



**Church Action
on Poverty
in Sheffield**

five years of pilgrimages against poverty

a reflection



**Pilgrims gather after our service in Sheffield Cathedral
at the start of the 2009 Pilgrimage Against Poverty.
(Each of our pilgrimages has started with a church service)**

Introduction

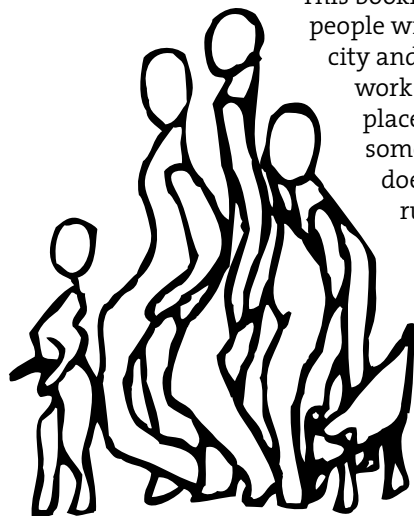
In 2009 we received a request from the national Church Action on Poverty. We were reminded that in 1999 there had been a Pilgrimage Against Poverty which travelled the length of the country, from Iona to London, with churches and communities along the way supporting the Pilgrims and joining in the Pilgrimage themselves. **All the local Church Action on Poverty groups were asked to organise a local event to mark the 10th anniversary of the original Pilgrimage and to draw attention to the fact that poverty still exists and must be eradicated.** We thought that we should respond to this; after all, it would be a one off event!

We had underestimated the interest and enthusiasm that would be shown in this first pilgrimage. Immediately after the finish, we were asked when the next one would be held, and this question has been asked every year, with the interest now having been sustained over five years. Each year we have chosen a different part of the city to walk through and have visited a variety of projects that work with people experiencing poverty and exclusion.

This booklet has been written to celebrate the witness shown by people willing to draw attention to the poverty existing in the city and, in particular, to the commitment of the people who work in the projects we have visited. We revisit many of the places we saw over the five years, and get up-dates from some of them. We know it is not a comprehensive list but it does illustrate how many and how diverse are the projects run by churches and other voluntary agencies in the city. Unfortunately, as several of the 'updates' emphasise, poverty in the city is increasing and, as government cuts have forced the reduction of some services, the demand for many kinds of assistance continues to grow. One major development between 2009 and now is the emergence of many food banks in the city.

We hope this booklet will stir some memories, initiate some reflection and encourage us to continue our campaigning.

For reasons of space, we have not included contact details for any of the projects listed. Most of them would be grateful for assistance in kind or financially. Details can be obtained by contacting our secretary on sarahbaker17@live.co.uk or on 07949 682 050.



**PILGRIMAGE
AGAINST
POVERTY 2009**

2009 Pilgrimage: to Arbourthorne

Route: Anglican Cathedral, city centre churches, Cholera Monument, Norfolk Park, Holy Family church, St Wilfrid's, St Mary's Bramall Lane

St Mary's Bramall Lane is a church which is also a community centre in Sharrow, a multi-cultural area with significant levels of deprivation. Since 2009, St Mary's has changed to an approach which values the unnoticed strengths and resources in the community – trying to find ways of enabling people to contribute, to belong and to build relationships. Central to this is a 'time bank', enabling people to earn time credits by making a contribution of some kind. These credits can then be used for some benefit, such as a meal, a party, an outing, or tickets for a football match. There is also a community café, enabling wasted food to be used to create great food; extensive teaching of English for people from migrant communities; an appreciative enquiry working with Pakistani women to empower them through exchanged stories; and a lunch club for 60 people each week.

Holy Family Church in Arbourthorne

On our first pilgrimage the church provided very welcome hospitality half way through our pilgrimage, not just tea/coffee but a very heartening stew. Since our visit the church has hosted two services for Sheffield Church Action on Poverty during Poverty & Homelessness Action Week, in 2012 and again in 2014 – not only providing the church premises and readers for some of the material for the service, but also refreshments. We are grateful to the Church to have had this opportunity to reflect on what the Bible says to us about social justice and to offer prayers for both local and national issues.



2010 Pilgrimage: to Burngreave

*Route: Anglican Cathedral, Emmaus, Burngreave Ashram,
St Catherine – Pitsmoor, Christ Church – Pitsmoor, The Furnival Centre*

Cathedral Archer Project – helping the homeless and vulnerable

In both 2009 and 2010 we started at the Anglican Cathedral, which hosts the Archer Project. News from the Project is mixed at the moment. On the positive side the project has been successful in acquiring funds to develop new work throughout 2013 and 2014. Alongside its usual service to homeless adults, offering support in times of crisis and longer term support which helps people move away from homelessness altogether, it now offers in-depth support to those who are persistently homeless. The work depends on a high level of collaboration between agencies to make sure the complexity of issues that help maintain a person as long term homeless can be addressed. The work is being assessed by Sheffield Hallam University to help identify the methods which are most useful in addressing long term and persistent homelessness.

On the negative side, 2014 will be a testing year after three years of relatively secure funding. Grants come to an end during the year which may mean the staff team and services are reduced. Funding is being sought to avoid this happening.



Emmaus

Emmaus is a charity for the homeless with a difference. Located on Cadman Street next to the Sheffield canal at Attercliffe, it is part of a wider national scheme. Emmaus offers accommodation for as long as it is needed to residents, known as Companions, who are given a room of their own, food, clothing and a small weekly allowance. None claims benefits. In return, all are required to work in the community social enterprise. A Cambridge University study a few years ago showed that every companion living in Emmaus saves the government £32,000.

And at the Sipelia Works Centre, close to the canal, there is plenty to do. There, Emmaus Sheffield runs a huge community shop selling furniture, bric-a-brac, household good, toys, books and records. It has recently opened a vintage clothes shop. It also offers a full PAT testing service for businesses.

Emmaus has been in the building for about six years, having spent the previous 12 years raising the money to buy it and then restoring and renovating part of it for residential as well as business use. Companions and staff are hoping to eventually raise sufficient funds to restore the remainder of the building and increase its residential capacity. Money is raised through its business enterprises, donations and Lottery funding. Graham Bostock, Community Manager, says: “We like to think that we offer a safe place for people who have been homeless to live and work. They all contribute to the life of the community here. We give them our trust and we offer them opportunities, support and hope for the future.”

Burngreave Ashram

In 2010, the mid-morning stop was at Burngreave Ashram. The Ashram at 80–86 Spital Hill began in 2001 as “a Sign of the Incarnation and a Place where Kingdom of God things might happen” on an inner-city shopping street. The first floor at number 80 provides accommodation for six asylum-seekers through ASSIST. The corner shop, 86, is a café/centre, where local community and health groups meet, and where Burngreave Ashram provides a Wednesday 6pm Free Meal for Homeless and Needy, through membership of FareShare. The basement houses the Multi-Faith Chapel and Library, where seminars, meditations and other activities take place. Burngreave Ashram is an entirely volunteer-run charitable project, part of the Radical Christian Ashram Community, which also sponsors three nearby Community Houses, and the New Roots veggie/vegan/fairtrade shop and centre at 347 Glossop Road .



2011 Pilgrimage: Manor/Castle

Route: Victoria Methodist Church Stafford Rd, Salvation Army (Castle Corps), St Oswald's Church, Manor Oaks Farm, William Temple Church, St Aidan's Church



Pilgrims
ascending
Skye Edge

Salvation Army (Duke St)

The Sunday Morning Breakfast project continues to serve around 40 people a week with a cooked breakfast. About one third are homeless and others come because of social isolation and other personal and financial reasons. There is an increase in people coming to breakfast because of food poverty with families occasionally coming with young children for something to eat. The food bank remains busy; this is now also part of the S2 Food Bank but emergency food parcels are still given out, on average 12 a week, to people from other areas of the city whose local food bank is not open at their time of need.

Emmaus Catholic and Church of England Primary School

During the stop for refreshments at St Oswald's Church there was an inspiring talk from the then headteacher, Mr Thomas, about how he and the staff tried to provide a consistently calm and welcoming atmosphere at the school, of especial benefit to those children who are under a great deal of stress in their home environment.

The school has 335 children, aged 3–11, on roll – a larger than average primary school, which resulted from the amalgamation of the former St Oswald's (RC) and St John's (CofE) schools, and is a joint venture of the Hallam Catholic and Sheffield Anglican dioceses. It continues to serve one of the most materially deprived areas of Sheffield.

Manor Parish (Church of England)

On this pilgrimage, Paul Blomfield MP joined us for a discussion during our lunch break at St Aidan's Church.

During the last year the Manor Parish has been involved in a pilot project with Church Action on Poverty called 'Listen Up', where a number of local people were interviewed to assess the impact of the new welfare reforms on people's lives. This has led to the development of a working group in partnership with other churches, community groups, local councillors and the MP, seeking to respond to the increasing levels of poverty in Sheffield 2. One practical development has been the establishment of the S2 Food Bank, involving a partnership between the churches and community groups in the area. All three Manor churches are collection points for food donations, whilst William Temple and St Swithun's provide a weekly session where food parcels can be obtained.

City view
from Manor/
Castle area





- 2009 — to Arbourthorne
- 2010 — to Burngreave
- 2011 — to Manor/Castle
- 2012 — to Gleadless Valley
- 2013 — to Hillsborough

2012 Pilgrimage: to Gleadless Valley

Route: Mother of God Church, Brunswick Trinity Church, St Wilfrid's Centre, Heeley City Farm, Church of the Nazarene – Heeley, Holy Cross Church – Spotswood Mount, Gleadless Valley Methodist Church

Roundabout

At Brunswick Trinity Church we heard about the work of Roundabout, Sheffield's charity for homeless young people. In 2013 Roundabout was able to renovate its emergency hostel on St Barnabas Road, which provides a safe place for vulnerable young people with nowhere else to go. Funded by South Yorkshire Housing Association and generous donations from trusts and the public, more rooms, all single and en suite, have been created and a fit-for-purpose training room to teach young people important life skills has been built. It is now a comfortable and modern place for the young people to live.

St Wilfrid's Centre

We stopped to pray for St Wilfrid's Centre close to where they intend to build their new residential project.

The aim of this project is to improve the quality of life of vulnerable people and help relieve the homelessness situation within the city of Sheffield.



The proposed
new St
Wilfrid's
Centre

The number of people declared homeless in Sheffield is increasing and the experience of those working within St Wilfrid's is that over 90% of them suffer or have suffered from mental health problems. In this project, clients would sign a contract to live there for up to two years and undertake life and employment skills training in the nearby day centre. Then they would be helped to find permanent accommodation and move on to live independently with the ongoing support of St Wilfrid's Centre.

At Gleadless Valley Methodist Church (pictured below) we heard about two of the food banks operating in the city, and have further news of each of them:

Gleadless Valley Food Bank

This has now been running a year and a half. During that time they opened their doors every Friday to people in need of food and a listening ear; they have joined together a brilliant group of volunteers and collected a lot of food from concerned individuals and businesses. It has been a privilege to spend time with the people who have used the food bank, to hear their stories and to meet a practical need. The team should like to open a second session earlier in the week in Heeley when they have found people to help with this. There's such a tension between the need, finding the best ways to serve people and the limitations of volunteer time. They hope to rise to these challenges in new ways this year.



Parson Cross Initiative Food Bank

PXI food bank is now known as SHARE, and does much more than simply hand out emergency food to individuals and families living in Parson Cross, Southey, Foxhill & Longley. The Friday afternoon sessions include a social aspect for people coming to the building, with diverse activities and now a monthly shared meal. But sadly demand for emergency food has continued to increase since 2012, when 95 people were helped with 353 days of food. Last year they assisted 694 people with 2,025 days of food. They also work with the Credit Union, and with Sheffield Advice Service and others to provide advice to those in crisis. Last year they also assisted local people in a variety of ways with a grant of £1,940 donated via a national website as part of an initiative from the Archbishop of York's office. This money has helped with many things, e.g. Debt Relief Orders, household equipment. SHARE is grateful to all those who have supported them and other food banks in the city with food, financial support, volunteer hours and prayer.

Note: There are now about 16 food banks operating in Sheffield as well as many less formal schemes.

2013 Pilgrimage: to Hillsborough

Route: St Andrew's Church, Weston Park, St Stephen's – Netherthorpe, Ponderosa, Uppertorpe, St Thomas Philadelphia, St Bartholomew's Church, Sacred Heart Church



St Andrew's United Reformed Church and other churches active in Broomhall

Our pilgrimage started with a service here and we learned about the church projects in Broomhall, many of which are run jointly with St Mark's Broomhill and Broomhall and Beacon Methodist Church in Broomhill. These projects include the provision of a worker with older people, a youth club for girls, a weekly social gathering at the Broomhall Centre, and a weekly Breakfast held in St Andrew's Church Hall, which attracts 40–50 people. St Andrew's also runs a project to provide starter packs for formerly homeless people who move into new accommodation and have no household equipment.

Nearby is the Jesus Centre which welcomes people of all backgrounds to its drop-in facility (with provision for laundry, food, and showers), its skills suite with IT facilities and courses on various subjects including ESOL, its community café and the food bank.

Recently, members of various churches have been carrying out 'Listen Up' interviews with people living locally or using Broomhall facilities. As in the Manor parish, the object is to explore how people cope with the many pressures on their lives, notably welfare reform.

The Vine Sheffield (formerly St Stephen's & St Bartholomew's)

Our pilgrims then visited the two linked churches of St Stephen's Netherthorpe and St Bartholomew, Langsett, both of which are very active in their local communities. Last year, after several years of working closely together, they joined together formally to form one new parish, the Vine Sheffield, serving Netherthorpe, Uppethorpe and Langsett. They operate as one church across two buildings.

Community engagement in the Netherthorpe area includes: community café run from the St Stephen's building; a youth club, conversation club and other activities in Edward Street flats (an area of social housing on the edge of the city centre); and various forms of engagement with Netherthorpe primary school. Community activities run from the St Bart's building include: a drop-in and support group for people with mental health problems; a weekly lunch and social activities for older people; two youth clubs; and the Food Cycle project – using volunteers and surplus food to create tasty and nutritious meals.

St Thomas Philadelphia

We were welcomed here for our lunch stop and heard about the work of Christians Against Poverty, an organisation which assists people who have got into debt.

Since including St Thomas on this pilgrimage, Church Action on Poverty in Sheffield has engaged in conversation with the church about how to bring issues surrounding poverty and social injustice more into their services, particularly with their young people. This has come about after the pilgrimage witnessed to them that the commitment of the pilgrims in matters of social justice and is ongoing.



At our final stop at **Sacred Heart Church** we heard about a number of social action projects run by churches in Hillsborough, including:

The food bank at Sacred Heart Church

This is available to people who call whenever there is someone in to answer the door at the presbytery. So the service is more 'out of hours' than other food banks, and is quite well used when other food parcel schemes are closed. It is funded by donations of money and of food from parishioners. They have a number of regular customers who may be homeless, have had their benefits stopped, are trying to cope with emergencies, or have been released without support from a short term in prison. We offer information about other food outlets and hot meal providers. One hears in the media some scepticism about food banks and their creation of a culture of dependency, but the experience in this parish is that the people who come to us are very much in need of the service that is offered, and that it is right to provide it.

St Polycarp's Soup Run

Each evening of the week, there is a Soup Run from an individual church which runs from September to the end of May, and we had heard an overview of the scheme during our opening service this year. St Polycarp's contribution has been in operation for 16 years, and goes out once a fortnight on a Thursday evening. About eight volunteers go to Eldon Street car park, taking provisions of food, drinks, warm coats, etc. The number of people attending has increased over the years with 35-40 attending each evening. The aim of the Soup Run is to help our city's 'homeless' and 'needy' people. St Polycarp's volunteers offer friendship, show care, and try to meet emotional and spiritual needs as well.

The Carmel Care Centre

This centre on Dykes Hall Road caters for people who have emotional and/or addiction problems. It offers both individual therapy and group therapy based on the 12-step programme, coupled with socially allied activities. The Centre has a Christian ethos welcoming people of all beliefs and backgrounds. It has a team of dedicated volunteers offering their services in support, hospitality and administration. Together with those who use the Centre they create an environment where everyone's contribution is valued.

Some comments from pilgrims

“All four pilgrimages I have been on have been excellent and thought-provoking. I have taken three services at church, based on the projects we visited, help at one of the food banks we heard about and, after speaking to another pilgrim, I also volunteer at a conversation club for women who speak English as a second language.”

“For the Methodists from Dronfield on the 2013 pilgrimage, the experience was very meaningful. It expanded our knowledge of ministries in Sheffield, but more importantly, deepened our compassion and our own commitment as Christians. I have since heard the pilgrimage invoked in various settings – a testimony to its impact on each of us. The contacts made as we walked in the rain and visited churches that day are continuing to bear fruit.”

“I went on the Pilgrimage, to Gleadless Valley. You get to see an area in quite a different way when you walk, and it was rewarding to get to know a bit about the backgrounds of other pilgrims. I particularly remember the work of Roundabout: how really important it has been for some young people. We heard about other projects, too; in the news you hear about the problems and not necessarily about all the helpful work which is going on. We talked about the growing gap between rich and poor in our society; of course this discussion is one which has not gone away.”

“It was uplifting to be part of a good turnout on an inclement day and to hear about the considerable efforts made by the churches we visited to help the less well off.”

“We found the whole event last year very interesting and revealing to learn about the many things that are being done by the churches in Sheffield. Living as we do in Dronfield where churches work well together in a small town situation, it was good to be aware of the possibilities for the churches working in the big city.”

“The first pilgrimage I went on was around Attercliffe and Burngreave. It meant a lot to me as I was visiting parts of Sheffield where my relatives had lived at the turn of the 20th century. As someone who had moved up to Sheffield from London, finding my roots in Sheffield was an incredible experience.”

“It’s been encouraging, inspiring and interesting over the years visiting the projects on the pilgrimages. They have taken us to places we would never have visited and to areas of Sheffield we would not have gone to either. The ecumenical side to the Pilgrimages are also important and enjoyable.”



Through Rollestone Woods in 2012



**Church Action
on Poverty**

The Sheffield group is part of a national movement for change. Find out how you can Give, Act and Pray to Close the Gap between rich and poor at www.church-poverty.org.uk