

Being Church
on the Margins:
page 5



spark

news from Church Action on Poverty
autumn 2024

Neighbourhood Voices
page 10

Just Worship
page 14



Working for change
through the arts,
letters to the Prime
Minister, and more...

Page 8

LET'S END
POVERTY



“Here is liturgical resistance in practice. This is a great book of witness.”

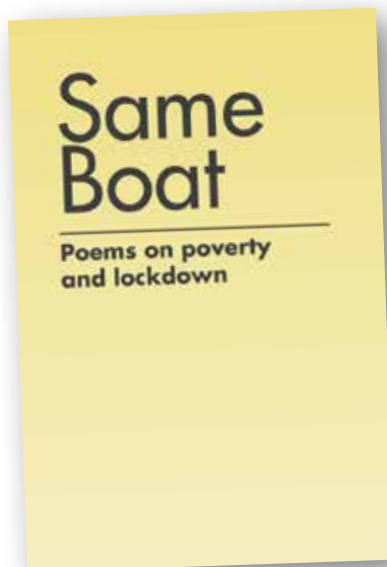
Kathy Galloway,
former Head of
Christian Aid Scotland

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And check out these other great publications from Church Action on Poverty and our partners...

Same Boat

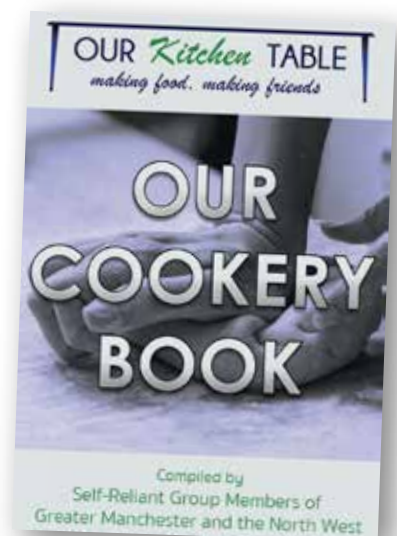
Poems about people's experiences of poverty during the Covid lockdown.

Read some poems and order the book at www.church-poverty.org.uk/sameboat

Our Cookery Book

Members of Self-Reliant Groups in North West England share their favourite recipes, and the stories that make them special.

Order the book at www.church-poverty.org.uk/ourcookerybook



New Government, new hope?



Our Chief Executive **Niall Cooper** is calling on churches to keep up the pressure for an end to unjust benefit policies.

What were your reactions to the election of a new Government in July? Has this sparked a new sense of hope, or a resigned feeling that not much has changed? Poverty certainly wasn't uppermost in the list of topics discussed during the election campaign, and nor does it feature as one of Keir Starmer's five key 'missions' for his new Government.

The new Government have certainly spent most of their first few weeks playing down any expectations that things will dramatically change for the better any time soon. We have been left in no doubt by Rachel Reeves that Government finances are incredibly tough, and there are no 'giveaways' likely in the forthcoming Budget.

Perhaps more encouragingly, one of the first issues where they have come under pressure has been the growing calls to

scrap the so-called Two Child Limit. This means families are not allowed to access support through Universal Credit or Child Tax Credit, for more than two children, if children were born after April 2017. Today, 1.6 million children in 440,000 households are affected, and families are being denied access to up to £3,455 a year.

Churches have always been among the most vocal critics of the policy. The effort is being stepped up now because the new Government has launched a Child Poverty Strategy, and there are hopes that Ministers might heed the growing calls. We hope the policy will be removed in the Budget in October.

What is clear is the continued need for campaigning and sustained pressure. For Church Action on Poverty it is also important that the views and voices of people directly affected are at the forefront of this. The struggle continues!

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give

Take a collection on
**Church Action on
Poverty Sunday**
See back cover

act

Sign our open letter to
**the Chancellor about the
'Two-Child Limit**
See page 3

pray

Read Stef Benstead's new
book **Just Worship**
See page 14

news

Pantry Post

As our network of Local Pantries continues to grow across the UK (see page 6), we hear more and more inspiring stories about Pantry members and what they're doing in their communities. So we've created Pantry Post, a twice-yearly newsletter just for Pantry members, connecting people together and sharing stories of dignity, choice and hope.

If you're involved in a Pantry, share your own member stories by emailing them to info@yourlocalpantry.co.uk



Thank you Pat! 40 years of compassionate action

Pat Devlin, one of Church Action on Poverty's most experienced supporters and activists, stepped down this summer after almost 40 years playing a lead role in our North East group and other anti-poverty work. We talked to Pat and shared her story on our blog. It takes in the Poll Tax, the Pilgrimage Against Poverty, and much more. It's an inspiring read!

Read Pat's story at www.church-poverty.org.uk/thankspat

Dignity For All

In June, Church Action on Poverty worked again in partnership with the Joint Public Issues Team and the Addressing Poverty Through Lived Experience Collective, to put on the second 'Dignity for All' conference.

As in 2023, the conference was well attended, and inspiring for everyone who took part. It's a unique space that brings together a range of people from across the movement – church-based activists, people with lived experience of poverty who are working for change, people running anti-poverty projects, and people using the arts and creativity. It was great to see people learning from one another and building new connections - all linked this year to the Let's End Poverty campaign.

Look out for details of Dignity for All or similar events in 2025!



Call for an end to the unjust two-child limit

Ahead of the autumn Budget, Church Action on Poverty is inviting church leaders to sign an open letter to the Chancellor, urging her to abolish the unjust two-child limit on benefit payments, which drives thousands of families into poverty.

Find out more and add your name at www.church-poverty.org.uk/siblinginjustice

events

Church Action on Poverty online gathering, including Annual General Meeting for 2024 20 November 2024, 7pm Online

Hear what we and the wider movement to tackle poverty have achieved this year, and our vision for the year ahead. We'll also elect new members to our Council of Management.

Find out more and book your place at <https://caopagm2024.eventbrite.co.uk>

Arts events

LET'S END POVERTY

The Dreams & Realities art exhibition (see page 9) completes its tour of the UK this autumn. It will be coming to

Manchester, Halifax, Portsmouth and Sheffield.

Find out more at letsendpoverty.co.uk/dreams-and-realities-2

Launch of Pantry social impact report

Hear how Pantries have been creating dignity, choice and hope this year: join us online.

More details at www.yourlocalpantry.co.uk



yourlocalpantry.co.uk



Challenge Poverty Week England and Wales 14–20 October

An opportunity to... celebrate what we're doing to tackle

poverty in our communities; share our visions of a world without poverty; and challenge politicians to play their part too. Can your church or project take part?

Visit challengepoverty.co.uk to find out more, get resources, and register your event

Church on the margins

A church with people at the margins



The United Reformed Church's North West Synod is adopting a new anti-poverty strategy inspired by our Church at the Margins programme – and urging the wider church to do likewise. The Synod's Transformation Director **Mike Hart** explains.

“What does a Church with People at the Margins look like?” is a question that the North Western Synod of the United Reformed Church has wrestled with as we sought to respond to the growing issues of economic deprivation and marginalisation in many communities local to our churches.

From statistics produced by the Church Urban Fund, we were able to think about the depth, extent, and variety of the roots of poverty in North West England. Over a third of our churches serve in communities ranked in the 10% most deprived in England. They range from rural Cumbria to housing estates in South Manchester, from the Irish Sea coast to the mill towns of Lancashire, and remain a presence in many of our town and city centres.

We drew inspiration from the biblical calls of the prophets for peace and justice, and were reminded that all people are created in the image of God. The Gospel stories taught us again of the way in which Jesus actively sought out those who were marginalised by the society of his time. We took direction from the Marks of Mission's call to service through tending those in need, and to transform unjust structures.

Finally, the work of Church Action on Poverty enabled us to reflect on the value of building dignity, agency, and power with all people in creating an inclusive community, and the importance of making space to listen to people who are too often excluded from society. The word 'with' in the strategy is deliberate, and a reminder that too often as churches we have offered support *for* or *to*

people and communities, without understanding their hopes and aspirations and standing *with* them.

A real difference will only happen through the ways in which local churches engage with their communities, and so key to the strategy is a set of behaviours which we want to encourage churches to adopt. Behaviours which are about their generosity of spirit and resources, their inclusivity of all people in their community, and their willingness to go beyond compassion to seek structural change. Behaviours that are important in all aspects of our mission and ministry.

As a Synod we have committed to supporting and enabling churches to respond, and to prioritise the use of our resources for this work, particularly where it is rooted in the most economically disadvantaged communities in our region. Being church in marginalised communities is not easy, and we will achieve more if we can work collaboratively with others, both faith and secular, who share our objectives.

In a mixture of generosity and challenge, we offer the work we have done to create this strategy to churches and faith organisations beyond our Synod. Our challenge is about how they prioritise and respond in the communities they serve. Our invitation is for them to journey with us, to learn from each other in mission and ministry about how we can all be better at being Church with People at the Margins.

The North West Synod adopted the 'A Church with People at the Margins' strategy in March 2024. They offered the strategy to the wider United Reformed Church through a resolution at General Assembly in early July.



Read more about the new 'A Church with People at the Margins' strategy at nwsynod.org.uk/a-church-with-people-at-the-margins

Read about our own 'Church on the Margins' programme at www.church-poverty.org.uk/cotm

Not just a **shop**

One of Church Action on Poverty's new partners is the brilliant Community One Stop Shop (COSS), who run a Local Pantry in Broomhouse, a low-income community in South West Edinburgh. Pantry Coordinator **Lee Reynolds** tells us more about it.



Support your Local Pantry!
Read more about Pantries and their communities at www.yourlocalpantry.co.uk
Become a **Pantry Friend** by making a donation to your nearest Pantry at www.yourlocalpantry.co.uk/friends

COSS was established over 20 years ago as an advice shop, but now runs 13 services including a food bank, a baby bank, a soup kitchen, an employability service and the Local Pantry, as well as distributing fuel vouchers.

Thanks to the cost-of-living crisis, we saw a massive spike in the usage of the food bank. We had clients, many working full-time, who desperately wanted to support themselves and their families, but the high prices of basic foods made this impossible for them. We launched the Broomhouse Pantry in 2021 to support these clients.

Our members

We currently have 110 members, and most tell us that their health has improved as a result of cooking more meals from scratch with food they've bought at the Pantry. A member recently told me:

"After I had heart surgery I couldn't get to the supermarket. The cost of shopping at the local store was too high, so being able to get affordable fresh food locally has been really beneficial. It speeded up my recovery and helped me get my independence back."

Since the premises are small, we only have the capacity to serve one client at a time. Our volunteers will chat to them and usually hear a bit more about what's going on in their lives. For many, this is one of the few opportunities they get to speak to another person, and a chance to get emotional support for things they might be going through. One Pantry regular told me:

"I lost my husband just before the Covid pandemic, so using the Pantry has given me the chance to get out and speak to people".

We have seen more and more people using the Pantry, not just as a shop to buy their groceries but as a place to chat to the team and to meet other people.

To build on this, we started hosting events for members: family days out during the school summer holiday, an afternoon tea every Christmas, and regular pop-up community cafés.



Dignity

Last year, thanks to a generous donation by a local business, the Pantry was fitted out with new shelving units. For the first time, members using mobility scooters and those with children in prams and buggies could come right into the shop to see the selection of goods for themselves, rather than have to ask the server for the items they needed.

Shopping with dignity is something most people take for granted, but for those who don't have the choice of where they go to buy their groceries, making the surroundings as user-friendly as possible has a huge impact on wellbeing.

Future plans

We launched a steering group for the Pantry this year, which was an opportunity for members to let us know what they like about the service, as well as offer suggestions for how things could be improved. It's important to be in touch with our members so that what we are offering them is what they actually want.

And of course we are always looking at ways to build community amongst our members. We are hoping to host even more events, and to make sure the everyone feels able and welcome to come along and get to know more people in the area they live in.



A charter for dignity

Attendees at this summer's Dignity For All conference heard about a fascinating and promising new piece of work, aimed at making food provision as dignified as possible.

The Alliance For Dignified Food Support is a coalition of community food organisations and food partnerships, academics and activists, working towards a shared aim. Church Action on Poverty and Your Local Pantry are among the partners.

The alliance aims to support organisations to make their food practices as dignified as possible, while also championing other anti-poverty strategies including support for a living income through social security payments, increased wages and a cash-first approach.

The work has grown from the first-hand experience of food providers, including our own Pantry partners.

There are four core principles, which we believe will help any food provider to maximise dignity within their work. Food providers should be:

- **Welcoming** – providing an inclusive and welcoming space; minimising barriers to access; providing spaces to share food.
- **Transparent** – offering clarity about what people providing and receiving support can expect; providing information about the community food project, how it works and why.
- **Person-centred** – ensuring that interactions are respectful and compassionate; including appropriate safeguarding culture and practices; where possible, offering a choice of food (or the provision of vouchers and hardship grants).
- **Empowering** – offering opportunities for staff, volunteers and members to share their views, so that people with direct and relevant experience contribute and are involved in decision-making; creating opportunities for members to contribute in a range of ways (money, time, skills, etc.)

On the alliance website, each principle is illustrated by a range of evidence-based suggestions for how these might be implemented in practice. The recognition of the importance of dignity is vital, and should be central to any community food work, and Church Action on Poverty is committed to working with Pantries and other organisations to share the learning.

ALLIANCE FOR
DIGNIFIED 
FOOD SUPPORT

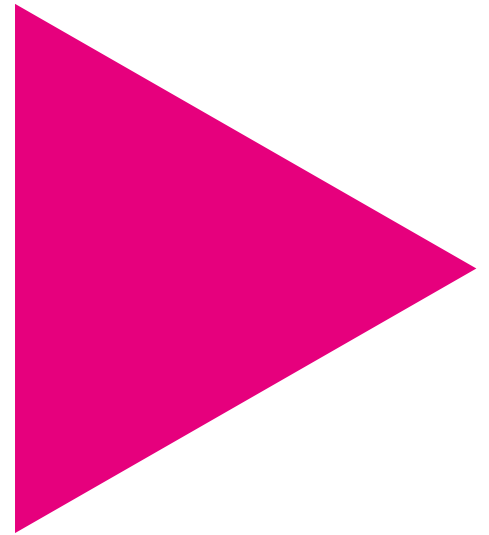
Find out more at
alliancefordignifiedfoodsupport.org.uk

“Dignity is essential for good human relations, individual self worth and wellbeing”

Church Action on Poverty's Learning, Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator Jane Perry led a discussion about the Alliance and its aims at the Dignity for All conference in June.



LET'S END POVERTY



Whilst the snap election may have caught a lot of us off guard, it didn't stop thousands of people around the country doing their bit to get poverty on the agenda in a range of different ways, through the Let's End Poverty campaign.

Over 330 people signed our pledge to demand action to end poverty at this election. 7,444 email conversations were started with candidates standing at the election, reaching over 80% of constituencies. Over 50 Let's End Poverty banners have been put up outside churches. Supporters put on community events, meetups and workshops across the country and much, much more.

Now, the focus shifts to the new Government. Here are some ways you can take action!



Dear Prime Minister

Now the dust has settled following the General Election, the Government's position on poverty appears to be the promise of reviews and taskforces rather than immediate action. If the Government is going to design solutions that genuinely make a difference, it's vital that they have at their disposal the expertise that only people with actual lived experience of poverty possess.

This is why Let's End Poverty's next campaign, Dear Prime Minister, is focused on getting people with lived experience of poverty included in the decision-making process. We're launching a publication this month containing 15 letters amplifying the expertise and experience of people experiencing poverty. We plan on then inviting the contributors to a meeting in Westminster with MPs during Challenge Poverty Week to discuss the issues they face and demonstrate the necessary value that lived expertise is able to provide on the issue of UK poverty.

Alongside this we are asking you to write postcards along with your church or local community group to the new Prime Minister, explaining why listening to people with experience of poverty is important to you. You can order postcards via the Let's End Poverty website, and find out more by signing up to the email list and coming to the monthly Action Gatherings.

Sign up now at www.letsendpoverty.co.uk

Get your church involved

Let's End Poverty is preparing a set of worship materials for churches to use during Challenge Poverty Week, on 15 October.

Visit www.church-poverty.org.uk/cpw to find out more and download your copy.

Manchester band Duvet were one of several bands and artists performing at our 'Artists for Change' launch event

Artists for Change

Art has a unique power to challenge the status quo, and bring people together. It has the potential to be a powerful tool in our mission to end UK poverty. That's why Church Action on Poverty has been supporting artists, groups and Local Pantries to deliver creative projects through Artists for Change and our YLP Creative Fund.

Since our Artists for Change launch event in Manchester this April (pictured), we've helped to support murals, exhibitions, workshops, choirs and theatre performances across the country. As well as helping people to engage with poverty in creative and thought-provoking ways, it's allowing people who are struggling with poverty an outlet to be creative and express themselves on their own terms.

If you're interested in becoming an Artist for Change, make an enquiry at letsendpoverty.co.uk/artists



**LET'S END
POVERTY** ▶

Dreams and Realities

Stephen Martin's Dreams and Realities portrait exhibition, depicting the stories of nine members of a Sheffield community choir with experience of poverty, has been moving audiences up and down the country. Since the last issue, the exhibition has visited Newcastle, Stoke on Trent, York, Camden and Leeds. Alongside the tour we've hosted community-focused events which have featured passionate speeches and panel conversations by people on the frontline of poverty, moving poetry, musical performances and amazing community choirs.

September marks the start of the tour's second leg which will see the portraits travel to Halifax, Manchester and Portsmouth before coming home to Sheffield. We have also launched an online tool for church and community groups to order print copies of the paintings, as well as a workshop to go alongside them for anyone that has missed out on seeing the exhibition.

Go to letsendpoverty.co.uk/dreams-and-realities-resources/ for more information.



Neighbourhood VOICES

The UK needs to get serious about ending poverty. And to do that, we need to have meaningful conversations including a wide range of voices. Ahead of the General Election, grassroots organisations supporting the Let's End Poverty campaign did just that, by hosting Neighbourhood Voices conversations. Overall, more than 40 people have taken part.

Conversations were held in Sheffield, Halifax, Stoke, Epsom, London and Wythenshawe. We've heard about poverty, racism, health crises, dwindling opportunities for young people, food insecurity, hard-to-reach politicians, the failing benefit system, social services and much more. We've also heard incredible stories of community ingenuity, love and kindness, and the power of art and creativity. We joined the conversations, and here's a sample of what we heard:

"Mums On A Mission [in Halifax] has that way that grassroots groups do, of saying: 'we will find a way and see what can work'. There's not enough housing here and there's not enough support. At least if you've got a group like Mums On A Mission or Light Up, you can process what's going on."

Viv in Halifax

"A lot of people don't talk about poverty, but it's real, due to high costs of living. A lot of people are in crisis. A lot of people are out of pocket on energy pre-payment meters, and don't know they can change it. There's a lot of poverty among Black people, among BAME or global majority communities."

John in Halifax

"Wythenshawe gets a bad rep from people who do not know it, but there's community here. We care about each other. We might never have met but we care about what happens to each other... We need things here for the kids to do. There's no upward mobility for the children. They come out of school and are stuck doing low-paid working-class jobs, unless they can play football or act."

"Children need to be able to have dreams that are achievable, but the idea of upward mobility has been taken away from us. I was doing a Masters in English contemporary literature and film, then during the pandemic my mental health suffered and there was no support or aftercare. It all comes down to funding. Austerity has not done anything, except make people poorer, poorer and unhappier."

Cat in Wythenshawe

"We are lucky here. It's a nice place to live, but I think some people in the Pantry feel excluded from that, because they are not in a nice situation financially, or they're struggling for housing. I think sometimes, because it's quite a wealthy area, people can feel even more excluded than if they were living in London or somewhere else where there are lots of people struggling. When the food bank first opened, people could not believe it – a food bank in Surrey! – and more than 10 years on, it's been normalised."

Jane in Epsom

"I want them to tell a more hopeful story of Stoke. Hope is the one thing, the most important thing people need. It's easier for me, because I see it with a different lens. When I sit with young people, it's difficult for them to see that there is hope but they do not need to be pulled down by negative narratives. Spread more hope."

Nnaeto in Stoke

"I have been coming here for 12 years. I like coming here because I know people, and everyone is all right with you here, and you can have a chat and a drink and a bite to eat... "Parson Cross needs a youth club for young people to go to. When I was younger, we had youth clubs, and when you left school if you didn't have a job there were youth training schemes (YTS), and they were fantastic. They ought to bring things like that back."

Bryan in Sheffield





Unlocking the **power** of **unheard voices**



Our Media and Storytelling Coordinator **Gavin Aitchison** explains how your support has helped us take part in an exciting new media collaboration project.

Five people with experience of complex poverty have been speaking up to press for change, as part of a storytelling collaboration in York.

Church Action on Poverty worked with the independent media outlet YorkMix and a local group called Lived Insights, to help tell complicated stories effectively. Participants all had experience of issues such as poverty, anxiety, food insecurity, homelessness, drug use, or the criminal justice system. They spent several months exploring and sharing their experiences, and then the stories were published online over this summer, in a series called Unheard York.

One participant, Charlotte (see opposite), was made homeless when her landlord chose to sell the house she rented. She told of what she had learned navigating York's homeless system, and suggested changes.

Anne told about the links between poverty, addiction and her deteriorating mental health. She told of the positive impact that compassionate support staff can have, but also told of the rigid and gruelling process of applying for social security support.

John and Dave told of the need for wider options for people who have been homeless, and of how accessing thorough NHS support can help mental health.

And Tammy told of the harm caused to teenagers by drug dealers, and the problems that spiral from

there. Tammy told of the years-long wait for the diagnosis that finally opened the door to support.

After the stories, Lived Insights (which has joined Church Action on Poverty's 'Speaking Truth To Power' programme) secured meetings with the city council. One issue raised was the absence of a feedback system, for people who had been through homeless services.

Miles and Astrid (pictured) led the work for Lived Insights. Miles said: "It's been a great collaborative project bringing together experiences of people into a powerful series which asks the public and change-makers to consider reframing how they view circumstances they might have previously judged people on."

The work was prompted by a 2020 report, called *Telling A Different Story*, which noted that the media often over-simplify stories, and struggle to convey the complexity of personal disadvantages. It said the voices of people experiencing multiple disadvantages were often missing, and called for collaboration between the media, charities, and people with personal experience.

The report was challenging but inspiring, and it's been an uplifting few months, working with people to hear powerful, insightful new stories. It's encouraging also that politicians are listening. It shows what can happen when groups work together.

Read all the stories at www.church-poverty.org.uk/unheardyork

Miles and Astrid led the project for our partner Lived Insights

It's been a great

collaborative project

bringing together

experiences of people



Unheard York: Charlotte's story

A year ago, Charlotte was served with an eviction notice from her private landlord. She and her family had been living in the house for 10 years, paying £695 a month at first, and then £850 a month. This is very low for York, because the property was not in a great state, but then her landlord told Charlotte he wanted to sell the house.

Similarly-sized private rental properties nearby would cost £1,300 to £1,500 a month, more than Charlotte could possibly afford.

Her landlord was amicable and quite patient, but he didn't back down. Last October, Charlotte and her family moved into James House, a converted office block which is now temporary housing flats for families forced into homelessness.

So began the most difficult and stressful episode of Charlotte's life.

Charlotte has come through it, but along the way she gained insights and wisdom that highlight and humanise where the system could be improved. She wanted to be heard, so other families might be spared what she had to go through.



Extract from Charlotte's story

“This is the hardest process I've ever had to go through, and it's so hard because I'm not the one managing it. I'm being pushed and pulled by a system. If you don't pester, then you are just another number on paper...

“There are not enough houses in York for families. When you're on the waiting list, there isn't enough social housing to bid on. In York, some houses have been converted to Airbnbs or for student lets as well. There's just not enough social housing.

“When I spoke to other people, a lot of them were saying the same as me: the council hadn't been clear with them how long it would take, and people felt there was no compassion. These people are often going through the worst times of their lives, and it should not be like this for them.

“Being able to meet someone face to face would have made a big difference. You could speak to someone there and then and ask your questions.

“I'm saying all this because I want it to be easier for other people who are going through it. We had some support but not everyone does. I feel more compassionate and empathetic now that I have been through this and having spoken to other people who have been through it. I was compassionate before but I understand it more now.”

Charlotte's recommendations, at a glance:

- Within the temporary accommodation block, Charlotte calls for more recognition and support of the emotional struggle that homelessness brings, and for some form of communal space.
- Within the council, Charlotte feels strongly there should be face to face interaction, and more clarity about what lies in store when for people becoming homeless.
- And, above all that, Charlotte and Lived Insights reiterate that York needs more affordable housing, particularly with many homes being lost to Airbnb and student let accommodation.

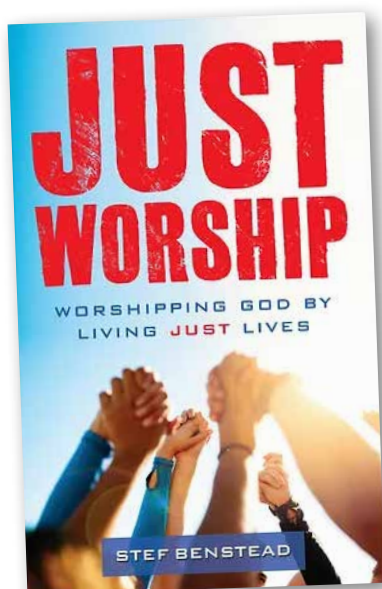
Principles we worked to

- Every story should primarily be told by the person with first-hand experience of the issue, ideally in the first person.
- Every story should include a look at solutions, showing how things could be done differently. Let's show that change is possible.
- Every story should include some wider context. The storytellers are not isolated examples, but evidence of flawed systems.
- Stories should reflect the real complexity of people's lives. Where there are multiple issues, we shouldn't reduce these for ease of narrative.

Just Worship



Anti-poverty activist **Stef Benstead's** new book *Just Worship* has been described by Greg Smith of the Templeton Foundation as “a book which brings together the radical teaching of the Bible with the reality of life in unequal Britain today”.



Just Worship is available to order online at www.church-poverty.org.uk/just-worship. Read Stef's 'Stories that challenge' – a powerful series of true stories that show the reality of poverty behind common stereotypes – on our blog at www.church-poverty.org.uk/tag/stories-that-challenge

Christianity as a worldview has a lot to say to and about politics. Christianity says that, in the interests of justice and generosity, we should all be on the side of the poor and oppressed against the rich and oppressive. But Christianity also says that the poor and the oppressed are equally capable of sin and of oppressing others; poor people are not good by virtue of being poor. As Aleksander Solzhenitsyn says in *The Gulag Archipelago 1918–1956*, “The line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either – but right through every human heart – and through all human hearts.” If he is correct, then this has political implications that cannot be avoided by such simplistic tropes as ‘religion has no place in politics’.

For Christians, the principles and virtues that God laid down in the Bible are to inform not just how Christians live, but how all people live. When God judges people at the end of this age, he will judge us for the failure to live up to his principles as he revealed them to us, regardless of whether we acknowledge him as Lord or not. That is part of what sin is: the failure to obey God; the decision to disobey him; the harm and injustice caused by our greed and oppression of others contrary to God's law. The books of the prophets declare God's anger and judgment against pagan nations for their oppression and injustice. God demands just politics; just processes; just people.

“Lives of justice and generosity are a part of our worship to God”

Indeed, I think that politics is so important to God that worship is not just incomplete but becomes a stench to him without the political virtues of justice and generosity. Lives of justice and generosity are a part of our worship to God, without which the rest of our worship – the formulaic, ritualistic aspects of singing, prayer, Bible reading, and corporate gathering – are just superstitious cults that become blasphemous.

One of the questions I seek to answer in this book is: how did the laws that God gave the Israelites lead to human flourishing and salvation, and how do we apply the same underpinning principles to achieve the same goals today, in our context? In particular, I am writing in the context of the UK, which has (albeit in increasingly denuded form since the 1980s, and in particular since 2010) a welfare state, and a basic appreciation of the role of government in caring for all UK citizens. But it is one thing to understand what God told the Israelites several thousand years ago. It is another to then determine what that means for how we should live today; what are the practical implications for us? When she's not asleep, Stef Benstead is an independent researcher in disability and welfare. Chronic illness means that her capacity for activity is limited, and she is dependent on social security for her main income. She is an evangelical Christian committed to working for justice for people in poverty in the UK. She is a former trustee of Church Action on Poverty and a member of Manchester Poverty Truth Commission. She is currently studying for a Master's in Theology, Community Development and Social Change at the Nazarene Theological College.

This is Stef's second published book. Her first was *Second Class Citizens: The treatment of disabled people in austerity Britain*.



Act on poverty

Would you like to help your church gain a deeper understanding of poverty, in the UK and globally – and equip members to do something about it?

Act On Poverty, produced by us jointly with Christian Aid, the Joint Public Issues Team, and other partners, is a great place to start. Why not use these free materials to run a workshop in your church during Challenge Poverty Week (14–20 October)?

The materials feature the voices of people struggling against poverty both here and in the global South. They'll help your church to plan action to end poverty, in the UK and globally.

Hundreds of churches used the full *Act On Poverty* programme during Lent this year, and were inspired to take action through Let's End Poverty and other campaigns. We've now produced a shorter version that you can run as a two-hour workshop. It includes handouts, slides, video and audio clips, and everything you need to equip and inspire people.

Act On Poverty now! Download the workshop at www.church-poverty.org.uk/actonpoverty

Act on Poverty
A Short Course for Churches & Groups
2 hours + a break

Reflect Speak up Take action

Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 mins)
God of justice and compassion, you are present with us. Help us to listen to one another with care. Give us open minds and hearts, ready to learn and be challenged. Inspire in us hope for change. Fill us with energy and determination. That we may act for the good of our neighbours. Amen.

Talking Poverty, Talking Politics (10 mins)
Poverty and politics aren't easy subjects to discuss. We each bring different views and life experiences to our conversations.

Listen to Methodist Vice President (2023-24) Deacon Kerry Scarlett talk about her family's experience of poverty.
Kerry encourages us to be mindful of the assumptions we make about other people. It is important to avoid stereotypes about poverty and those it affects. Political discussions can be divisive but Christianity has a lot to say about how we should do politics – and what our priorities should be. Jesus taught about the issues and everyday choices facing ordinary people and those in power. He wasn't afraid to confront unjust power structures that were harming the very people they were supposed to nurture and protect.

Take a moment to agree some simple...
• We will listen to each other – no...
• We will strive to disagree well, sh... without judgement or hostility.
• We will keep confidential any per...

Ashleigh May, Mums on a Mission - Halifax, UK

“Poverty is something that if we work collectively together, it can be erased.”

Bryer Mlowoka Evangelical Association of Malawi - Lilongwe, Malawi

“Where there's injustice, the church needs to speak.”

Act on poverty

THERE'S ENOUGH RESOURCES ON THIS EARTH, ALSO IN THIS COUNTRY, TO BE ABLE TO SAY NO CHILD OR NO FAMILY SHOULD BE LIVING IN POVERTY, THAT'S WHAT I BELIEVE.

Ashleigh May, Church Action on Poverty

What does it take to be a prophet?

What qualities does a prophet need?

Can you think of any examples of modern day prophets?

CHALLENGE POVERTY WEEK ENGLAND & WALES

LET'S END POVERTY!

14–20 October 2024

Celebrate what is already happening to challenge poverty and share good practices

Share our dreams of what a better, more just future looks like

Challenge our political leaders to act on poverty

Sign up now at www.challengepoverty.co.uk

