



The Revd Sue Pegg has served as a minister in the Huddersfield Methodist Circuit, which includes Gledholt Methodist Church, since 2018. Having undertaken postgraduate studies in evangelism, Sue is passionate about church growth and loves to support others in this.



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Tea and Toast volunteer Eric

Evolving outreach boosts attendance

An initiative aimed at helping a struggling community has led to the growth of a Huddersfield church. The Revd Sue Pegg explains how.

"Some of our visitors are in need of more than breakfast, so we do our best to show them that they don't have to face life's struggles on their own," says Eric (83), one of our Tea and Toast volunteers.

Eric, a life-long Methodist, became a regular helper at the Wednesday breakfast drop-in sessions at our church, Gledholt

Methodist, after being widowed in spring 2023 when his wife, Betty, died after a long illness.

Gledholt's Tea and Toast is open to anyone in our community, regardless of their faith, who would like morning refreshments and a chance to socialise – though visitors can just sit quietly if they want to.

Volunteers benefit

Eric and our other volunteers do a marvellous job of providing a warm welcome, making and serving the breakfast and being available to chat. The great thing is that the volunteers benefit from being involved, too.

“It gives me a focus for my week and means that I can feel useful, contributing to the community,” says Eric.

Anyone arriving into the busyness of Tea and Toast for the first time would probably think it’s been like that for ever, but it’s taken a few years of prayer-led evolution to get here.

Five years ago, a few months into my appointment as a minister in the Huddersfield Circuit, I was asked to look after Gledholt church alongside the two village churches I was caring for. Gledholt is an urban church, so this was a first for me, having spent 20 years in rural locations.

Crisis

Sadly, Covid-19 set in before I’d had chance to get to know the Gledholt congregation, and the pandemic lockdowns then led to some church members leaving and the resident playgroup closing.

When we returned to worshipping in our building, the congregation had shrunk from around 35 regulars to 23, with just 3 children. Then the cost of living crisis hit our community.

Several of us began praying about how we could best help our community. Hearing that many people were struggling to afford to eat, we joined the national FareShare network which redirects surplus food from businesses to hungry people via charities including churches.

Also, we decided that, when community members visited our church to collect food, we would offer them a free simple breakfast as part of the national Tea and Toast network.

Breakfast

As time went on, we found that food coming to us via the FareShare scheme was a bit hit and miss, but about 15 people still came regularly for breakfast.

Hoping to give our community outreach a boost, I applied for a few grants and was thrilled when the church was awarded £3,000 to buy food for distribution, along with a further grant to become a registered Warm Welcome space. We were also given boxes of essential items by the local council to distribute to our service users over the winter.



The Revd Sue Pegg chats with visitors

Wednesday morning Tea and Toast with food giveaways, alongside Warm Welcome, became increasingly popular and, as visitor numbers went up, so did attendance at our Sunday services!

Children’s activities

In addition, about a year ago, families newly arrived in the UK from several African countries began to attend our services. Many speak English as a second language and most are Christians, and it’s been a great joy to have since baptised two of their babies. As a church, we’re journeying with the newcomers, supporting them in various practical ways.

The increased numbers of families at services (we now have a congregation of around 50 worshippers!) has led to us restarting some children’s activities including monthly Lego Church sessions. We’re also offering teenagers mini smart screens for them to watch Christian programmes.

Sadly, with many supermarkets now selling food that they previously would have donated, it has become challenging to provide groceries to our community. However, Tea and Toast continues to thrive, and other events including a school uniform giveaway, community police talks and free basic health checks by NHS nurses occasionally run alongside.



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