



Church Action
on Poverty
Sunday

voices from the **MARGINS** 11 FEBRUARY 2018

Church Action on Poverty

opened my eyes to injustice

and gave me the confidence

to speak out



Martin went
without food due
to problems in the
benefits system

“For churches, Jesus initiated the act of making visible those who were overlooked.” (Kathy Galloway)

Throughout his ministry, Jesus listened to people who were on the margins of his society. He made visible those who were overlooked, and gave them hope.

Our churches are called to follow Jesus' example: to listen to voices from the margins and make them heard, so that things can change.

That's what Church Action on Poverty's campaigns and projects are for. On Church Action on Poverty Sunday, we invite you to learn about them and lend your support.

GIVE ACT PRAY

Host a soup lunch or take
a collection *page 10*

Share stories and spread
the word *page 2*

Use our resources for prayer
and worship *page 4*

tell a story

Church Action on Poverty Sunday is about celebrating the hope that we can create when we listen to people on the margins. We want to show churches how they really do make a difference when they support Church Action on Poverty. At your soup lunch or service, please include time to tell a story and share that vision.

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The easiest way to do this to **play one of our 'Voices from the Margins' video clips**, in which people marginalised by poverty talk about their experiences, what needs to be done to tackle poverty, and how Church Action on Poverty worked with them to make a difference. You can stream or download videos from www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday.

If you don't have the technology to play a video, you could...

- **Preach from the margins.** Invite someone who has experienced poverty, or someone who works in a social action project, to speak at your service – or to preach the sermon. You could even follow the example of Revd Derek Rigby (opposite), who used a disguise to challenge his congregation to pay more attention to people on the margins.
- **Invite a speaker.** If we have one available, Church Action on Poverty is always happy to send a volunteer or staff member to talk about our work. Just call Liam on 0161 872 9294 to enquire.

However you tell the story, it is crucial to make the congregation understand how their donations will make a difference:

Your gifts will enable people who are marginalised by poverty to speak out, make their voices heard, and work alongside churches to strengthen communities and build a fairer world.

I thought Church Action on Poverty Sunday was 'a nice thing to do' for years. Then I lost my nice middle-class job and slid into poverty, mental chaos, homelessness. Please, please work hard to bring hope back to us again, in the name of Jesus, friend of the poor

'John' (not his real name) is a supporter of Church Action on Poverty



In 2008, Revd Derek Rigby, the leader of Trinity Methodist Church in Prestatyn, let his beard grow for three days, put on a wig, dirtied himself up, drew tattoos on his arms and put on lager-soaked clothes. He then sat in the porch to his church as the congregation arrived for a Sunday service and settled on a pew in the church, drinking from a can of beer. None of the congregation spoke to him. He then took off his wig to reveal his identity, before delivering a sermon. He said: "It was interesting to see the reaction from people – I was totally ignored."

Get out of your church and listen to people. To serve them, from the point of view of the gospel, you need to see the reality they're living



Dick Johnson is an industrial chaplain and a member of Church Action on Poverty

pray

Lord Jesus,
you say that
when someone gives food to the hungry,
when someone gives a drink to the thirsty,
when someone welcomes a stranger,
when someone clothes the poor,
when someone cares for the sick
and when someone visits a prisoner,
they are really doing it for you.

Enable us, with the wealth of our society, to do these things,
but help us first to listen to the voices
of those we desire to assist and to welcome,
those who are on the margins,
because, in their strength and love and endurance,
they are your voice, your words for us today.

Lord Jesus, we pray in your name.

Amen

(Revd Nick Jowett, Church Action on Poverty in Sheffield)

This is our special prayer for Church Action on Poverty Sunday. Use it, and you will be praying for people on the margins together with hundreds of other congregations and individuals around the UK.

We have prayer cards available, with the prayer and other information about Church Action on Poverty. Please distribute the cards and ask people to join in prayer on 11 February. You could hand out cards at church services, food banks, and anywhere else where churches are working alongside people on the margins.

If you need more prayer cards, please contact 0161 872 9294 or info@church-poverty.org.uk.



worship

Use this collection of prayers, Bible readings and creative activities to get people thinking about Jesus' ministry with people on the margins – and how our churches are called to follow that example.

There is enough material here to organise a whole church service around the theme if you wish. If that's not possible in your church, just pick and choose whatever ideas work for you. You could also use the ideas in a house group or elsewhere.

Don't forget to include some stories about Church Action on Poverty's work (see page 2) and to take a collection or hold a soup lunch after your service (see page 10).

Non-liturgical worship

The materials are organised so that they can be used as part of a traditional liturgical service. If your church's style of worship is less liturgical, we encourage you to use whichever of the materials is most suited to your approach. You might be particularly interested in using our multimedia resources (see page 2). You could also draw on this list of suggested topics for *ex tempore* prayer:

- Pray that your church may listen more attentively to the cry of the poor
- Pray that people in poverty may feel welcome and valued in your church
- Pray that people in poverty may play a full role in the life of your church
- Pray that the church may genuinely stand alongside the poorest and most vulnerable people in society
- Pray that the church may allow itself to be changed and challenged by people on the margins of society
- Pray that God may help your church to listen better to voices from the margins

Intercessions

Lord Jesus Christ, you and the Father are one.

Amen

May your anger at injustice be alive in us.

Amen

May your love and wisdom, shown to humanity,
find solutions that work for the poor.

Amen

May your compassion inspire us to put
those solutions into practice.

Amen

And may all our work be not in our own strength,
but in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen. Lord, your will is good.

By Hazel Palmer

Share the word

Readings and preaching

Please use readings which tell of Jesus' ministry on the margins. If you can find a dramatic way to present the story, it will have more impact.

Challenge the congregation to think about how the church can follow Jesus' example.

Who are the people on the margins today? How can we reach out and be open as Jesus did?

Here are some suitable Gospel readings:

- Matthew 15:21–28 or Mark 7:24–30 (the Canaanite or Syro-Phoenician woman – see on the right for a dramatised retelling)
- Mark 1:40–45 (the healing of the lepers)
- Mark 5:25–34 (the woman with a haemorrhage)
- John 8:1–11 (the woman caught in adultery)
- Mark 12:41–44 (the widow's offering)
- Luke 19:1–10 (Zacchaeus the tax collector)

If your church uses a lectionary, you could include one of these readings in addition to the usual ones, or relate the lectionary readings to the theme of 'voices from the margins' in your sermon.

The Canaanite woman

It was unusual, in the first place, to have a rabbi visit here. Rabbis didn't come here. This is where the sinners live, this is where the enemy lives. I didn't expect sympathy. But I had heard tales of a man of great power – who healed the sick, cured the lame and stilled the waves. I expected power. I was not expecting his followers to be sympathetic either. I was expecting exactly what I got: sidelong looks from pious people who don't want to hear a woman shouting. But one thing I had learned as the mother of a sick child was shouting. You learn to shout. You shout at those who wish her ill. You shout at those who would harm her. You shout at those who would drive her away. You shout for her right to be loved. You shout for her right to live. You shout for a cure. Then you whisper. You whisper gentle and quiet to her, to be heard above the loudness in her mind. So I was shouting with all that was in me that day. "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon." "Send her away," they said. We have heard "send her away" too many times for it to sting, only to bruise on an already hurt place deep inside.

I heard him say "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Fair enough, we weren't his responsibility, my daughter and I. But fierce love and fierce need brought me forward and I knelt before him. Then I saw his face. I saw his eyes, so full of compassion, so full of empathy. I knew that I was known to him. I knew my precious child was known to him. I knew he would help me. I knew I only had to ask. So I asked "Lord, help me," and I saw my answer in his face. The rest was theatre. History will tell this man's story and people will wonder if he wounded me with harsh words, but this man's power was from a loving heart; to hurt me was beyond him. He had a loving heart and a sharp mind. "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs," he said. I saw them nod and gave them a moment to admire his intellect. I held his gaze. I knew my line: "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table." I wanted to laugh, like anyone who has succumbed to the begging eyes of a faithful hound and fed it from their own plate. I saw my amusement echoed in his own face. Here was a man who loved to talk, debate, ask a good question and get a good answer.

His hand raised me up. "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." It was done in that moment. I returned to my girl. Happy. Healthy. Whole.

©Marie Pattison, 2016 (first published in *Roots magazine*)

Respond to the word: take action

The voices of people who are in poverty are not heard, and they often feel unable to influence decisions that affect them. When stories about poverty do appear in the media, they often promote negative stereotypes.

When you support Church Action on Poverty, you're helping to change that. We work with people in poverty to tell their stories, and with journalists to make sure their coverage is accurate and sensitive.

Just before Christmas, we worked with the *Northern Echo* (a regional newspaper in North East England) to put marginalised voices at the centre of their coverage. Could you mark Church Action on Poverty Sunday by inviting your own local paper to do something similar?

We'd like you to write to the editor of your local paper, and ask them to work with Church Action on Poverty on a similar feature in your region. You could invite members of the congregation to add their signatures to your letter as their active response to today's scripture readings and theme.

Visit www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday to get our action pack, with a template letter and everything else you need to take action.

A prayer for people on the margins

Righteous God,
You plead the cause
Of the poor and
unprotected.
Fill us with holy rage
When justice is delayed,
And give us the
persistence
To require those rights
that are denied;
In your name's sake.
Amen

*By Janet Morley,
from All Desires Known*



Children's activities

If your service includes children's ministry or all-age worship, you could include some activities that help children and young people to think about how it feels to be left out – and how Jesus reached out to people on the edges.

We have prepared a separate set of activities to explore 'voices from the margins' and 'church of the poor' with children. You can download them at www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday – or call 0161 872 9294 and we'll send you a printed copy.



Hymns

Two hymns on the Syro-Phoenician woman

Tune: 88.88.88 meter, e.g. Abingdon or Melita

You told us, Lord, in ancient law,
to share with everyone in need,
to welcome strangers at our door,
honour the poor in word and deed.
Can selfish humans be so kind?
What power can make them change their mind?

But we deny the victims' rights,
dismiss their sorrows out of hand.
We see the migrants' deadly plight,
yet welcome few into our land.
Why are we humans so unkind?
What makes it hard to change our mind?

A woman of Phoenician stock
whose daughter had a mind possessed
once turned to Christ in need and shock
and was sent packing as a pest.
Why were Christ's comrades so unkind?
What would have made them change their mind?

And Jesus said that Jewish 'bread'
should not be given to Gentile 'dogs'.
What was his tone when this was said?
Was humour in his dialogue?
How could our Lord have been unkind?
Surely he knew he'd change his mind.

The woman spoke, with sudden wit,
of crumbs that fall, from table piled,
for 'dogs' whose faces do not fit.
Now Jesus smiled and healed her child.
O God, you cannot be unkind:
as human once, you changed your mind.

As human too, but not divine,
we're tied to culture, language, space.
Lord, give us Jesus' spirit fine,
to care for all within our place.
Stop us when we would be unkind;
help us each time to change our mind.

© Nick Jowett, *Church Action on Poverty in Sheffield*

Tune: Auld Lang Syne

Subversive speech recalls
the time
when Jesus changed his
mind.

A woman challenged
pious words:
religious, yet unkind.

Her daughter was in need
of help,
they said she was
possessed,
yet Jesus turned his face
away,
her mother was
distrressed.

He masked his fear
with prejudice
he justified with law,
she challenged him
with common sense
which shamed him
to the core.

When crumbs of comfort
are withheld
crass judgments
forged and made,
they keep the poor
in poverty,
the hungry still afraid.

And we too need
to hear the word
that brings us
to our knees,
that opens us
to gracious love,
that gives, affirms
and frees.

*By Andrew Pratt. © 2017
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Though lords of this world

Tune: 10.10.11.11 meter, e.g. Paderborn or Hanover

Though lords of this world use power to do wrong,
a new order's dawned where weakness is strong.

Where losers are winners, the end is rehearsed;
the first will be last and the last will be first.

Discover a King, whose love is so deep
he saw his own crown as not his to keep.

Yes, monarch is servant; the order's reversed:
to imitate Jesus, our pride can't be first.

We'll worship the King they plotted to shame
and honour the poor the rich want to blame.

We aim to turn tables where greed does its worst;
in God's revolution, the poor will be first.

The best schools won't count; all status must bow;
You rank poor folk low, which God won't allow.

In justice and sharing we should be well-versed;
His grace is the answer, put faith in him first.

Get ready for God; let self be denied.

He listens to those who've toiled and who've cried.

When Jesus returns, ends all hunger and thirst;
no justice or sharing? The last will be first.

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Other suggested hymns

- 'Father, we have sinned in word, and deed and thought' by Stuart Townend and Keith Getty
- 'Give to our God immortal praise' by Isaac Watts
- 'Love inspired the anger' by Andrew E Pratt
- 'Sing we a song of high revolt' by Fred Kaan
- 'When I survey the wondrous cross' by Isaac Watts

Sending out

A prayer for deprived communities

Loving God,

In our street, in our community, people go to food banks, are behind with the rent, are in debt.

We go hungry, we're afraid of being homeless, there's so much we can't afford.

And when we talk about it, people often don't listen. We feel angry.

So thank you, God, that you hear us.

And thank you that the message of Jesus is good news.

Lord, change the hearts of people in power who don't

seem to care. We remember, when God's people were suffering injustice, **they cried out to him and he answered:**

"I have seen the misery of my people and how they are being oppressed. I have heard them crying out and I have come down to rescue them."

Thank you for your promise, Lord. At the right time you will keep it. We trust you to bring about your salvation.

And thank you for everything in our

community that's already good. For people, organisations and projects like [NAME SOME LOCAL EXAMPLES HERE] **and everyone who tries to make a difference.**

You are a great God, full of love and compassion. We worship you; we say out loud **that you – Father, Son and Holy Spirit - deserve all our praise. We thank you for all you've done and praise you for who you are. Amen**

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hold a soup lunch...

A simple soup lunch is a great way to bring people together, raise money, and maybe listen to some voices from the margins.

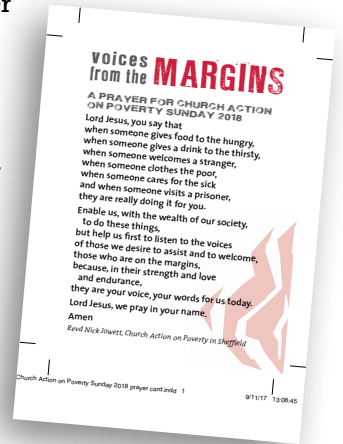
- **Choose a date.** You could hold a soup lunch on Church Action on Poverty Sunday itself, or any time during that week (or through Lent).
If you choose the Sunday, why not use some of our prayers, resources and worship materials in your church service too? (See page 4.)
- **Invite people.** If your lunch takes place after a church service, this is easy. If it's a stand-alone event, you could send out emails, use social media, or make an announcement in your church newsletter.
- **Plan your meal.** You can get creative and make your own soup; just use simple pre-prepared bread and soup; or ask people to bring their own food.
If you can, download and print our special **placemats** from www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday, and lay one at each place. They will tell people about Church Action on Poverty's work with people on the margins, and allow them to make a Gift Aid declaration alongside their donation.
- **Tell a story.** Make sure your guests hear some voices from the margins, and understand how their donations to Church Action on Poverty will help make people heard. You could play one of our video clips if you have the equipment to do so (see page 2).
- **Raise as much money as you can!** Ask your guests for a donation per bowl of soup, but this should be entirely voluntary. You could even offer extras – bread rolls, croutons and soft drinks – for people who make an extra donation. Don't forget to ask each person to sign the Gift Aid declarations on their placemats, to make sure that every pound raised really does count.



... or give in other ways

Don't have time to organise a soup lunch? An even simpler way to raise funds to make voices heard is simply to donate the proceeds of a collection taken during a church service.

- Use our **prayers and worship materials** (see page 4) to get people thinking about Jesus' ministry with marginalised people in your service on 11 February.
- If you can, **show one of our videos or invite a speaker** (see page 2) to tell the congregation about the difference they are making by supporting Church Action on Poverty.
- As well as taking your collection, make sure every member of the congregation receives one of our **prayer cards**. The cards include the Church Action on Poverty Sunday prayer (see page 4) for them to use in their own meditations, and details of how they can give online or take action in other ways. You should have received some prayer cards with this booklet – just call 0161 872 9294 if you need more!



How to donate

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 post it to:

Freepost RTTY-JGEE-JJEZ, Church Action on Poverty, 28 Sandpiper Court, Water's Edge Business Park, Modwen Road, Salford M5 3EZ.

Be sure to include any signed Gift Aid declarations along with your cheque.





voices from the
MARGINS
11 FEBRUARY 2018

a prayer for church action on poverty sunday 2018

Lord Jesus, you say that
when someone gives food to the hungry,
when someone gives a drink to the thirsty,
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Enable us, with the wealth of our society, to do these things,
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Lord Jesus, we pray in your name.

Amen

(Revd Nick Jowett, Church Action on Poverty in Sheffield)