

# Together

## Act on Poverty



### Ask Ahead: a question to consider before this session

Can you think of an occasion when you spoke up about an issue that you felt strongly about? What happened? How did you feel?

### Scripture Reading: Mark 4.30-32

Jesus also said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade."

### How to use this pack

If you've already used the other course packs from the Act on Poverty series, you may notice that this one looks a little different. **This pack focuses on supporting you and your church on taking action and speaking up about poverty in your community and alongside your global neighbours.**

We'll draw on some of the resources from other parts of the series. If you're using this pack as the basis for a standalone session, don't worry! You can find all our audio and video materials at [caid.org.uk/AoPcontent](https://caid.org.uk/AoPcontent) and you can choose which of these to share with your group.

For all groups, we'd recommend consulting the Group Leaders pack for information before you dive in to this session.

### Reflection: What difference can we make by speaking up together about poverty?

Poverty hurts. It hurts when a child goes to bed hungry; it hurts when our neighbour cannot afford a decent home; it hurts when the impact of poverty is felt unequally across the world.

But **poverty is not inevitable**. The choices that are made by those with power - and the choices that we make - can force people into poverty. But our choices can also change the systems and structures that create poverty.

#### You've already made a difference!

The climate crisis deepens poverty and raises the cost of living worldwide. But **change is possible**. Campaigns by supporters of charities including Christian Aid have contributed to the end of coal-fuelled power stations in the UK. Find out more at [caid.org.uk/Campaigns](https://caid.org.uk/Campaigns) Through our collective action we've changed the world. And there's more we can do.

Your voice can help shape the agenda of those with power in your community and beyond.

**Together we can make acting on poverty a priority, locally and globally.** We can ensure that action happens where we live and in our churches. We can even have a global impact.

**We can make a difference.**

This session is all about developing your own Act on Poverty plan. **We want you to plant seeds of change that together we can nurture - seeds that will grow God's kingdom of justice and love.**

Let's look at some of the Bible passages that you can find in our other Act on Poverty materials:

*But let justice roll down like water  
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. (Amos 5.24)*

*Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?"  
He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise." (Luke 10.36-37)*

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor. (Luke 4.18 and Isaiah 61.1)*

**Justice. Righteousness. Mercy. Good News. What would it look like if we shaped our response to poverty as a society around these principles?**

In the audio interviews and films explored in other Act on Poverty sessions, we have heard from people who are trying to respond according to these principles. Many of the voices we have heard speak from lived experience of poverty. What is striking about these testimonies is the persistence of **hope**, the belief in change.

**"Ordinary people can bring about change.** So don't think you can't do it because you can." (Margaret Robinson, Christian Aid Campaigner, UK)

"We're encouraged by the scripture, the good Samaritan it's about the church, you know, being out there and being of support to somebody who is in need. ... **We can hold government accountable on the policies**, especially on the commitments that they make ... **Let's not give up. Let's not give up.**"  
(Bryar Mlowoka, Evangelical Association of Malawi)

"... **change has to come from the ground up** ... that's what the church should be doing. We are in communities, all over the country, all over the world, we are truly embedded in communities and so we can strengthen those communities, **we can show love to those communities, in the way that Jesus Christ did ...**"  
(Rev. Chris Minchin, Benwell and Scotswood Team, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK)

"I know it's easier said than done but it's where the Spirit is calling our energies right now in terms of revolution. **There will be a change.** It might not be today, but it will be tomorrow." (Winnie Baffoe, South London Mission, UK)

**"... poverty is something that if we all work collectively together, it can be erased. ...if everybody was to have that mindset that no change can happen, there wouldn't be no changes making in the world."** (Ashleigh May, Mums on a Mission, UK)

**"...you just have to keep persisting.** You don't know what is the last little action that's going to create that transformation in society or in government in the way we do things, in the way we think about things, but we do know that it's possible."  
(Stef Benstead, Disability Activist, UK)

**"Step by step we can reduce the effects of poverty in our society....** [I have] the hope that everyone joined together will improve the community."  
(Carlos Valle, Field Advisor, Comision de Accion Social Menonita, Honduras)

**'That planting and growing of that tree may seem small. But it's such a huge thing.'**  
(Stephen Amusala, Anglican Development Service Western, Kenya)

As Stephen Amusala says, the planting and growing we undertake can seem small to start with but we know it can lead to huge changes.

What could you do to add your voice to these calls for change?

Use the rest of this session to begin your Act on Poverty plan, following the steps below.

### **Act on Poverty: What could you and your church do?**

From conversations with local government in Kenya, to petitions presented to a North Devon MP, the people we have heard from in this course have experienced the difference that speaking to those in power can make. We know that levels of trust in political parties, institutions, and authorities are low. Perhaps you feel sceptical about the idea that engaging with those in power can make a difference?

It might be helpful to look back at our session on Hope. There we explored how practices of hope can include lament and anger. We don't need to leave our frustrations behind. Nonetheless, we are called into a different vision. One where our world more closely resembles God's Kingdom. Can we take a step together to hold our politicians to account and to press them to act? Can we live out our hope in action?

You could look too at our reflection on generosity and the importance and value of small actions. Every individual, every group, every church that takes an action is adding to the chorus of voices crying out for a more just world, a world where poverty is understood as an outrage that must end.

On our 'Seeds of Change' action cards you will find a range of different steps that you and your church can take to make a difference.

- 1. Look at the Seeds of Change action planning sheet at [caid.org.uk/SeedsOfChange](http://caid.org.uk/SeedsOfChange)**
- 2. Choose at least three actions that you, your group or your church could commit to.**
- 3. Use the Sow, Water, Nurture, Grow method as described on the action sheet to help you plan your action.**

## **Breaking Bread with your MP or political representative**

Christian Aid supporters from churches in the Vale of Leven, used their annual sponsored walk to meet their new MP Douglas McAllister. The 7km river walk and soup lunch, allowed those participating to chat with Douglas, about everything from the local landscape to why they support the work of Christian Aid. It was such a welcoming experience that Douglas stayed a lot longer than he initially planned. This relationship could be vital in years to come if the churches in the Vale of Leven want to push the UK Government for greater action to tackle poverty, the climate crisis and connected issues.



As you plan your actions, remember that there's plenty of support from organisations like Christian Aid and existing campaigns and actions you can get involved in.

Find out about Christian Aid's latest campaigns at [caid.org.uk/Campaigns](https://caid.org.uk/Campaigns)

Find more information on the UK anti-poverty movement at [letsendpoverty.co.uk](https://letsendpoverty.co.uk)

Find out more about JPIT's Constituency Action Network at [jpit.uk/can](https://jpit.uk/can)

We would love to hear what you and your church are going to be doing. If you require any extra support, please contact: [campaigns@christian-aid.org](mailto:campaigns@christian-aid.org)

You can share your actions on social media. Tag your posts #ActOnPoverty

## **Closing Prayer**

Lord Jesus,  
You promise us that from faith like a mustard seed your kingdom can grow.  
You tell us that our hopes for change are enough, if together we nurture them.  
You show us that our acts of love for our neighbour are part of the abundance of love that flows from you, in the power of the Spirit, and blesses all of creation.

Lord Jesus, this day and every day make us planters, growers, waterers, who believe and trust in the coming of your kingdom.

Amen.

