



# Sharing Our Story...

## Hope Baptist Church, Liverpool

**Mary Hodson has been minister at Hope Baptist Church for a number of years. The church's mission has included a cookery school, which started in 2016. This group has developed through recommendations from 'Safe Families for Children,' a Christian organisation working with families to journey with them through crises. This means the mission is extending wider into the community, as Mary explains:**

"Since last year, our cookery school has grown from meeting once a month to meeting three times a month. We still have the first group who have become more and more ambitious in what they cook, which is amazing. The other groups are harder to work with, but still so rewarding. I never know whether or not any of them will turn up on the day, and some come from dysfunctional homes and have issues that are drug-related. The one-to-one classes have given me amazing opportunities to share my faith. The people involved have opened up to me quite a lot during these special times; one in particular sees me as a mum (she has a very absent mother and no father).

I find that I spend just as much time counselling as I do cooking, and it never ceases to amaze me how willing some of these ladies are to trust me. Cooking, of course, is helping them to gain life skills and I can't underplay this, but through the lessons I am able to come alongside some who are very broken and pastor them.

Beyond this, our keep fit classes are usually small in number during the winter months but during the summer can rise to about 30. We now have a new project that meets monthly and is not led by me but by one of our members. The group is designed to help the disabled and the chronically sick through music, crafts, and prayer. They also have butties and cakes and will go out on trips in the summer.

As a church we are beginning to see younger people coming to worship. We consider these to be the first fruits and as a church we are praying for more opportunities to penetrate the community and to strengthen the work that currently exists. When we consider that three years ago we tried to do Messy Church and got very little response, we are now in a position to rethink. With our current contacts, Messy Church might be viable, but this is has to thought and prayed through. We still have two ladies who regularly go into the local primary school to support children experiencing reading difficulties. All told, for a small church we are doing quite a bit of mission.

### **For your consideration, reflection and prayers:**

What does 'care for the whole person' look like in your church and context? What are the needs in your community? How might your church engage with the local community by working with and alongside other groups?