Pantry, Warrington Road, Ashton, WN4 9PL

An evening of prayer, worship and stories about the ongoing work and impact of the 'Lifted' ministry and Food Pantries.

### Bingo Night

 **Friday 30th January 2026 | Doors Open 6:30pm**  
St Peter's Church, Hindley

£3 Admission (Includes Refreshments)  
Doors open at 6:30pm for a 7pm start.

### The Start Course

 **Tuesdays from 24th Feb - 31st March | 10am - 12pm**  
St. Peter's Church Meeting Room, Hindley

Looking for a simple, engaging way to explore the Christian faith? Then 'Start!' is the perfect place to begin.

If you're interested, please contact Cynthia Taylor on 07539 703023

### CWSC Prayer Morning

 **Saturday 24th January | 9:30am - 11am**  
Laithwaite Park

Come along to Laithwaite Park for an exciting morning of praying for what God's vision is for Church Wigan's Sports Chaplaincy in 2026. All welcome!

### 'Grave Talk'

 **Tuesday 20th January | 10am - 11:30am**  
St Luke's Church, Stubshaw Cross

 **Monday 16th February | 10am - 11:30am**  
Holy Trinity Church, Downall Green

**Grave Talk: Because talking about death and funerals doesn't have to be deadly serious!**

We invite you to come along to chat, listen or simply think about this subject in a safe environment. Come along and enjoy a chat and a cuppa as we talk about something that affects us all! More session dates are available throughout the year!

### Bereavement Groups

You are warmly invited to a safe, supportive bereavement group where you can share, listen, and find comfort with others who understand loss. You don't have to walk your journey of grief alone—come and be supported in a caring, welcoming space.

#### First Tuesday of the Month

**10am - 11.30am**  
St Luke's Church  
Bolton Road  
Stubshaw Cross

#### First Tuesday of the Month

**1.15pm - 2.45pm**  
St Andrew's Church  
Garswood Road  
Garswood

#### First Thursday of the Month

**10.45am - 12pm**  
St Thomas' Church  
Warrington Road  
Ashton-in-Makerfield

#### First Friday of the Month

**1.30pm - 2.30pm**  
St Aidan's Church  
Main Street  
Billinge

### Moving On Course

 **Wednesdays starting 21st January | 7pm - 8:30pm**  
Holy Trinity Church, Downall Green

A down-to-earth 7 week course helping you discover more about Christian discipleship. Each session is around 90 minutes and involves a video and time to time to talk, listen and ask questions.

### 2026 Pantry Opening Times

#### The Pantry @ St. Nathaniel's

**Open** Thursdays | 9am - 12noon

#### The Pantry @ Christ Church, Ince

**Open** Thursdays | 9am - 12noon

#### Tom's Pantry @ St James', Poolstock

**Open** Tuesdays | 9:30am - 11:45am  
Wednesdays | 9:30am - 11:45am  
Saturdays | 11am - 2pm (alongside Faith Cafe)

#### Annie's Pantry @ St Anne's, Beech Hill

**Open** Mondays | 11am - 1pm  
(Welcome Space / Cafe 10:30am - 12:30pm)

#### Ashton Pantry @ St Thomas Church Hall, Ashton

**Pay-as-you-feel Cafe open Mondays 12noon - 1pm**

**Open** Tuesdays | 11am - 12noon  
Thursdays | 2pm - 3pm  
Sundays | 3pm - 4pm

#### JEDS Pop-Up Pantry @ St David's Church Hall, Haigh

**Open** Tuesdays | 5:30pm - 7pm

#### JEDS Pantry @ St Stephen's Church, Haigh

**Open** Tuesdays | 9am - 11am  
(Welcome Space until 12pm)

#### The Pantry @ Holy Trinity, Downall Green

**Open** Fridays | 9am - 10am

#### Aidan's Pantry @ St Aidan's,

**Open** Fridays | 11am - 1pm

#### Pop Up Pantry @ Marsh Green Library

**Open** Wednesdays | 9:30am - 10:30am