

life in all its fullness

talking about the living wage
in schools and youth groups



Church Action
on Poverty

About this resource

Life in all its fullness contains activities which can be used to explore the concept of the Living Wage with young people, either in church youth groups or in RE, PSE or Citizenship lessons in school.

All of the UK's major Christian denominations have now committed to paying a Living Wage to all their employees – including those in church-run schools. The purpose of this resource is to inform young people about the principles behind the Living Wage, and to support and celebrate local churches and schools which do pay the Living Wage.

About the Living Wage

As announced by the Living Wage Foundation on 3 November 2014, the current Living Wage rate for adults is £7.85 an hour, or £9.15 per hour in London.

This is more than the statutory National Minimum Wage, which is currently £6.50 for workers aged 21, and substantially less for young people. The Living Wage takes into account top-up benefits and credits, which are often not enough to keep people out of poverty.

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Why pay the Living Wage?

For people who work hard full-time to be subject to poverty is a denial of the dignity that God has given them. The Living Wage is an idea that flows directly from Christian values, and has resonated throughout the secular world.

A complex labour market which prices in supply and demand is a fact of modern societies. However, human endeavour cannot be a product bought and sold like any other commodity. It is morally unacceptable to price labour so low that people are forced to work long and hard and still remain in poverty. It is an indictment of the UK's low-pay culture and the low level of the legally enforced Minimum Wage that the majority of children living in poverty actually have working parents.

For over five million people in the UK today – 21% of the workforce – hard work and poverty pay is their daily reality. Before the Methodist Church adopted the Living Wage, its internal research showed that many of these low-paid workers worked in Methodist churches as cleaners, office workers, gardeners and caretakers. There is good reason to believe the same will be true in other churches – and in schools and other institutions run by churches. Many of those on sub-Living Wage salaries also live in the most deprived communities, which we as a church are committed to as part of our mission.

People
should
be paid a
fair wage
for a fair
day's
work –
anything
else is
unjust
Archbishop
of York,
September
2012

As an employer, the Church has a moral responsibility towards its workers ... [We will pay] a wage which reflects that we value our staff and want to bear in mind their needs and welfare.

General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church of Wales, July 2012

Who supports the Living Wage?

The Living Wage is not a party political issue. It is endorsed by politicians as diverse as David Cameron, Boris Johnson, Ed Miliband and Alex Salmond. A range of large and small employers have already shown that the Living Wage is both affordable and makes sound business sense. This includes Barclays, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Lloyds of London, KPMG and Lush; and in the public sector, the Greater London Authority, at least 35 councils, 12 universities, and four hospitals. Public opinion polling shows four out of five people think the Minimum Wage is too low.

Costs and benefits

Anecdotally, the experience of most churches when they ask the question "How much will it cost to pay the Living Wage?" is that the answer is surprising low. It is surprisingly easy to be a low-pay employer without facing up to it or realising how little money it is saving.

When the synod of the Diocese of Sheffield came to debate this issue in 2012, it was estimated that the financial cost would be in the region of only £3,600. Other systematic research by the Methodist Church showed that the overall cost of Living Wage was relatively small, affecting only around one in six churches. These churches tended to be small and the jobs involved were typically the three-hour-a-week cleaner or the person doing occasional maintenance or gardening work; often these were people who were already doing other low-paid jobs and needed the extra money.

The Living Wage helps to clarify the difference between people whose work for the church is their livelihood and those for whom it is part of their voluntary commitment or vocation, making these boundaries less inappropriately blurred and less prone to forms of exploitation.

Even in larger institutions such as schools, the cost of adopting the Living Wage can be offset by the economic benefits it brings. Because the Living Wage makes people happier at work and more motivated, it reduces absenteeism, staff turnover goes down, and productivity is increased.

But it is all of us, as tax-payers, who bear the cost of sub-Living Wage salaries. The Institute for Fiscal Studies estimates it mounts up to £6 billion a year in benefits and forgone revenue.

Churches and the Living Wage

All of the UK's major denominations have now committed to support the Living Wage:

Methodists – Since 2010 all Methodist churches, districts, circuits and projects have been required to pay the Living Wage, except in exceptional circumstances.

Church of Wales – The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Wales committed its 650 churches to pay the Living Wage in July 2012.

Church of Scotland – The 2012 General Assembly reaffirmed support for the Minimum Wage, and encouraged its being raised towards the level of the Living Wage. They instructed all Church of Scotland agencies and congregations to implement the Living Wage with all possible speed and in all cases by 2015. They also urged congregations to make payment of the Living Wage a criterion in awarding goods and services over the value of £100,000 in any year. Finally, they called on the Scottish Government and local authorities to revise their procurement policies to require service-providers to pay at least the Living Wage and make adequate provision in funding to enable service-providers to meet the Living Wage (see <http://s.coop/pypt>).

United Reformed Church – The URC's 2008 General Assembly passed a resolution calling on all URC Synods and churches to "support Church Action on Poverty's call for churches to pay a living wage as determined by the Living Wage campaign".

Baptists – In 2008, the Assembly of the Baptist Union of Great Britain passed a resolution on care for church employees, calling for churches to "consider carefully their employment practice in the light of Church Action on Poverty's work highlighting the need for churches to work for social justice within their own communities".

Roman Catholic Church – The November 2012 Conference of the Bishops of England and Wales "fully endorsed the principle of the Living Wage" and encouraged all Catholic organisations and charities in England and Wales to work towards implementation (see <http://s.coop/livingwage>).

Church of England – In November 2012 the General Synod overwhelmingly decided to "strongly encourage all Church of England institutions to pay at least the Living Wage" (see <http://s.coop/generalsynod>). At least 10 Anglican bishops or dioceses in England have publicly supported the Living Wage, including Bristol, Chester, Winchester, Oxford, Portsmouth, Sheffield, Southwark, Southwell & Nottingham, St Albans, Ripon & Leeds, and York. The Church Army also pays the Living Wage.

The Society of Friends – Quakers in Britain are committed to maintaining a ratio of four to one between their lowest- and highest-paid workers, and consider that "economic systems which are based on justice rather than exploitation are a necessary part of a peaceful society". All staff in their centrally managed work are paid above a Living Wage.

The Living Wage and schools

In September 2014, the National Society announced a plan to work with UNISON, the UK's largest education union, to help the Church of England's nearly 4,700 schools ensure all support staff receive the Living Wage, by turning the schools into Living Wage employers.

UNISON has also developed an implementation plan to help Catholic schools become Living Wage employers in the same way.

The Living Wage in local churches

Because of the nature of church decision-making processes, most of the commitments made by churches at a national level are not binding on local churches. It is up to local churches and institutions whether they act on the recommendations of their national bodies.

There is therefore a need for church members who care about fair pay to find out what their own church is paying its staff, and to press their church to act on the recommendations described above. This resource aims to help young church members to do that.

Talking about poverty with young people

Any work on poverty should be approached with sensitivity, as there may be students in your class or group who are themselves materially poor. Be up front about the fact that these topics can be sensitive and let the students know that you are aware of this. Occasionally, students may raise personal issues in class or want to confide in you afterwards. It is always good to start by saying that if students wish to talk about any issues further or in private, they can see you or a member of staff afterwards. Always stress confidentiality. This note of caution may make you feel a little anxious about embarking on the topic of poverty in the UK. However, it is really a case of being aware and not putting individuals on the spot. It is essential that these issues are discussed if ignorance of the causes, extent and effects of poverty in the UK is not to continue.



Church Action
on Poverty

About us

Church Action on Poverty is a national ecumenical Christian social justice charity, committed to tackling poverty in the UK. We work in partnership with churches and with people in poverty themselves to find solutions to poverty, locally, nationally and globally.

We have a vision of a fairer society, with a narrower gap between rich and poor. We want to see significant changes in policy and practice to make this happen:

- **Fair Taxes** – action to reduce tax avoidance and evasion
- **Fair Pay** – fairer employment (with public bodies and churches paying the Living Wage) and a benefits system that provides a safety net for all
- **Fair Prices** – better access to affordable credit and a reduction in the 'poverty premium'.
- **A Fair Say** – an end to the stigmatisation of people experiencing poverty, and opportunities for people in poverty to make their voices heard and influence decisions which affect them

We have been working since 2001 to persuade all the UK's churches to pay a Living Wage to all their employees.

Further information – and copies of this resource – can be found at www.church-poverty.org.uk/livingwage.

Registered charity number 1079986.

Company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales, number 3780243.

activity 1: how do we **value** work?

An activity to help young people explore whether the way in which jobs are paid reflects their value to society.

Preparation

You will need two sets of 15 Job Cards made by printing or photocopying and cutting up the cards overleaf. If you are working with a large class, you may want to make four sets and do the exercise in four groups rather than two.

Time: 20 minutes

What to do

1. Divide the class into two groups and give each group one set of the 15 Job Cards. Ask one group to sort the Job Cards according to how well they think that each job is paid, with the highest-paid job at the top, and the lowest-paid at the bottom. Ask the other group to rank the Job Cards according to how valuable they think the job is to society.
2. Each group should then feed back to the whole class, saying how and why they chose their particular ranking of jobs.
3. The class can then discuss the choices. The teacher should stimulate the discussion by highlighting and exploring any difference in the two rankings. For example, "If care workers do such important jobs, why are they so badly paid?"
4. As an optional extra stage to the exercise, you could ask the group to estimate how much they think each job is actually paid, and then to discuss whether they think these wages are appropriate or justified. The approximate annual full-time salaries for each job are listed on the right.

Job vacancy

Job title: Security Officer, Commercial – Contract Support Officer

Location: Londonderry

Salary: National Minimum Wage

Hours of work: As and when required

Closing date: n/a

Contract type: Days, Weekends, Occasional Nights

Qualifications/experience:

- Candidates must have excellent communication skills (both oral and written format)
- Ideally have some security experience; however, on-site training will be provided
- Applicants must already possess a current valid SIA Security Licence

As a Security Officer, your specific role is to provide general security and perform the following duties:

- To provide a safe, secure environment through regular patrols
- To be a visible presence at all times
- To provide a safe and secure workplace for all staff
- To be smart and punctual

The role of Contract Support Officer involves a varied pattern, which includes various weekdays and weekends and some nights.

(This advert appeared on a jobs website in spring 2015)

Typical salaries (as of December 2014)

Shop worker	£10,296
Cleaner	£7,919
Hairdresser	£10,019
Catering assistant	£8,975
Care worker	£12,650
Classroom assistant	£11,916
Nurse	£26,252
Secondary school teacher	£32,524
Nursery nurse	£11,734
Refuse collector	£19,945
Member of Parliament	£67,060
Doctor	£69,463
Accountant	£38,692
Premiership footballer	£2,300,000
Top 100 company director	£2,400,000

Shop worker	Cleaner	Hairdresser
Catering assistant	Care worker	Classroom assistant
Nurse	Secondary school teacher	Nursery nurse
Refuse collector	Member of Parliament	Doctor
Accountant	Premiership footballer	Top 100 company director

activity 2: **images** of low pay

An activity to explore young people's perceptions of poverty and low pay.

Preparation

Make copies for each group of the photos opposite, plus any other photos of high- and low-paid work that you can provide. You could use photos from newspapers, weekend colour supplements, magazines and catalogues. It doesn't matter if groups have different photos.

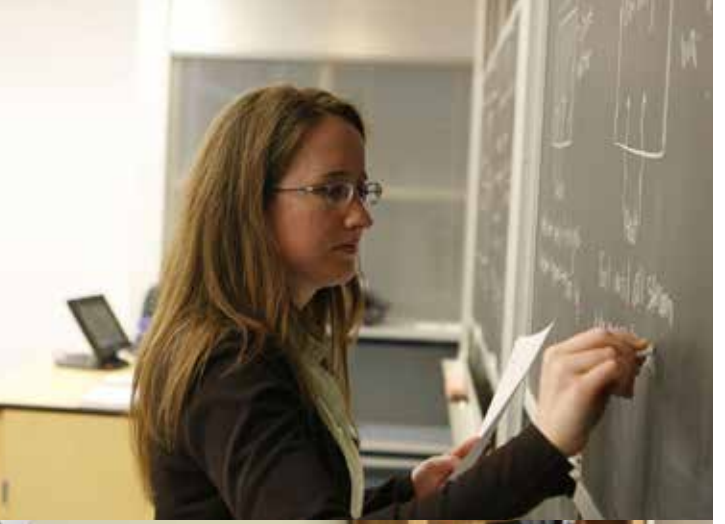
Time: 20–30 minutes

What to do

1. Put people into small groups and give each group a copy of the photos. Ask them to choose one that represents low pay and one that represents wealth.
2. Each group should then feed back to the whole class, saying why they chose particular photos.
3. The group can then discuss the choices. Stimulate discussion by offering other photos for discussion, asking questions such as "Why could this show wealth?"

Church of England schools were set up more than 200 years ago to serve the poor and marginalised, and they have always been committed to treating staff and pupils fairly. This new agreement with UNISON will reward schools with Living Wage accreditation for their commitment to treating staff fairly.

Dr John Sentamu, Archbishop of York & chair of the Living Wage Commission



activity 3: role-play Jackie's story

An activity to encourage young people to explore some of the difficulties faced by young people working for low pay.

Preparation

Set out a table in the middle of the room, with two chairs on one side and one chair on the other, in an interview format. Photocopy and cut out the profiles for the three people in the role-play on separate sheets (see below).

Time: 30–40 minutes

What to do

1. The setting for the role play is an interview in which the Area Manager of a chain of stores (Mr Rudlin) and the local shop manager (Ms Jones) are asking Jackie for her response to their offer: to stay on her present rate of pay (£5 an hour) for another year until she is 19, and the company will train her as a supervisor, or to leave.
2. Ask three people to volunteer for the role-play (or pick them yourself), and allocate each of them one of the profiles. Ask them to spend two or three minutes reading through the profile and getting into character.
3. Introduce the three characters to the rest of the group, and give a brief introduction to the situation (see 1 above).
4. Do the role-play, with the rest of the group standing or sitting well to one side. The role-play should start with Ms Jones and Mr Rudlin sitting at the table, inviting Jackie to come and sit down. The role play should last six or seven minutes, or until it reaches a natural conclusion.
5. Ask the three role-players to come out of character, and rearrange the room.
6. The class can then discuss their reactions to the role-play, giving space for each player to explore their own thoughts and feelings about the situation in turn. Ask the class to consider what they would have done in Jackie's situation, and what they think they would have done if they were in Ms Jones' or Mr Rudlin's situation.

For many employers, moving towards the Living Wage is a difficult and gradual process which must be balanced with other commitments and demands. However, it is crucial that we tirelessly strive for just pay throughout society as a whole, if work is to provide a viable escape from poverty.

The Most Reverend Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster

Jackie

You are 18 and have been working as a shop assistant for a chain of stores for the past nine months.

You enjoy the work and think that you have been doing well. Last week your manager (Ms Jones) offered to train you as a supervisor, provided you agree to stay on your present rate of pay (£5 an hour) for another year. However, the local Citizens Advice Bureau has told you it is illegal not to be paid the Minimum Wage (£5.13 for 18–20-year-olds). You take home £170 a week, from which you give your mother £140 for board and lodging, leaving just £30 for yourself.

Ms Jones

You are 25 and have been the manager of a shop for a high-street chain for the past three years. You like Jackie and can see that she has potential to develop. Last week you offered to train Jackie as a supervisor, but know that there is no more money in your budget to increase her wages for at least a year. One option you could offer is to increase her hourly rate to £5.13 (the Minimum Wage for 18–20-year-olds) and reduce her hours, so that her overall wage remains the same.

Mr Rudlin

You are an ambitious 28-year-old area manager for a chain of stores. You know that it is illegal to pay less than the Minimum Wage (£5.13 for 18–20-year-olds), but the company is losing money. Your main priority is to keep costs down. You know that there are plenty more young people who would take Jackie's job if she doesn't accept the deal offered to her.

activity 4: bible study

the parable of the workers

Examine how the Bible can help explore attitudes to poverty and low pay.

Preparation

You will need copies of the Bible reading, Matthew 20:1–15 (right), or a Bible to read it from.

Time needed

20–30 minutes

What to do

1. Read the parable of the workers in the vineyard. Ask the group or class for their immediate reaction, which may well be that it wasn't fair giving the same wages to those who started work in the afternoon as to those who had started in the morning.
2. Explain to the students that in Jesus' time employment was extremely insecure. Men would wait in the marketplace, hoping to be hired. The farmer trying to get in the grape harvest had to keep returning to hire extra workers. Then comes the explosion: "It's not fair!" And it isn't. You could make a connection with modern concerns over insecurity and zero-hours contracts. What is the message of this story? Is it yet another instance of Jesus turning worldly values on their head? In God's eyes all the workers were of equal worth.
3. Ask students what would happen if we tried to apply this principle today. Would everyone join in with the outrage of those workers? What impact would a stronger notion of sharing money have on the whole of our economy and wider society?
4. Follow the discussion with a few moments of silent reflection. Light a candle at the front of the class or group if you like. Then you could ask each person to write on a slip of paper one thought they would like to keep or action they are going to take as a result of listening to and reflecting on the messages. If appropriate, ask them to bring their thoughts to put round the candle.
5. As an alternative, you could adapt the parable of the workers in the vineyard into a whole class role-play. You could act as the landowner, and divide the class up into five groups, corresponding to the workers hired at the first, third, sixth, ninth and eleventh hours.

The parable of the workers in the vineyard

Matthew 20:1–15

THE kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard. He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard.

About the third hour he went out and saw others standing in the market-place doing nothing. He told them, "You also go and work in the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right." So they went.

He went out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour and did the same thing. About the eleventh hour he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, "Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?"

"Because no one has hired us," they answered.

He said to them, "You also go and work in my vineyard."

WHEN evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, "Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first."

The workers who were hired about the eleventh hour came and each received a denarius. So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. "These men who were hired last worked only one hour," they said "and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day."

BUT he answered one of them, "Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn't you agree to work for one denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?"

(New International Version)

activity 5: low pay **on our doorstep**

Find out whether anyone within your school or church is being paid less than a Living Wage.

Time

This is a 'homework' exercise which will need to be carried out over a week or two.

What to do

1. Get the group to draw up a list of the different kinds of people who are employed by the school, church or any associated projects. This may include cleaners, classroom assistants, lunchtime organisers, secretaries, caretakers as well as teachers and clergy.
2. Agree within the group how you are going to find out what the various people are paid - this may be by asking the workers themselves, or by approaching someone who has responsibility for money and pay (e.g. the treasurer, secretary or headteacher). Make sure you collect the information in a way in which you can calculate their hourly rate of pay – i.e. you will need to know what their weekly income is and how many hours a week they work.
3. Get the group to bring back what they have found out, and discuss the findings. Discuss whether people are being paid more or less than you thought. Use this information to identify if anyone is being paid less than a Living Wage (£7.85 an hour, or £9.15 in London, as of spring 2015).
4. Encourage the group to discuss whether it is appropriate to argue for a higher wage, and if so, how they might go about doing so.
5. One action might be to encourage the Church Council (or equivalent) or School Governors to work towards becoming a Living Wage Employer (see next page).

The remuneration of work is not something that can be left to the laws of the marketplace; nor should it be a decision left to the will of the more powerful. It must be determined in accordance with justice and equity; which means that workers must be paid a wage which allows them to live a truly human life and to fulfil their family obligations in a worthy manner.

Pope John XXIII, in the 1961 encyclical *Mater et Magistra*

activity 6: become a **living wage employer**

Your church or school can set an example to other employers by becoming an official Living Wage Employer.

If your church or school isn't already paying a Living Wage, you could work to ensure that they start doing so. Once you are paying a Living Wage, you can be accredited by the Living Wage Foundation, and set an example to other employers. Here are some pointers if you want to take action:

In your local church

If your church isn't already paying the Living Wage, you should make sure that your church council or governing body is aware of what your denomination has said about this at a national level (see page 2). If they still need to be persuaded, Church Action on Poverty can help you to put the moral, theological and economic case for paying the Living Wage. See www.church-poverty.org.uk/livingwage or call us on 0161 236 9321.

Once you are paying a Living Wage, you can find out how to get accredited by the Living Wage Foundation at www.livingwage.org.uk/employers

In your school

UNISON, the UK's largest education union, has worked with the Church of England and the Catholic Church to produce a briefing and plan, designed to help church schools work towards paying a Living Wage and then to become Living Wage employers.

The resource includes background information, notes on how to make the case for paying the Living Wage, an outline of the process for accreditation, and notes on key issues and how the Living Wage applies to different categories of staff.

You can download the briefings and plans at www.unison.org.uk/our-campaigns/unison-campaigns/a-living-wage/resources

