

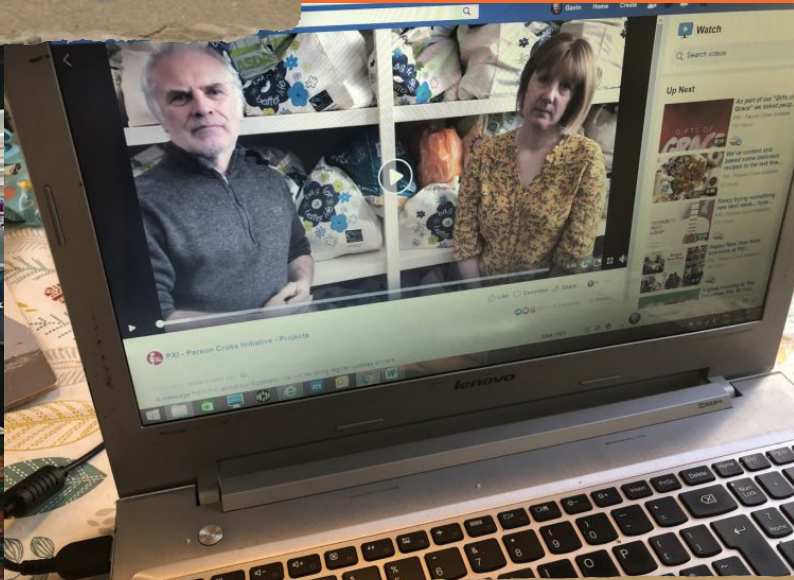
Reading
recommendations:
page 15

spark

news from Church Action on Poverty
summer 2020

Help keep
the Pantry stocked
page 10

Staying connected
through poetry
page 14



Staying connected

No one should be cut off or left behind
during the coronavirus outbreak



Untold Stories

scripture from the margins

Five Bible studies on the Gospel of Matthew

By Chris Howson, Nick Jowett, Marie Pattison, Sue Richardson, David Rhodes and Ruth Wilde



Listen to unheard voices and new perspectives – explore the challenge to be on the side of people on the margins

Great for individual reflection or as a Lent programme in your church

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

No one left behind



The coronavirus outbreak must not be allowed to sweep people further into poverty, says Church Action on Poverty Director **Niall Cooper**.

The numbers swept into poverty in the past month are on a scale unseen since the Great Depression nearly a century ago. Whilst the measures taken to tackle the threat posed by the global coronavirus pandemic are undoubtedly essential, the economic cost is disproportionately falling on the poorest and most vulnerable.

According to research published in the past week, a staggering 14 million people in the UK have experienced some kind of income shock since the start of the crisis. Worryingly, 43% of people who have reported a loss of income – some 6 million people – do not think that they are eligible for any Government help. So, whilst Government measures to mitigate the impact have been impressive, there is growing evidence that hundreds of thousands – and potentially millions – will slip through the

net, and face increasing poverty and destitution.

The response at community level, by churches, food banks, and other local projects, has been heroic, with many seeing a doubling or trebling in the numbers turning to them for support. The blossoming of 'mutual aid' groups across the country is heartening.

As you will read in this edition of *SPARK*, we're doing our bit to ensure that we stay connected with our grassroots activists, local partners and supporters. Our network of Local Pantries are all determined to stay open for their members through the crisis. However, it is clear that charitable and voluntary action cannot avert the scale of crisis of poverty now affecting millions of people across the country.

In the light of this, further 'bold and courageous' Government action is required to match some of the radical measures being rolled out by nations in the grip of the crisis.

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give

Church Action on Poverty Sunday raised over £5,000 - thank you!
See page 4

act

Urgent action needed to ensure coronavirus outbreak doesn't make people go hungry
See page 5

pray

Take time to read and reflect with poetry and Bible studies
See pages 14 and 15

news

Speaking Truth to Power on Church Action on Poverty Sunday

On 23 February, churches around the UK joined us in worship for Church Action on Poverty Sunday, reflecting on the theme of 'Speaking Truth to Power'.

Over 100 churches and groups ordered resource packs to take part. Churches held worship services using our prayers, organised soup lunches, invited speakers, took collections, and read out our letter challenging the UK's denominations to stand alongside people in poverty (see page 6).

At the time of writing, Church Action on Poverty Sunday has raised at least £5,000 to support more people to speak truth to power about their experiences of poverty. Thank you to everyone who took part!



A soup lunch at St Cuthbert's Birkby, in Huddersfield

Church Action on Poverty North East held an event in Gateshead, attended by over 300 people



Churches on the Margins in Manchester

We're delighted that we can now launch an in-depth 'Church on the Margins' programme in Greater Manchester, with support from Methodist Action for Poverty and Justice and the Sir Halley Stewart Trust.

We'll be working in partnership with the Methodist District and other church bodies, building a network of churches that are working in marginalised communities. We'll create space for them to reflect theologically on their mission, and share their stories as a challenge to the wider church to prioritise people on the margins. We're also doing research into how churches allocate their resources in our poorest communities.

As part of this project, we welcome Revd Deirdre Brower-Latz (pictured below) to our staff team – she will be facilitating the 'Church on the Margins' network as it grows.

We have had to adapt our plans to take account of lockdown during the coronavirus outbreak. We're working remotely to build the network. We are also holding a weekly online discussion group on Thursdays at 2pm, for anyone interested in what it means to be church on the margins. If you're interested, sign up at www.church-poverty.org.uk/poorchurch



Talking About Poverty

In February, Church Action on Poverty was proud to work in partnership with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) and Greater Manchester Poverty Action on an inspiring conference. 'Talking About Poverty' explored how new ways of framing the issue, based on thorough research by JRF, can challenge prejudices about UK poverty and build support for political action.

Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, was one of the speakers. More importantly, people with lived experience of poverty took a lead throughout the event.

Find out about framing poverty at www.jrf.org.uk/our-work/talking-about-poverty



Urgent cash payments needed



Church Action on Poverty Director **Niall Cooper** arranged this open letter calling for bold and courageous Government action.

The compelling case for a one-off cash payment to every household in the country

The numbers swept into poverty in the past month are on a scale unseen since the Great Depression nearly a century ago. According to research by YouGov for the Food Foundation published last weekend, over 5.3 million people – 1 in 10 of the population – have lost at least half of their income virtually overnight.

There is an increasingly compelling case for an urgent one-off cash payment to every household in the country, to ensure they have the means to buy food, pay rent and bills, and tide them through the next few months, and to provide the economic stimulus to kickstart the economy once shops and businesses, pubs and restaurants start to reopen in the coming months.

Whilst the measures taken to tackle the threat posed by the global coronavirus pandemic are undoubtedly essential, the economic cost is disproportionately falling on the poorest and most vulnerable. Government measures to mitigate the impact have been welcome and impressive, but there is growing evidence that millions of people are ineligible, or have not yet applied for assistance and face the imminent prospect of poverty and destitution.

It is clear that the unprecedented scale of the crisis requires wholly new solutions. As Chancellor Rishi Sunak has said, the support needed is “on a scale unimaginable only a few weeks ago. This is not a time for ideology and orthodoxy, this is a time to be bold – a time for courage.”

We therefore call on the Prime Minister and Chancellor to consider making an urgent payment of £1,000 to every household in the country, to ensure that no one is left in debt or destitution as a result of the crisis.

Niall Cooper, Director, Church Action on Poverty

Rt Rev Paul Bayes, Bishop of Liverpool

Baroness Ruth Lister of Burtersett, House of Lords

Sue Pritchard, Director, The Food Farming & Countryside Commission

Peter Kelly, Director, The Poverty Alliance

Claire Pritchard, Chair, London Food Board

Simon Duffy, Director, Centre for Welfare Reform

Dr Martin Caraher, Professor Emeritus Food and Health Policy, University of London

Paul Cloke, Professor of Human Geography, University of Exeter

Elizabeth Dowler, Emeritus Professor in Food & Social Policy, University of Warwick

Dr Chris Shannahan, Associate Professor in Political Theology, Coventry University

Peter Taylor-Gooby OBE, Professor of Social Policy, University of Kent

Dr Dave Beck, Lecturer of Social Policy, University of Salford

Dr Megan Blake, Senior Lecturer in Human Geography, University of Sheffield

Alison Briggs PhD Research Student, Human Geography, University of Manchester

Dr Kayleigh Garthwaite, Fellow, Department of Social Policy, University of Birmingham

Dr Hannah Lambie Mumford, Research Fellow, SPERI, University of Sheffield

Dr Rachel Loopstra, Lecturer in Department of Nutritional Sciences, King's College London

Rev Canon Dr Ellen Loudon, Director of Social Justice, Diocese of Liverpool

Dr Chris Möller, Postdoctoral researcher, Aberystwyth University

Dr Charles Pemberton, Tutor, St Chad's College, Durham University

Dr Maddy Power, Research Fellow, Department of Health Sciences, University of York

Dr Flora School, Reader in the School of Nursing and Midwifery, Robert Gordon University

Dr Samuel Strong, Junior Research Fellow in Geography, University of Cambridge

Dr Callum Sutherland, School of Geographical and Earth Sciences, University of Glasgow

Geoff Tansey, curator, Food Systems Academy

Dr Andrew Williams, Lecturer in Human Geography, University of Cardiff

Dee Woods, Granville Community Kitchen and Chair, Independent Food Aid Network

We call on the Prime Minister and Chancellor to consider making an urgent payment of £1,000 to every household in the country, to ensure that no one is left in debt or destitution as a result of the crisis

Churches must listen to the **cry of the poor**

On Church Action on Poverty Sunday (23 February), we published an open letter to the UK's churches – with backing from almost 500 church leaders in communities across the country.

Our letter to the churches

There is a pressing need to bring the deepening crisis of poverty, afflicting many of our families and communities, to the centre of our life together as a nation.

Brexit debates and the recent General Election have revealed and exacerbated painful divisions in society. Far too many feel left behind, ignored and marginalised. As local churches, we bear witness to these realities in communities the length and breadth of the UK, and to the powerful currents that continue to sweep so many into debt and destitution.

The Church cannot remain silent for as long as this situation continues to exist. For us, this is a matter of faith: it is about responding to the gospel priority to put the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable first.

As churches, we must redouble our efforts not just to alleviate the symptoms of poverty, but to call out the root causes, systems and structures which ensnare so many in poverty today.

At local level, we commit to becoming genuinely part of a 'church at the margins' where those on the margins of society feel welcomed, where their God-given dignity is recognised, and where their talents, hopes and visions for the future are celebrated and affirmed.

At national level, we call on our church institutions to commit to the task of becoming a true church at the margins and to properly resource this, as a genuine expression of the gospel priority for the poorest and most vulnerable.

Above all, as churches we are compelled to speak truth to power, with and alongside those whose voices are consistently ignored by those in power in corporate, media and public life. Poverty and gross inequality are not acts of God, but structural defects that can be corrected. Speaking truth to power is a task for the whole Church, and one given greater urgency now, amid political debates that continue to expose the divisions within society.

As the Lord heard the cry of his people in exile in the Old Testament and intervened, let churches hear the cry of the poor in our neighbourhoods, and work with them to realise a vision of a society in which all can enjoy life in all its fullness.

The Church must hear the cry of the poor and act. It must step alongside those who have been swept into poverty and work with them to challenge the systems that pull people down. Many churches are doing wonderful work in their own neighbourhoods, but we need such action everywhere, and national leaders must prioritise that. We thank everyone who has signed this letter, and hope it begins a sea-change in the priorities of the Church as a whole.

Many of the signatories read the letter aloud in their Church Action on Poverty Sunday services.

Rev'd Andy Delmege, an Anglican vicar and director of the National Estate Churches Network, is one of the signatories. He said: "I have signed this letter because it is more vital than ever that our churches prioritise communities

that are being ignored, pushed aside and left behind. We must ensure that every community can flourish, bringing God's love and hope to those in need."

Rev'd Dr Clare McBeath, Co-Director of the Centre for Theology and Justice, said:

"I have signed this letter to remind our churches of their calling to stand alongside marginalised communities and speak out for justice."



"Churches are often good at helping people when they are on the street, but they need to challenge the poverty that has put people on the street in the first place. With more church support, other people would also listen more to people in poverty."

speaking **TRUTH**
to **POWER**
Putting faith into action
www.church-poverty.org.uk/churchletter

Woolly food for **MPeas**



Before the coronavirus outbreak, Campaigns and Events Intern **Felicity Guite** was busy sending out 650 bulky packages. She explains the story behind a creative campaign action.

End Hunger UK has taken to craftivism as a way of campaigning about food poverty. For months, supporters have been knitting and crocheting an amazing array of food items. We have received: mountains of fruit and veg, cakes, sandwiches, burgers, eggs, and much more (even a couple of prawns!) In total we received a whopping 808 pieces of food!

As someone with no knitting ability myself, I have been very impressed with everyone's craft skills, and their dedication to making a powerful statement about the need to tackle food poverty.

We have now sent every MP in the country at least one piece of woolly food (and in some cases two or three), along with a copy of the *Why End UK Hunger?* report. This was published last year by End Hunger UK, outlining why it is so important to end hunger in the UK on the basis of seven key 'cases': the moral case; the child's case; the health case; the secure income case; the human right's case; the political case; and the public opinion case.

The time and care that so many people across the country have put into making all this knitted food makes a powerful statement. It will highlight to the MPs that this is an issue that we as a society care deeply about, and will hopefully encourage them to take action. We have asked them to keep their woolly food item in a prominent place as a visible reminder of the importance of ensuring that everyone in the UK has access to good food and no one needs to go hungry.

So far Toby Perkins, the MP for Chesterfield, has tweeted a picture of himself holding the knitted lemon we sent him and his copy of the report. We hope that more MPs will tweet pictures of the woolly food they have received. Follow @EndHunger_UK on twitter and #WhyEndHunger to see more of the MPs' responses.

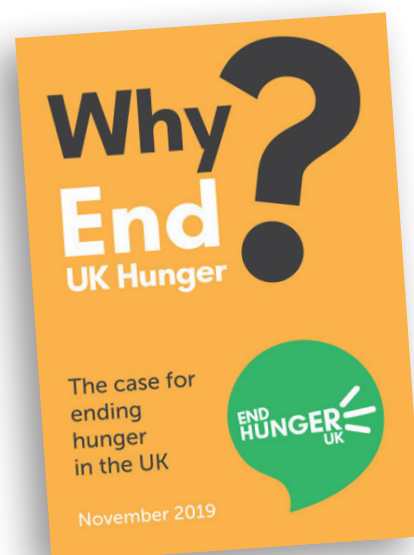
It has also been great to have so much knitted food in the office., as it has helped us engage with more people in creative ways, even before we sent it off to the politicians. In the run-up to Christmas we had great fun trying to come up with as many food-related Christmas puns as possible, and every day throughout Advent we posted one of these puns, along with a picture of the woolly food, on our social media as an advent calendar. Some of our favourites were: 'Peas on earth', 'In the leek midwinter', and 'Away in a mangetout'.

Thank you so much to everyone who dedicated their time, energy and craft skills to making these brilliant pieces of food, and fighting food poverty in a creative way!



We support
END HUNGER UK

You can
download your
own copy of
the report at
www.church-poverty.org.uk/whyendhunger

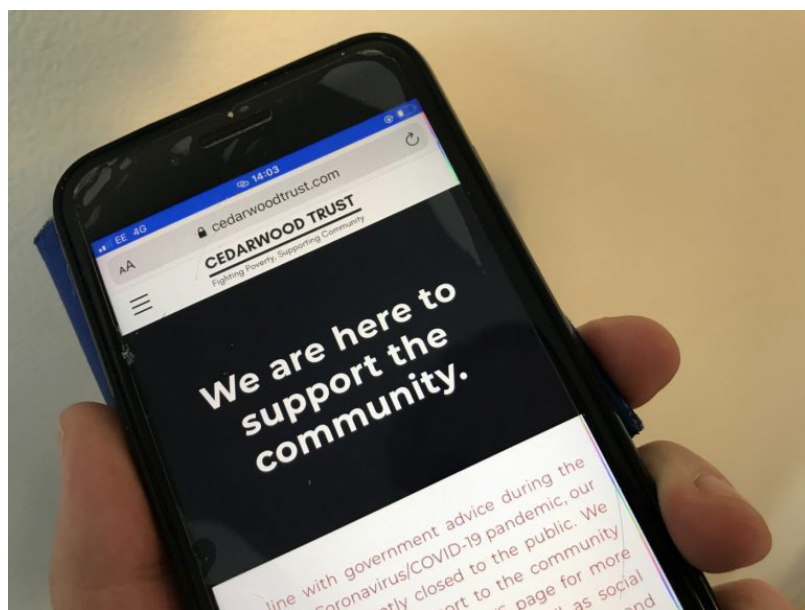


How do we remain closely connected...



Poverty Media Coordinator **Gavin Aitchison** explores what has been a fundamental question for churches, charities and community projects all over the country, during the coronavirus outbreak.

We all must play our part in slowing the spread of the virus, but in finding new ways to deliver vital services and support, community has been maintained and sometimes even strengthened. Many of our partners have been leading the effort in their communities.



The **Cedarwood Trust** on the Meadow Well estate in North Shields closed even before it was forced to, conscious of the underlying health concerns of many of the regulars.

Some community work moved online, with the charity hosting conversations, quizzes and audio messages on its social media pages, but much was also done out and about in the community as well, for as long as distancing rules allowed. By the time the Prime Minister ordered a major lockdown on 23 March, the charity had already distributed 2,400 leaflets locally offering support, cooked 181 meals for local families including 55 people in isolation, was working with the food bank to identify and support families in need, and was making more than 20 phone calls a day to local people.

Wayne Dobson, chief executive, says: "It has been really important still keeping community going, even though the centre is closed."

Meeting the needs of people who do not have internet access has been a widespread challenge. At **Thrive Teesside** in Stockton, manager Tracey Herrington says:

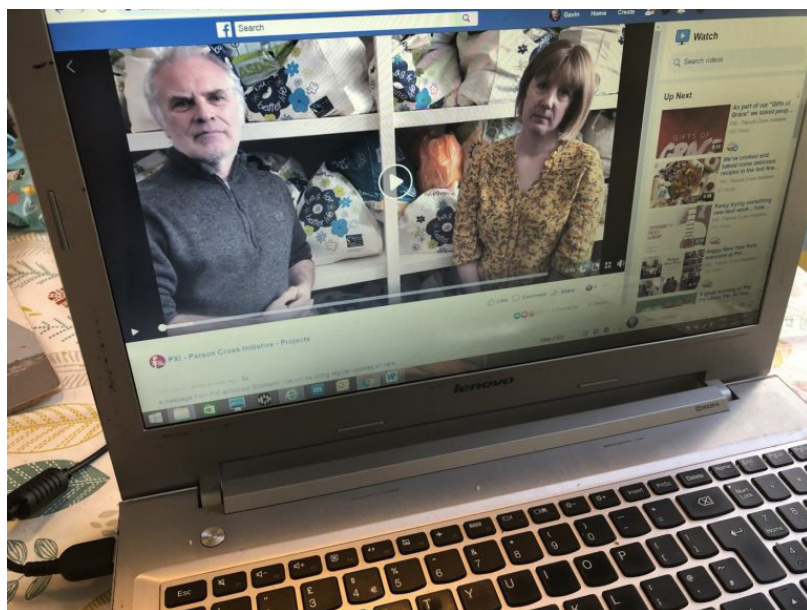
"Many of our beneficiaries are not connected to the internet, and we have been doing more calls to check on people and to stay connected, and to respond to queries. There are situations where people were maybe not aware of schemes that were available for support. So much that happens in a community is only advertised online and we need to ensure everyone is contacted. There are a lot of people who have only just been keeping afloat. It's not about what's right or wrong in what's happening, but the reality is they will not stay afloat any more. Incomes were already inadequate and contracts did not cover priority bills. The repercussions going down the line will be massive and this highlights that, if you do not have people with experience of an issue, you cannot fully understand the implications when something happens."

...while **keeping our distance?**

It's a similar picture in Sheffield, at **Parson Cross Initiative (PXI)**. Nick Waterfield, from the project, says: "We want people to know we have not disappeared; we are just not there at the moment. We too have a lot of people without internet access, including some of our volunteers, but we have other volunteers ringing round to check on people."

PXI has long run a range of community projects through the week, and it has tried to stick to the schedule online, such as by hosting food-related videos when the cookery club would ordinarily be on. "The idea is to keep the rhythm of the community going," says Nick. The charity teamed up with other food banks in Sheffield for its food distribution work, but Nick says:

"Among the clamour to keep food banks open, let's remember they were never the answer to poverty in the first place and they're not the answer now. They're prioritising food bank workers as key workers, but that's insanity and insulting. They're expecting our volunteers to put themselves on the front line because they're not putting enough money into people's pockets."



All projects that provide **food aid** faced enormous pressure but have been adapting as much as possible. Many were already facing unsustainable levels of need, and knew that society could not allow more people to be swept into debt and destitution. Brighton and Hove Food Partnership drew up plans with all its partners in the city, sourcing and distributing food, checking in by phone with vulnerable and isolated people, and setting up an online fundraising campaign to pay for bulk purchases to meet need.



Share your story of staying connected

How has your project changed the way it works, and how is it maintaining community?

Email
gavin@church-poverty.org.uk

Keeping the **Pantry** open – and stocked



Gillian Oliver, Your Local Pantry Development Officer, explains how the network is getting food to neighbours in lockdown. New delivery services have been added to the Pantry service during this national crisis.



St George's Pantry, Everton: a new delivery service

Peckham Pantry, London: using a larger space



We are reporting a record-breaking month for visits in March – more than 1,000 visits, compared with 850 in Feb and 700 in January. Together, we are reaching 3,600 adults and children through our 1,400 members.

As I write this, our Your Local Pantry projects remain more open than closed across the network, as they are essential sources of food for their communities and members – particularly given the number of people now facing severe food insecurity (8.1 million, according to the Food Foundation).

Nationally, we are seeking funders and partners to help us develop a new 'Pop-up Pantry' model that will help people get a Local Pantry set up at speed, and respond to people who are in need because of the coronavirus outbreak. At a local level, Pantries are trying out innovative ways of ensuring members continue to have access to good, affordable food:

- At **St Luke's Church in Peckham**, the Pantry had to move from their usual small room into the main hall (pictured), to allow more space between people, and unexpectedly created a quicker and more effective system in the process.
- Mark at **Manna House Pantry** in Halesowen reports: "We didn't want to just deliver a bag of food – so we phone the member and talk them through what we have and they choose. We then pack the items and deliver them." Meanwhile, they contact members who can still come in to make an appointment, and because they have a lounge and foyer they can follow guidelines on distancing.
- The newly opened **St George's Pantry** in Everton have set up a new delivery service (pictured), with volunteers packing bags for delivery while observing distancing rules.
- **Smethwick Pantry** had to leave its library home when the library shut, but quickly set up at a community centre and issued new guidance. They made all their visits free, and managed to serve 30 members at their first session.
- At **Lighthouse Pantry** in Middleton (Greater Manchester), they had to stand down volunteers aged over 70 – but new younger recruits quickly emerged. The volunteers who have to stay at home are now linked up on WhatsApp, where they are loving hearing how the Pantry is going. The Lighthouse Centre has closed all its amazing community services except for the Pantry and the food bank.

Well done everyone for smiling through!

Your Local Pantry: a growing network

Church Action on Poverty helps communities to set up 'Your Local Pantry' member-run food clubs, run by volunteers for the benefit of their members in low-income communities.

A Pantry is a membership scheme aimed at helping people make their money go further by:

- reducing food shopping bills (members can save over £500 each year);
- providing advice and support;
- developing skills.

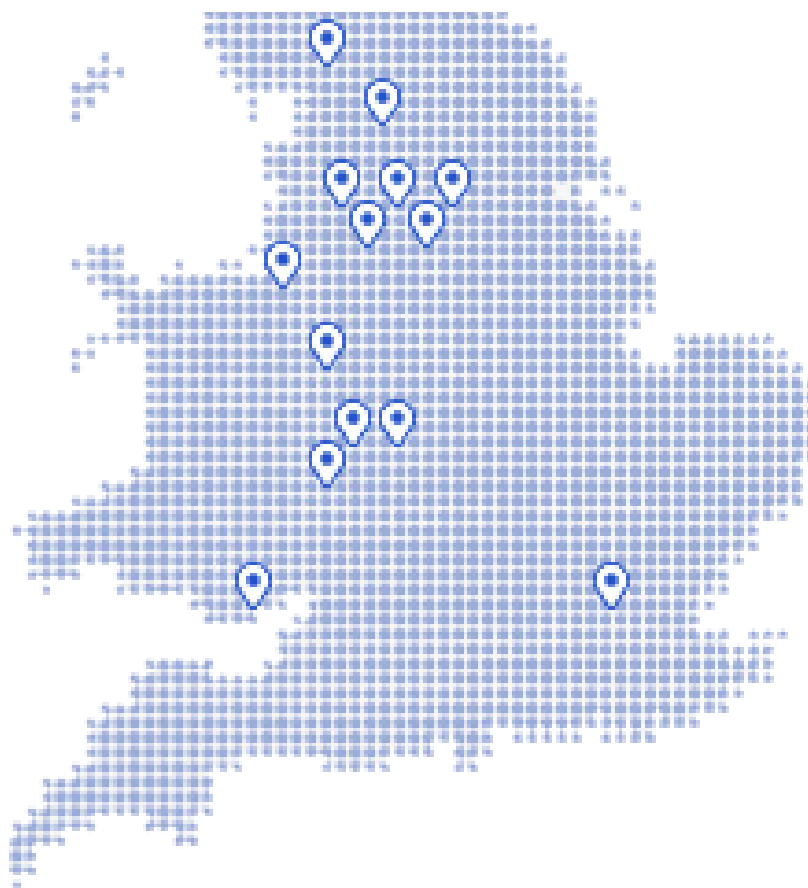
Local Pantries mean people can bring down their food shopping bills, and access good food, whilst freeing up more money for other essentials and enabling tight budgets to stretch a little further. They mean that people can stay afloat in tough times, rather than being swept into debt, and also promote new skills, combat isolation and improve health.

"The food is very good for people who are struggling, for poor families on benefits like myself. It's food we wouldn't be able to buy."

A member and volunteer at the Dusty Forge pantry in Cardiff

There are now 14 Your Local Pantry stores across England and Wales, with more on the way.

Visit www.yourlocalpantry.co.uk to find out more.



Your Local Pantry projects remain more open than closed across the network



You can help make sure your Local Pantry is stocked

At each Local Pantry, we insist on offering fresh, chilled and frozen food as well as long-life and tinned. Wherever possible, members have a choice about what to put in their basket.

Now and again, Your Local Pantry needs a top-up of fresh, frozen or seasonal food. If you want to top up the Pantry when something is needed, but hasn't been donated, you can.

Our 'Pantry Friends' scheme lets you make a cash donation to your nearest Local Pantry. Set up a regular donation, and you become a Friend of the Pantry – changing lives, and getting rewards and updates from the Your Local Pantry network.

Find out how you can donate now at www.yourlocalpantry.co.uk/friend

Living through lockdown



The coronavirus outbreak is having a particular impact on people who were already on low incomes. Church Action on Poverty trustee **Stef Benstead** shares some reflections on how it's affecting her.

Stay connected

This is part of a series of reflections which Stef shared on our blog – visit www.church-poverty.org.uk to read the rest.



Stef's new book, *Second Class Citizens: The treatment of disabled people in austerity Britain*, is available at www.centreforwelfarereform.org

As someone with chronic illness, the lockdown imposed on society makes relatively little difference to me socially. My life was already a moderate version of what we now have.

Practically, the major impact for me is shopping. I used to buy online and arrange delivery for when my assistant would be in to put shopping away. Now I can't do that. Because I use a mobility scooter, I was able to access one of the early morning supermarket slots recently, but I'm not usually up at that time. By the end of the shopping I was feeling really quite ill, and I still had to queue through the checkout, get home and put everything away. I went back to bed for several hours and still feel slightly ill three days later.

The shopping itself was a bizarre feeling: all the most important products had large empty spaces behind them on the shelves, and by the time I found the paracetamol and the soap, there were no paracetamol-only tablets (I got some with caffeine, which I didn't notice until I got home) and the only soap was handwash and three luxury bars. I've read that the issue isn't stockpiling, but that people are buying more from supermarkets rather than cafes, restaurants etc; all the people doing as we're told and going shopping less often are therefore buying more with each shop; and the just-in-time, money-saving approach of the capitalist supply chain simply can't cope with a slight change in demand.

But the solution isn't to turn to delivery services. 30% of individuals used online grocery shopping in 2019 but it made up less than 10% of grocery sales. Yet some 12 million people, or 20% of the country, are disabled, and right now everyone with limited mobility, high susceptibility, high risk of complications, current coronavirus symptoms or sole responsibility for young children needs 100% of their grocery shopping to be online. Care workers, both social care, social work and healthcare should also be getting deliveries to reduce their role in transmission, given their high exposure. Yet the only people to whom the government guarantees access are the 1.5 million extremely vulnerable. That's well over 10 million people being utterly failed.

But getting delivery slots to disabled people isn't enough. Healthy people need to eat and wash too! If disabled people need to go shopping at 8am to get paracetamol and soap, how are the healthy people who are also struggling to get delivery slots to manage? We won't control the spread of the virus if healthy people can't wash, and there will be excessive suffering if the most basic drug, paracetamol, isn't available. Our healthy population is about to discover why getting paracetamol on prescription, rather than only 32 tablets at a time, can make such a difference – because the last thing you want to do (and right now should do!) is to go out to the chemist to get more paracetamol when you have a raging temperature and debilitating pain.

The just-in-time supply chain doesn't work. We urgently need much more rapid transport of food, hygiene and health products around the country for everyone. Not just the 1.5 million extremely vulnerable, not just the 12 million disabled, not just the over-70s, but everyone. Because everyone needs food and healthcare.

Media experts



Our Poverty Media Coordinator Gavin Aitchison shares some positive news from his work in the first few months of 2020.

Our media work at Church Action on Poverty is driven by a fairly straightforward knowledge: that people in poverty understand it better than anyone else.

That may sound obvious, but while poverty attracts much attention in the UK media, the coverage is often flimsy and fleeting because people who truly understand the issues are left out.

Much of the UK media turns repeatedly to clichéd and predetermined story formats, and even when people in poverty are interviewed, it is often only once a story is already written or nearing completion. ‘Case studies’ are sought for preconceived narratives, with little regard for the broader insights an interviewee may bring.

We seek to change that, and long-term supporters may recall that in 2016, we worked with the National Union of Journalists and people in poverty to produce a reporting guide.

In March, this work took a very encouraging step forward, when the NUJ hosted a round-table discussion event for journalists, people in poverty and charities including Church Action on Poverty.

Martin Green, one of our trustees, was among six participants with experience of poverty, from Halifax, York and London. They were joined by reporters, photographers and members of the union’s ethics committee. Further work will also now follow, and we hope to update the guide.

Topics of conversation at the event included the way that over-dramatic stock images skew public perceptions, painting a narrow and extreme understanding of poverty in the public eye.

We talked about the lack of diversity in newsrooms, with few journalists having grown up in poverty.

Sydney Corley, from York Food Justice Alliance, challenged media preconceptions about what audiences want.

“Journalists say they print what people want to read – but why not challenge them more to read something that challenges what they think?”

Mary Passeri, also from York, recounted her positive and negative experiences with journalists, and said:



Sydney Corley is part of York Food Justice Alliance and our community reporters programme

**Journalists say
they print what
people want
to read – but
why not**

challenge them more to read

something that challenges

what they think?



Read the NUJ guide to reporting poverty at www.church-poverty.org.uk/media

“You shouldn’t be making people in poverty feel like they’re on trial, to prove what they’re saying. Of course, fact-check things, but interview more sensitively and sincerely than sometimes happens.”

Fundamentally, the speakers with experience of poverty called for deeper relationships with journalists and a more collaborative approach.

A few weeks earlier, that very approach showed how complicated issues can be conveyed powerfully and clearly to a large audience. Mary and Sydney both campaign around food poverty but also have personal experience of the complexities and inadequacies of carer support in the UK. We worked with Joseph Rowntree Foundation and BBC News over a series of discussions, and Mary and Sydney then told their stories on the BBC News at Six, to an audience of millions, showing how the lack of support keeps people trapped in poverty, and outlining what could help to make a difference.

Staying **connected** through **poetry**



During the coronavirus outbreak, **Matt Sowerby** has been Church Action on Poverty's Poet in Digital Residence, sharing performances and leading workshops on our social networks and at virtual meetings. Here are a couple of the poems Matt and our supporters have shared.

Signs

(Stitched together from signs seen around the town during the outbreak)

To all our dear clients
After much consideration and sleepless nights
Temporarily closed
We hope this won't be permanent but it's a scary time
and we are a family business
But ultimately, lives are at risk
The church remains open
and invites you to come in for private prayer
We have currently sold out of 1) thermometers;
2) antibacterial hand gel; 3) Calpol (under six years)
For online tuition please call
Our NHS and care workers are risking their health for us
No matter how much we try to keep up with sanitation guidelines
Delivery available to those that need it
Individuals are looking after their neighbours on every street
If you are not working and not being paid, ring me
and we will make sure that you do not go without
Flowers will still be available to buy for funerals
Putting together a box for residents to borrow books
Cars and local volunteer drivers available for medical appointments,
hospital visiting, any distance
The town's coronavirus mutual aid group has set itself a tremendous
task and deserves support from all those that can provide it
Keep smiling
We will see this through and build ourselves and each other up again
at the other side
We thank you for your loyalty and amazing support
There will be an end to this crisis
We look forward to welcoming you back
Stay safe
Matt Sowerby

May we
go ahead,
remembering
what we
missed,
and what
we didn't

Nobody saw it coming

It changed everything.
All those things that seemed
important yesterday,
Ofsted, SATs, spreadsheets of
data, observations,
suddenly wasn't.
We began to realise what was.
People,
keeping safe,
being happy,
little things like soap.
May we always remember
how it felt,
when the unimportant
important things came
crashing down.
Yet with them important
important things.
Like...
A child's hand held in safety,
Laughter of a game played
together with friends.
A trip to the zoo,
Lining up for school dinners,
Story time and reading books (in
real life, not online),
Walking with you and helping
you grow,
Saying goodbye with hugs and
handshakes.
And when we emerge once
again,
Instead of going back to normal,
May we go ahead, remembering
what we missed, and what we
didn't.
Liz Delafield

Find Matt Sowerby's poems online on Twitter @SowerbyMatt
or Instagram @sowerby_matt

Lockdown **media**



Do you have time on your hands during the lockdown? Communications Manager **Liam Purcell** suggests some books, TV and podcasts that could keep you occupied – and help you understand UK poverty and campaigning better!

Read

- ***Second Class Citizens: The treatment of disabled people in Austerity Britain* by Stef Benstead**

A powerful book by one of our trustees. Professor Peter Beresford, co-chair of Shaping Our Lives, said it provides “the definitive verdict on government welfare reform, the UK’s shame”. (See page 12 for some lockdown reflections from Stef.)

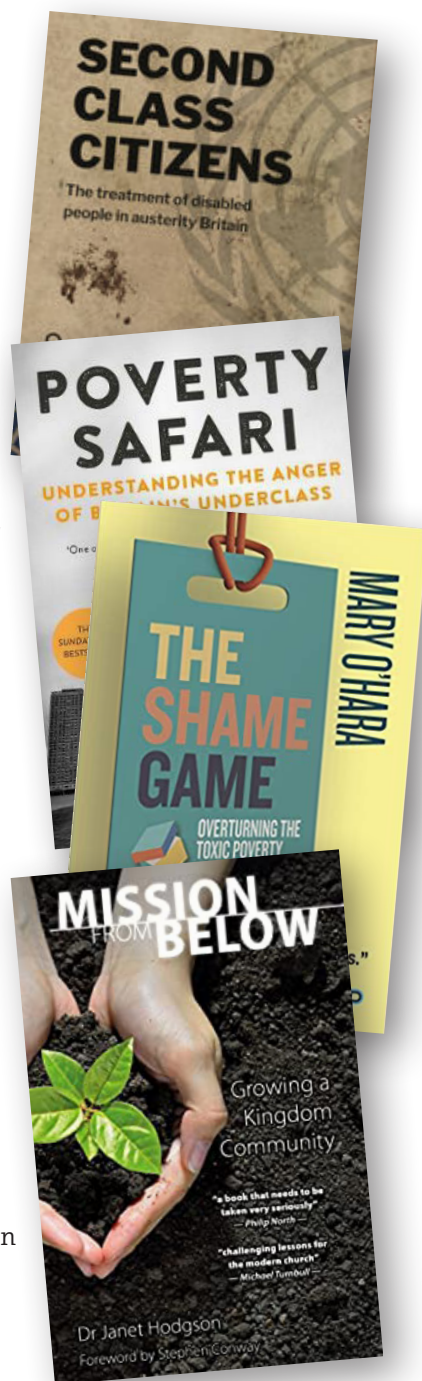
- ***Poverty Safari: Understanding the anger of Britain’s underclass* by Darren McGarvey**

A challenging, personal perspective on UK poverty and how to tackle it, drawing on Scottish rapper Loki’s own experiences of community activism and growing up in poverty.

- ***The Shame Game: Overturning the toxic poverty narrative* by Mary O’Hara**

Crucially, this book about changing the portrayal of poverty draws on the insights of people who experience it.

- ***Mission from Below: Building a kingdom community* by Janet Hodgson and Stephen Conway**
- How two nuns worked alongside local people to loosen poverty’s grip in a North East community. An inspirational story of church on the margins.



Listen

- ***Frame[s] of Mind***

A podcast about how language can help change people’s perceptions of issues – by the Frameworks Institute, who have helped develop innovative new frames for talking about UK poverty (see page 4). Available on iTunes or other podcast providers.

- ***Social Power***

A podcast from the Sheila McKechnie Foundation about social change and how to bring it about. Available on iTunes or other podcast providers.

- ***Sound Delivery***

This organisation has a wide range of audio available at <https://soundcloud.com/sounddelivery>, all sharing stories from people who have experience of poverty and other issues, and whose voices aren’t usually heard.

Watch

- ***Broken***

This 2017 BBC TV series (pictured below) by Jimmy McGovern is about a Catholic priest in a poor Liverpool community. It’s a powerful depiction of how the church can make a difference by sharing in people’s brokenness on the margins of society. It touches on issues Church Action on Poverty has campaigned on, such as high-cost lending. It’s available to watch on Netflix or YouTube.



Stay connected during the coronavirus outbreak

During this time, our gospel values are more important than ever. We need to maintain community. If we remember our common values and shared identity, we can make sure no one is cut off or left behind.

Church Action on Poverty's priority is to support everyone in our networks. We're creating spaces for reflection, prayer and community. We are sharing stories of how churches continue to be present in marginalised communities – and tips on how we can all cope during social isolation.

We regret that unavoidably, most of this has to happen online. But if you can't get online, we would still like to hear from you. You can write to us or ring us to share your stories – our contact details are on page 3.

Gather on the Margins

Every Tuesday at 2pm, we hold a 60-minute virtual 'Gathering on the Margins'. We use Zoom so it's easy to join with a laptop or smartphone, but you can also call in from a normal telephone.

Each week we explore a different theme, and there is...

- time for social connection;
- inspiring interviews;
- ideas for action;
- input by poet in digital residence Matt Sowerby.

Find out more and join us at www.church-poverty.org.uk/gatheringmargins

Online updates

Throughout the outbreak, we are regularly posting videos, stories, resources and reflections on our blog and social media – and sharing links to them in a weekly email bulletin. Highlights so far include poems from Matt Sowerby, reflections from food bank volunteers on the impact of the pandemic, and Stef Benstead (see page 12) sharing practical and theological thoughts.

You can stay connected with us by signing up for email updates or following us on social media. Visit www.church-poverty.org.uk/connected to find all the links.



Bible studies

You may have a lot of time for quiet reflection at the moment.

Why not use our 'Scripture from the Margins' series to guide you in reading the Bible? They're great for personal reflection, or you could meet virtually with a house group or study group.

Each publication uncovers the radical things scripture has to say about poverty and injustice, by focusing on voices and meanings that are usually left on the margins. *Dangerous Stories* looks at Jesus' parables. *Untold Stories* explores the Gospel of Matthew.

Download the Bible studies free at www.church-poverty.org.uk/bible, or call 0161 872 9294 to request a printed copy.

