

DREAMS & REALITIES



Church Action
on Poverty
Sunday

2 March 2025
Worship and
fundraising pack

What are the realities facing your community?

What are your dreams for a world free from poverty?

On Church Action on Poverty Sunday, give, act and pray with others to help build a movement to end UK poverty – inspired by the powerful ‘Dreams and Realities’ art exhibition.

‘Dreams and Realities’ is a set of nine portraits by Sheffield artist Stephen Martin. Each portrays a person, along with objects or backgrounds representing the reality they face living in poverty – and the dreams they would pursue if they weren’t being held back.

The exhibition has toured the UK through 2024 in support of the ‘Let’s End Poverty’ campaign. Now you can use the pictures to spark reflection and action in your church.

- **Use the worship materials from page 7 to reflect and pray for change.**
- **During the service, share the Dreams and Realities portraits (available as prints or digital slides) to inspire people to reflect on their own dreams for a better world – with prayers and suggestions for all-age creative activities.**
- **Raise funds to support people working together to reclaim dignity, agency and power across the UK.**

What to do

In your church service on Church Action on Poverty Sunday, 2 March 2025:

- Use our **worship** materials to help the congregation reflect on their own dreams and realities.
- Use a **talk or sermon** to explore the concepts.
- Make space in your service to allow the congregation to engage with the 'Dreams and Realities' portraits (see page 4).
- Ask your congregation to **donate** to Church Action on Poverty, to enable more people to build dignity, agency and power together.

Online worship

We've adapted the materials and ideas for Church Action on Poverty Sunday so that they can also be used for hybrid or online worship:

- Several videos are available for you to stream or download from www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday, and use as part of your service.
- The prayers and hymns are available as slides at www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday/extras, so you can share them in online worship.
- We've made it easy to donate online or by text, so people don't have to use cash.

Other types of event

If you would prefer to mark Church Action on Poverty Sunday outside of a church service, that's great too. Why not use the prayers (and perhaps our 'Scripture from the Margins' Bible studies, available from www.church-poverty.org.uk/bible) in a **house group**? Or hold a **'Zoom and Hymns'** online singing evening and invite people to make an online donation at the end?

Dreams and Realities

Download or order the 'Dreams and Realities' paintings and stories at www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday/paintings. Display them in church on Church Action on Poverty Sunday – either by hanging them from the walls or by projecting them digitally.

The exhibition tells stories of people from St Mary's Bramall Lane Family Choir in Sheffield. Each person here lives with strength and dignity whilst facing the challenges of life on the frontline of poverty. Each person is a creative soul, hard-working, with skills to share and a dream. Their economic circumstances have not yet allowed them to realise their dreams. Each person has a reality that they live with as part of life on a low income.

Both the dreams and the realities are depicted in the portraits, painted by Stephen Martin. The portrait project was funded by Church Action on Poverty as part of the Let's End Poverty campaign (www.letsendpoverty.co.uk), and the portraits toured the UK during 2024.

The stories on these pages are shortened – see the downloadable slides for fuller versions.



Stephen

Stephen painted all the 'Dreams and Realities' portraits, including his own. Stephen's dream is to safeguard his own mental health long-term. He keeps a journal of positive events in his life as they occur and this book is shown in his portrait. Stephen's reality is that he could not afford to rewire the family home where he lived while doing the paintings. With no gas or electricity, his house was dark from sunset.



Michelle

Michelle has a vision to set up a charity reaching out to women stuck in cycles of homelessness, addiction, prostitution and prison, drawing on her own experience and insights as a recovering addict. Michelle's dream is to be a motivational speaker to other survivors, using a camper van to take her and her dog to events across the UK. Living on the frontline of poverty means Michelle cannot afford the fresh fruit she needs.



Rebecca

Rebecca is a secondary school student and gifted young musician. She and her family are political refugees from Myanmar (formerly Burma). Rebecca's dream is to have piano lessons. Her reality is that her family "live from paycheque to paycheque with just enough to buy food and pay bills." They cannot travel to see relatives in Myanmar.



Susan

Susan is a craftsperson and a carer for her husband who lives with angina and type two diabetes. She is out of work due to ill health and her caring responsibilities.

Susan's dream is to be able to visit her daughter who lives in Hawick, Scotland. Susan's reality is that she cannot afford to pay her bills, let alone the fare to Scotland.



Glen

Glen is a professional jazz guitarist and community musician. His dream, as a passionate music-maker, is to perform at a New York City jazz club. His reality is that he has lived with a broken window for six months due to poor mental health and substance abuse issues. Supported by friends, he has been sober since September 2023.



Sandra

By the age of 14, Sandra had lived in four countries as a refugee from unrest in Democratic Republic of Congo. Sandra's dream is to have a small healthcare centre that provides treatment and educates pregnant girls or women in rural areas of her birth country. Sandra's reality of life on a low income is that she can't afford the bus fares to college and often has to walk long distances.



Liudmyla

Liudmyla is a refugee in the UK from the war in Ukraine, housed under the programme 'Home for Ukraine'. She and her teenage son "now live in a wonderful family. We're safe." Liudmyla is a qualified teacher. Her dream is to attend university in England and gain her UK teaching qualifications. Her reality is that she cannot predict and plan for the future.



Wayne

Wayne does voluntary work. "His dream is to facilitate sustainable business ideas, using the profits to empower others to overcome issues such as racial injustice, homelessness and "encountering a system that often works for the few". Presently, Wayne's reality is that he is homeless. He has no salary income, and claims no benefits.



Damian

Damian is an artist who captures energetic, everyday scenes using pen and paper. Damian has been involved in the community activities at St Mary's Church and Centre since 2018. Damian's dream of provision is represented by a golden St Mary's. His reality of living on the frontline of poverty is that he is often scraping the bottom of the barrel, down to his last penny before he has paid for all his needs.

How to give



Donations from churches are vital to our work, really enabling people to exercise dignity, agency and power. Please use your event to encourage people to make a donation to Church Action on Poverty.

Physical collections (cash or cheques)

- If you're taking a physical collection at your service or event, please give out our **donation envelopes** so that members of the congregation can make a Gift Aid declaration with their donation if they wish. You should have received some envelopes in your resource pack – just call 0161 872 9294 if you need more.
- After your event, you can donate the proceeds of your event by card or PayPal at www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday/give. Or make out a cheque for the full amount from your collection, payable to Church Action on Poverty, and send it to:
Freeport RTTY–JGEE–JJEZ, Church Action on Poverty, 28 Sandpiper Court, Water's Edge Business Park, Modwen Road, Salford M5 3EZ.
 Please **include a note saying that this is a Church Action on Poverty Sunday collection**, and where it was taken. Be sure to **include any signed Gift Aid declarations** along with your cheque.



Online donations

- Make sure the congregation receive our **prayer cards**. The cards include the Church Action on Poverty Sunday prayer, and a code and web address they can use to make an instant online donation. You should have received some prayer cards with this resource pack – just call 0161 872 9294 if you need more.
- Our **worship slides** include codes and links for people to make an online donation – just display them on a screen in church, or as part of your virtual worship. They're available to download at www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday/extras

Making a commitment as a church

Some churches prefer to make a **monthly donation** rather than taking a collection – or make donations to **nominated charities** at the end of each year. If this suits your church better, please ask your leaders to consider giving to Church Action on Poverty in this way. You can find more guidance at www.church-poverty.org.uk/donorchurch

Coffee

If your church serves tea or coffee after the service, why not buy some Church Action on Poverty fairtrade coffee? Every bag raises funds to help people speak truth to power. You can order yours at www.church-poverty.org.uk/give

Worship

Use this collection of prayers, hymns, Bible readings and creative activities to reflect on stories from scripture about dreams and visions – and to explore your own dreams and realities.

These materials are presented in the format of a traditional liturgical service. If you follow a less structured approach in your church, feel free to select whichever materials will work best in your worship. Please try to let your worship be led by authentic voices of lived experience, and do include a call to take action.

Remember that all of these materials are available as slides to use in online worship too – download them at www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday/extras

Gather: a prayer for Church Action on Poverty Sunday

God of grace,
 you speak to us in dreams of hope and encouragement.
 In Jesus you created communities of acceptance and healing,
 where all might flourish.
 May your Spirit urge us to turn the dreams you still send
 into the reality of a new world
 where everyone can fulfil the gifts of their life.
 For Jesus Christ's sake.

Nick Jowett



Listen: stories and paintings

Make the Dreams and Realities paintings (see page 4), and the background and biographies of the artist and subjects of the paintings, available for the congregation to see. You could display prints on the wall or run a slideshow of the digital images and text.

You could also play our video clip of an interview with the artist Stephen Martin.

Allow the congregation some quiet time to look at the paintings, read the stories, and reflect on the dreams and realities shared by the people in them.

(Visit www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday/paintings to download the slideshow or order printed copies, and to view the video interview.)



Confess: prayers of confession

A confession

God of mercy, we confess to you that our society lives by an untruth that sounds like encouragement and hope, yet is not.

It is the lie that freedom and opportunity are really within everyone's reach.

But in a world of inequality,

where the poor do not have the means for healthy food, where their health services are stretched beyond the limit,

where their schools struggle for resources,

where their libraries and swimming pools have closed

and where there are no youth centres or parks,

in such a world the idea that any poor person could,

with a little personal effort,

easily rise to success and self-fulfilment – this is the lie.

Forgive us when we fall back on this untruth.

For we remember that Jesus so often gave a gift before making the challenge to change.

Help us to will the resources for the well-being of every person, so that all may truly gain the potential for fullness of life.

We pray in Jesus' name.

Nick Jowett

Kyrie confession

In a society where the wellbeing of many is sacrificed for quick profit for the few
Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

In a country of conveniences and luxuries where many of our children are hungry
Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

In a time when our worth is measured by wealth not the richness of the dreams in our hearts
Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Marie Pattison

Share the word: scripture readings

If you can, please include these key Bible texts in your readings today. If you normally follow a lectionary, you could include these instead of or alongside the usual texts for today:

- Genesis 28:10–22, Jacob's ladder
- Isaiah 61, 'The spirit of the Lord is upon me'
- Luke 4:17–21, Jesus reads the passage from Isaiah in the synagogue
- Luke 1:46–55, the Magnificat

In Genesis, Jacob comments on how God was present but he didn't know it, just as the Dreams and Realities paintings show the presence of God and hope in the lives of people who are ignored or devalued by society.

Isaiah shares dreams and visions of a transformed world – and Jesus later uses this passage like a manifesto for his ministry.

The Magnificat is a vision of a complete transformation of the world. Note how both Jesus and Mary talk about their visions as if they have already happened - we can live out our dreams and make them real.

2 March is Transfiguration Sunday for churches that use the Revised Common Lectionary. If you need to focus on the lectionary readings, you could highlight how the Transfiguration inspires the apostles to go back out into the world and work to change it, and link that to our theme of dreams and realities.



Respond to the word: dreams and realities (an all-age activity)

You will need art supplies (markers, coloured pencils, large sheets of paper, paints).

Break the congregation into small groups; children and young people can do the same activity in their own groups, Sunday school session, etc. In each group, start by reflecting together:

- What was your immediate reaction to the exhibition?
- Is there a painting or story that connected with you particularly? Why? How did it make you feel?
- Did any of the pictures resonate with your own life, or with those of people you know and work with in the local community?
- What are the realities you face in your community (challenges, struggles, and everyday experiences)?
- How does your group or church respond to those realities?
- And what are your dreams for this community? For the wider world?
- Can you and your church help more people like those in the paintings to share their dreams - and even to make them real? What kind of world would it be if we all supported each other's dreams?
- If you were painting yourself, or your family or church, how would you represent your reality in the painting? And how would you represent your dreams?

Then, create an artwork that reflects your own dreams and realities. This could be a group activity using one big sheet of paper, and depicting the whole church's dreams and realities. Or it could be an individual activity, with each person making their own portrait.

Use various art supplies to encourage creativity. Encourage people not to worry about being talented artists. The idea is to share their dreams and hopes in a fun and creative way, not to produce a masterpiece.

Put all the pictures on display so that all the congregation can see them. If there's time, you could invite each person or group to say a few words about the dreams and realities they've depicted.



Explore the word: prayers and poems

The Gate of Heaven

It can't have been a very big stone,
 If Jacob could use it as a pillow.
 There must have been hundreds like it;
 A very ordinary stone
 In a barren place.
 Yet it was where the kingdoms of earth and heaven met,
 And a dream contained a promise
 Which became a reality.

Such places still exist;
 Barren, ordinary,
 But where the hidden yeast of the kingdom of Heaven
 Is at work,
 And dreams of justice, mercy,
 Help for the vulnerable,
 Care for the weak,
 Banquets for the hungry,
 Abundance for the poor
 Hope for the oppressed,
 Are becoming reality.

Brian Ford

Just a Teenage Peasant Girl

Just a teenage peasant girl,
 Probably illiterate,
 But claiming that all generations would call her
 blessed.
 That, at least, has happened.
 She also claimed that the proud would be
 scattered,
 Rulers brought down,
 The rich sent empty away,
 The humble lifted up
 And the hungry filled.
 Lord, may we who are proud
 Allow our smug arrogance to be scattered,
 And use our wealth for the humble and poor,
 So that part of her song, her vision
 Also happens.

Brian Ford

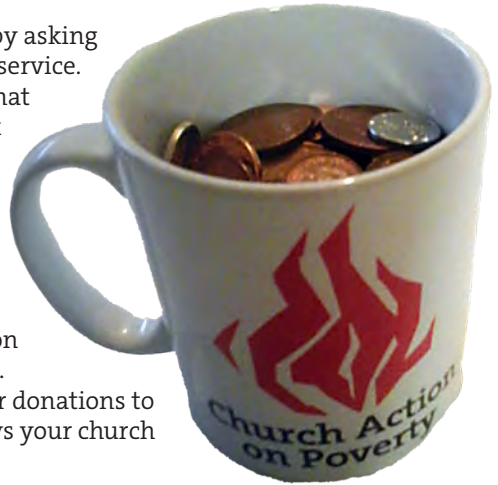


Give: a collection

Either take a collection, or raise funds by asking for donations for refreshments after your service. Make sure the congregation understand that their funds will help more people to speak truth to power, reclaiming their own dignity, agency and power.

Encourage people to use the donation envelopes provided, so that they can boost the value of their gift by making a Gift Aid declaration. Or they can donate online by using the link provided on the Church Action on Sunday prayer cards.

See page 6 to find out how to send your donations to Church Action on Poverty – and other ways your church could give.



Pray: intercessions

We pray to our heavenly Father for all those in our world who are held back by the bitter injustice of our society from fulfilling their hopes and their dreams.

Father, turn their dreams into new realities.

We pray for artists and musicians, held back from fulfilling their gifts by lack of support or resources.

Father, turn their dreams into new realities.

We pray for carers, frustrated by poor public transport, and unable to do all they would like for their families.

Father, turn their dreams into new realities.

We pray for refugees and people seeking sanctuary, forced to live in limbo, unable to move onwards in their lives.

Father, turn their dreams into new realities.

We pray for health professionals from many parts of the world struggling to gain the qualifications necessary for their future careers.

Father, turn their dreams into new realities.

We pray for those who are forced out of their homes, lost in a nightmare of homelessness and unable to plan ahead for their lives.

Father, turn their dreams into new realities.

We pray for those whose way is barred by the racist prejudice of their society.

Father, turn their dreams into new realities.

We pray for those who long to offer a helping hand to those still suffering the effects of poverty, addiction or mental ill health but lack the resources or qualifications to do so.

Father, turn their dreams into new realities.

We pray for those who are themselves poor and yet suffer as victims of robbery, fraud or violence.

Father, turn their dreams into new realities.

Heavenly Father, we ask that together, we may change our common life so that more people can throw off the shackles of poverty and deprivation, and so turn their dreams into realities of new, good life.

Father, turn our dreams into new realities.

We ask these prayers in the name of the one who came to bring a new reality to those who longed for it, Jesus Christ our Lord.

You may wish to leave out some of these petitions and substitute others relevant to your own situation.

Nick Jowett

Send out

Have someone open the church doors and the people face them:

We go out into a world where many are hungry

Help us bring justice

We go out into a world where many are hurting

Help us bring healing

We got out into a world where many are yearning

Help us bring hope

Marie Pattison

Sing: hymns to use in your service

- 'Jesus the Lamb' by Tim Pooley
- 'Liturgy of the Hours' by Stuart Townend
- 'When the hungry who have nothing share with strangers' by Jose Antonio Oliver and Miguel Manzano, translated by Mary Louise Bringle
- 'Tell out, my soul' by Timothy Dudley-Smith
- 'The Trumpets Sound, the Angels Sing' by Graham Kendrick
- 'The kingdom of God is justice and peace and joy in the holy spirit' (Taizé)

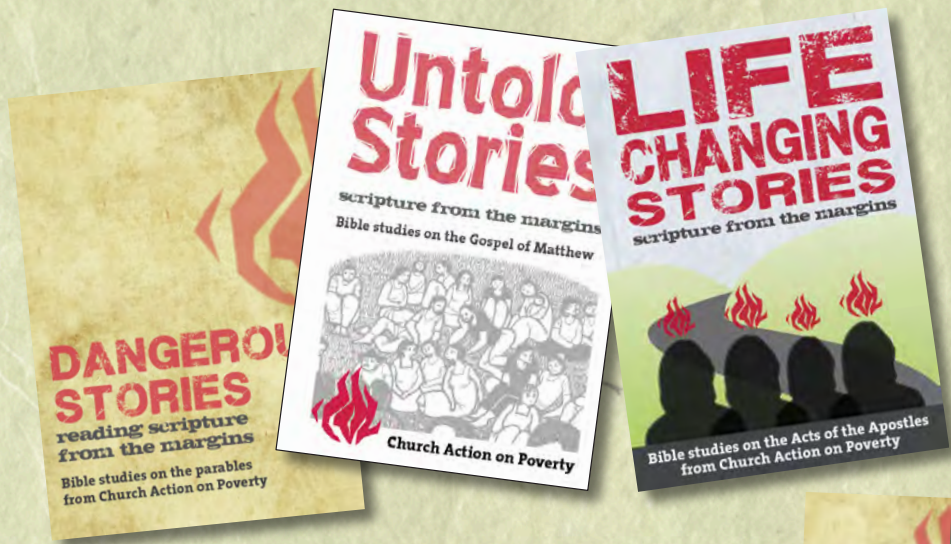
St Mary's Bramall Lane Church & Family Choir from Sheffield has kindly performed and recorded all of these hymns for us. The choir is led by Yo Tozer-Loft, who also led the choir featured in the Dreams and Realities paintings, and the artist Stephen Martin sings in the recordings.

You can stream or download the recordings, to use in your service, at www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday/hymns



Scripture from the margins

Free Bible studies – a great way to follow up from your Church Action on Poverty Sunday service



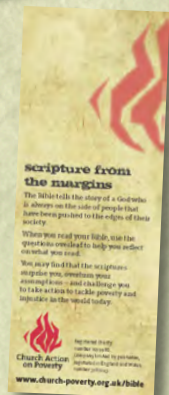
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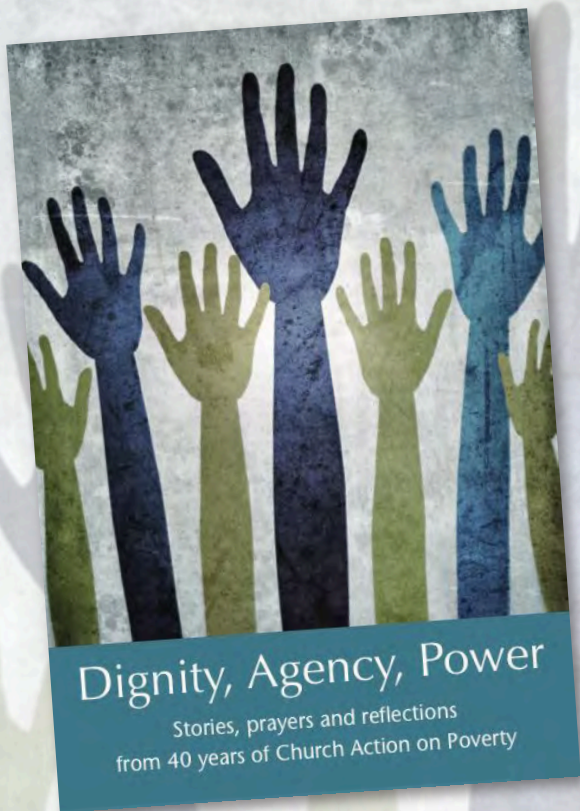
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“Plenty of material for spiritual growth and good discussion”

“A very stimulating course, causing one to think about issues not normally dealt with on a Lent course”

Download free at www.church-poverty.org.uk/bible





“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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