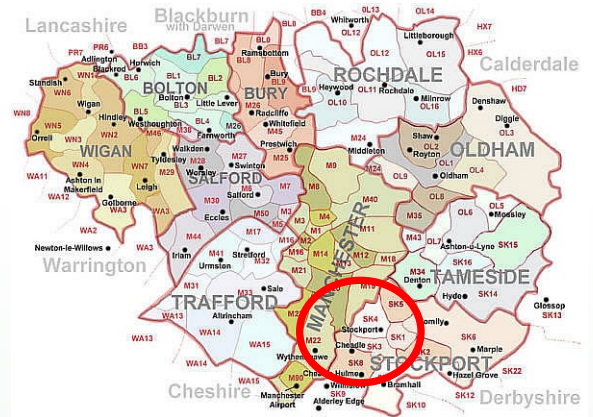


## Chelwood Baptist Church, Stockport

Chelwood Baptist Church serves an urban estate on the western edge of Stockport in Greater Manchester, with a growing congregation and the development of a number of mission and outreach initiatives, including a foodbank, Stockport House of Prayer and Homeless Project, Loaves & Fishes. Chelwood's minister, Rev Steve Hough, picks up the story of one local person, whose life has been dramatically impacted through the work of the church.



"This is Peter - one of many people who have been coming to 'Loaves & Fishes,' our homeless project that we run at St. Mary's in the Marketplace in the centre of Stockport. We meet every Sunday between 6 and 7.30pm to provide a hot meal, drinks and winter clothing for about 25 - 35 people on average. The project started in 2013 when one of our members, Ed Leavy believed that God was calling him to start a ministry with the homeless of Stockport. After being told by the local authority that there are no homeless in Stockport, Ed and the team pitched up in an empty car park in the middle of Stockport and began a simple soup kitchen operation. A few weeks later there was between 20 - 30 homeless people turning up and we realised that we needed to look for somewhere warmer to meet as winter was on the way - we needed to meet inside.



Someone suggested that we approach the local Anglican church St. Mary's as they didn't seem to have an evening service. We met with the Rev Roger Scoones and he welcomed the idea and suggested that myself and Ed spoke at their next PCC meeting.

We did, and were encouraged by the warm response that we received. They opened up their church for us almost immediately - it was perfect. We now have access to toilets, a cafe area and worship music in the background. Relationships have been built between the churches to such an extent that a 24 hour Prayer event was held at St. Mary's on New Year's Eve with churches from all over Stockport gathering to pray for the area.

A few weeks ago, myself and Ed were talking to Peter who was living in a hostel at the time. He was telling us that all he really wanted was his own place to live. He had the possibility of renting an apartment but they would only accept a direct debit for the rent and Peter did not have a bank account. He explained that he'd tried applying to several banks to open an account but they had all turned him down because he had no suitable ID - all he had was his birth certificate and a bus pass. We told him to try the Co-Op bank as they had special funding for cases like his and he said that he had already applied weeks ago but heard nothing. Ed and myself then prayed for him and we asked that the Co-Op bank would allow to open a bank account and that he would be in his new apartment by next Sunday.

The following Sunday when we arrived at St. Mary's we were met by a beaming Peter, dangling a set of keys in our faces - the Co-Op had given him a bank account and he was in his new apartment. He was overjoyed but the best news was that he gave all the credit to God, saying "God really does answer prayers so now I am going to pray for you!" Peter's story is one of several good news stories that we could have shared that make it an absolute blessing for all our volunteers who are involved with these mission projects.

**"Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."**  
**Matthew 25: 40**

### For your thoughts and prayers:

- Could your outreach be more effective by partnering with another church in your local area?
- How could your church respond to the needs of those around you - including housing, food, finance, homelessness?