

Be part of
Challenge Poverty
Week – page 8



spark

news from Church Action on Poverty
autumn 2022

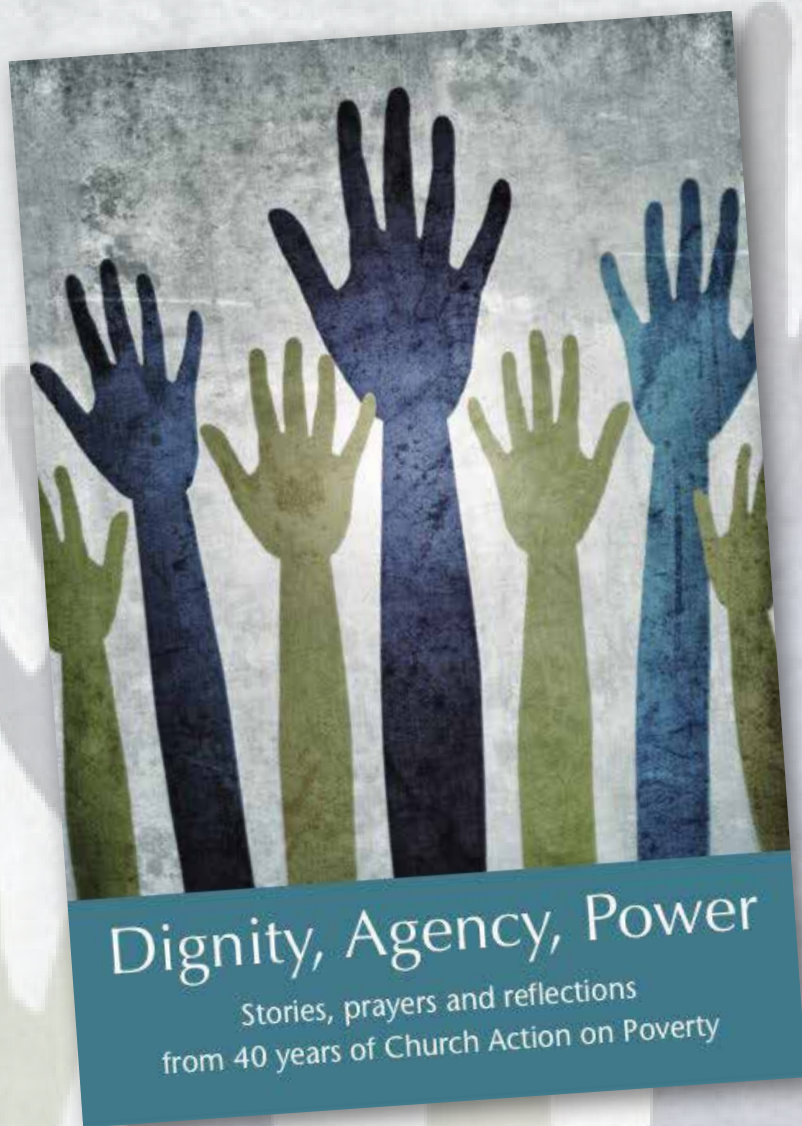
Responding to the cost
of living emergency
pages 5–7

Your Local Pantry
update
page 10



40 years of Church Action on Poverty

Reflections from Iona – page 10



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**40 years of
Church Action
on Poverty**

We must not be found wanting this winter



Urgent action is required from all of us in this cost of living emergency, says our Director Niall Cooper.

No one should have to face the choice between heating and eating. Everyone should have enough to live a decent life with dignity, and be able to play an active role in their community.

But this winter, the cost of living emergency could deny that vital dignity to thousands of people. Even people who are currently just about getting by could now be swept into poverty and destitution. Unless we take urgent action.

That emergency is our main theme in this issue of *SPARK*. You can read on page 5 about how faith leaders and charities are speaking out. We called for action, and the Government's mini budget in September completely failed to deliver what is needed.

We must continue speaking out. Churches in particular are called to dismantle the

structures that cause economic injustice. On pages 6 and 7 I look at how churches can speak out – and especially how we can be led by the real experts, those with lived experience of poverty.

We can also respond directly to the urgent need, with practical action like setting up Local Pantries. Our UK-wide network continues to grow, and you can read more about it on page 12. Could your church set up or support a Pantry?

Ensuring dignity for all in this emergency is the theme for this year's Challenge Poverty Week in England and Wales. See the centre pages for some simple ways you could get involved.

We face difficult times, but there is hope. If we in the churches really believe that the gospel is good news for people and communities, then we must stand together and uphold the dignity, agency and power of the people most directly affected by this crisis.

Church Action on Poverty

28 Sandpiper Court
Water's Edge Business Park
Salford
M5 3Ez
0161 872 9294
info@church-poverty.org.uk
www.church-poverty.org.uk
facebook.com/churchpoverty
twitter.com/churchpoverty
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give

Take a collection on Church Action on Poverty Sunday
See page 16

act

Speak out for dignity for all during Challenge Poverty Week
See page 8

pray

Pray for churches to respond to the cost of living emergency
See page 6

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news

Three choirs come together in Sheffield

'Soul Food: Fit For A Queen' was held at St Mary's on Bramall Lane this July, featuring three choirs led by Yo Tozer-Loft, who brings communities together through singing. Her work has been supported by Church Action on Poverty, and she has worked with us on several projects in recent years including in low-income neighbourhoods and with community food projects. The group sang gospel songs and a song specially written for the Platinum Jubilee. Yo said:

"Music is a soul thing. People come and they sing and they feel a real connection to themselves and each other. It's a very binding thing. Friendships form just because people are singing the same thing."



Reporting Poverty

An Early Day Motion has been tabled in Parliament, condemning the use of derogatory language which can lead to negative stigmatising. This is a really positive progression for the *Reporting Poverty* work that we and others have been involved in in recent years. It immediately puts this issue directly before MPs for them to consider, it highlights the concerns and reservations of people in poverty, and it calls for a united cross-party response.

To maximise the impact of this, we need your help. If you can, please contact your own MP and ask them to sign Early Day Motion 284, and tell them why this issue matters to you. You can find more information and tips at www.church-poverty.org.uk/reportingedm



events

Annual General Meeting 2022: Church on the Margins

7pm, 9 November, online

Hear about our work alongside churches on the margins, and how it challenges the wider church to place a greater priority on marginalised communities.

Find out more and book to take part at

<https://caopagm2022.eventbrite.co.uk>

Challenge Poverty Week England and Wales: 'Dignity for All – Living Not Just Existing'

17–23 October

Be part of a major national event, highlighting the impact of the cost of living emergency, and calling for action to ensure dignity for all.

Find out more on pages 8 and 9.

Pilgrimage on the Margins

During 2022, we are organising Pilgrimage at the Margins events across the UK, each hosted by a local partner church or organisation. We'll... amplify the truths revealed by people on the margins of society; share their vision of the future; and stand in solidarity with them in speaking truth to power. Upcoming Pilgrimage events include...

- 22 October, Sheffield
- 7 November, The Cedarwood Trust, North Shields
- 17 November, Edinburgh

Find out more and book to take part at

www.church-poverty.org.uk/40years/pilgrimage

Enough to live?

Church Action on Poverty has joined other faith and charity leaders to call for urgent action to support people on low incomes during the cost of living emergency.

With over 50 other leaders from faith communities, charities, frontline support organisations and trade unions, we signed this open letter to Prime Minister Liz Truss, ahead of the Government's 'mini budget' on 23 September.

The release of the letter coincided with new analysis from Professor Donald Hirsch, which calculates that despite the Energy Price Guarantee announcement made by the government on 8 September, a family of four receiving Universal Credit will still require an additional £1,391 over the next six months to stay warm and fed.

The letter (full text on the right) was signed by 52 charity, faith and community leaders, including representatives from The Methodist Church, The Muslim Council of Britain, The Hindu Council UK and Jewish leaders from across the UK, as well as charities and organisations such as The Food Foundation, the Child Poverty Action Group, Action for Children, The Big Issue and The Trussell Trust.

Sadly, the mini budget completely failed to meet the challenges we face. It delivered huge tax cuts for the super wealthy, while offering nothing to people on lower incomes except a tiny tax cut, and a price cap that will still leave us all facing huge increases in our energy bills. Church Action on Poverty trustee Stef Benstead (see page 14) described the support for people on low incomes as "derisory" and said: "Why are they giving a tiny amount of money to people who really need it, and a huge amount of money to people who don't?"

What next on the cost of living emergency?

- Niall Cooper discusses how churches should respond on pages 6 and 7.
- You could take part in Challenge Poverty Week England and Wales from 17 to 23 October, helping to ensure dignity for all during the cost of living emergency – see pages 8 and 9.

It is the urgent, moral responsibility of the Prime Minister to ensure that people on the lowest incomes have enough to live in the months ahead.

**50+ faith, charity and community leaders
write to the PM
Visit jpit.uk/EnoughToLive**

#EnoughToLive

As faith groups, charities, trade unions and front-line organisations we have seen the cost of living emergency escalating not only in the statistics but in the lives of people we meet day to day, in foodbanks, debt centres and in our places of worship. The least well off in our communities are facing the sharpest end of this crisis, and without substantial support will be dragged into destitution.

It is the urgent, moral responsibility of the Prime Minister to ensure that people on the lowest incomes have enough to live in the months ahead. Spiralling costs are affecting everyone, but for those who were already fighting to keep their heads above water this winter's challenges will be a matter of life and death.

The Energy Price Guarantee announced on 8 September, whilst welcome, hasn't gone far enough. Analysis published today by Prof Donald Hirsch indicates that the average family of four receiving Universal Credit will still need an additional £1,391 over the next six months to stay warm and fed. Low-income households need targeted financial support which takes into account family size and need, is distributed quickly and in amounts large enough to enable families to live decently this winter and beyond.

Increases in poverty and destitution because of this crisis are not inevitable, if government, business and civil society recognise that this is an emergency and act now. We believe that concerted action can turn the tide on poverty, see us through this winter and put us on the path to a poverty-free Britain. The government has the tools to deliver this at their disposal, and they must use them now.

How should churches respond to the **cost of living emergency?**



Church Action on Poverty Director **Niall Cooper** says that the way we answer this question will test and illustrate our faith. (An earlier version of this article appeared in the *Church Times* in August.)

Facilitators and a commissioner from a Poverty Truth Commission. Commissions show how people with experience of poverty can take the lead in designing solutions.

All around us, warning lights are flashing. We are in an economic emergency, and all the signs are that it will worsen severely this autumn and winter if nothing is done. In the 40 years since Church Action on Poverty was founded in 1982, there have been many times of economic hardship, but none to match the scale or urgency of the crisis currently facing millions of people.

There can be no greater priority for Liz Truss, the new Prime Minister. She must act urgently, with decisiveness and compassion. The energy proposals she unveiled in early September have softened some of the immediate threat and alarm, but time will tell whether they do enough to protect

We need a bold, transformative and long-term commitment to work with and alongside people and communities bearing the brunt of this crisis

households on low incomes. In the summer, Church Action on Poverty joined 55 other organisations in calling for an emergency budget and immediate action to support people who are already struggling the most, and it is likely more protection will be needed. Overall living costs for low-income households are predicted to rise by 14% this year, but benefits will have risen by only 3%. The Government has talked of riding out this storm, but that is only possible if we ensure the course ahead is clear and safe, and the lifeboats watertight.

Amid all this, what should the churches do? Supporting well-informed campaigns and pressing for urgent Government action is essential, but we have a role beyond that too. What is required is a bold, transformative and long-term commitment to work with and alongside people and communities bearing the brunt of this crisis.

Churches must reposition ourselves at the heart of neighbourhoods, invest in local leadership and work with partners, to build a social movement that enables people and communities to reclaim dignity, agency, and power together. This demands, in the words of Pope Francis, “a poor church, for the poor”.

What does that look like in practice?

Firstly, churches must not assume that ‘we know what is best,’ and resist the temptation to





do things *for* people in poverty. We must instead recognise that people with experience of poverty can be leaders, pioneers and innovators in their own right. Over the years, Church Action on Poverty has witnessed and supported many examples of transformational change that have come as a result of taking a lead from people who are themselves struggling against poverty.

We saw that at the first National Poverty Hearing organised by Church Action on Poverty at Church House Westminster in 1996. We see it today in the growing movement of Poverty Truth Commissions, which bring together people with direct experience of poverty and people in senior leadership roles locally, whose position means they can effect change. Over 12 to 18 months, participants engage in deep listening, and forming relationships. Having done this, they then develop practical actions together, based on the insights of people with first-hand experience of what needs to change – and frequently the best ideas for making it happen. Churches should embrace and join this approach wherever possible.

The rapidly growing Your Local Pantry network (see page 10) is another example of the transformational change that comes from working with people and communities to develop solutions together. Around 80 churches and other community

Staff and volunteers from St George's Pantry in Everton. Pantries enable people to reduce the cost of living with dignity, choice and hope.

People with experience of poverty can be leaders, pioneers and innovators in their own right

Becoming a “poor church, for the poor” means the churches as institutions must truly invest in local leadership and communities

partners have opened Local Pantries across the UK to date. Indeed, many of you reading this may know of a Pantry in your own church or neighbourhood. Pantry membership is a lifeline for over 90,000 people in member households, who are able to save up to £1,000 a year on their weekly budgets, gaining access to good quality food, and finding dignity, choice and hope in the process. Church Action on Poverty is looking to partner with churches and others to open a further 45 Local Pantries to support families struggling to make ends meet over the coming months.

Secondly, becoming a “poor church, for the poor” means the churches as institutions must truly invest in local leadership and communities. We cannot call out the Government for failing to adequately tackle the cost of living crisis unless the churches themselves make long-term investment in low-income communities. We’re delighted to be working with the Methodist and United Reformed Churches on ‘Church on the Margins’ programmes, and we hope other churches will follow their lead. In the Church of England, the Low Income Communities Fund is welcome, but there must be much greater transparency and accountability to communities as to how this money is being spent.

Thirdly, to be true to the fourth mark of mission – to transform the unjust structures of society – the churches must become even bolder in speaking truth to power. In this, we must resist the temptation to speak on behalf of people, and instead commit to enabling people struggling against poverty to speak for themselves. Our task is to create space for people and communities struggling in the cost of living crisis to speak their own truths to power – and to join our voices to theirs.

How the church as a whole responds to the cost of living emergency is a litmus of our belief in the gospel as good news to people and communities. We cannot be found wanting.

CHALLENGE POVERTY WEEK ENGLAND & WALES

17–23 October 2022



All of us want to live with dignity – to be treated as fully human, to have choices and be able to participate in our community.

But this winter, the soaring cost of living will deny that dignity to millions of people. People will be forced to choose between heating or eating... to skip meals so their children can eat... to go cold and hungry in one of the world's richest countries.

We want to celebrate the work of people, organisations and communities across England and Wales that are coming together to uphold people's dignity, in the face of the cost of living crisis.

Simple solutions – like the Universal Credit uplift that meant people had an extra £20 a week to cover costs – could make a huge difference.

Challenge Poverty Week will be a chance for people and communities facing poverty to stand up with dignity, share stories, and speak out for a just solution to the cost of living crisis.

Join us in calling for action to tackle the crisis. Challenge Poverty Week is designed to highlight the growing problem of poverty in England and Wales and showcase the solutions we can all get behind to solve it.

We are working closely with partners organising Challenge Poverty Weeks in London and Scotland. If you are located in either London or Scotland you should visit their respective websites to download separate resource materials and to register your events with them:

London Challenge Poverty Week
(also 17–23 October)

<https://londonchallengepovertyweek.org.uk>

Scotland Challenge Poverty Week
(3–9 October)

www.challengepoverty.net



Challenge Poverty Week England and Wales is supported and made possible by a number of partners including:



The Greater Manchester Big Poverty Conversation

This event took place at the start of Challenge Poverty Week 2021, and shows what impact we can have when we work together. Around 100 people including many with first-hand experience of poverty gathered in Manchester to discuss solutions. The Greater Manchester Big Poverty Conversation was organised by Greater Manchester Combined Authorities in partnership with Church Action on Poverty.

Niall Cooper, our director, said: “It is great to see so many people and groups taking part in Challenge Poverty Week. We know a more just and compassionate society is possible, if we tackle the big underlying injustices that hold so many people back.”

Speakers at the event included Nadine Travers, a member of Manchester Poverty Truth Commission. She said: “I think it’s vital that we challenge poverty, because people living in it are often unaware they are living in poverty, or shame and stigma mean individuals are blamed for poverty, rather than policies that are quite oppressive often.”

Arooj Shah, the then leader of Oldham council, said: “I think it’s really important for places like Oldham to make sure we are having open, honest and bold conversations around poverty. That means not just academics and professionals sitting around a room; it means we listen to the real-life experiences of people who live poverty every single day of their lives, and we listen to those conversations and shape our policy to ensure we have an impact.”



Get involved

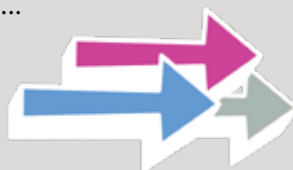
Taking part in Challenge Poverty Week is a chance for your church or project to celebrate the work you’re doing to tackle poverty, and to raise people’s voices to speak out for change.

There is usually a mixture of offline and online events. Online activities can be just as effective as offline ones, and sometimes even more so. You can reach more people as there are no geographic or travel barriers, and you may find that some people are more comfortable sharing with an online meeting than addressing a busy room of people. Bear in mind however, that not everyone has good internet access, so judge for yourself whether to make your event physical or digital.

We have a free toolkit which outlines numerous ways you could get involved. Campaign for Government action on the cost of living crisis... Meet your MP... Host a discussion event...

Host a storytelling event... Take to the streets... Get creative... Speak up on social media... Speak to your local media...

Find out more and download your toolkit
at [https://challengepoverty.co.uk/](https://challengepoverty.co.uk/resources)
resources



Dignity, agency and power on Iona



In July, we gathered on the Scottish island of Iona for an inspiring and challenging week, supported by our partners the Iona Community. Anti-poverty campaigner **Wayne Green** was part of it, and here he shares some reflections.

The week on Iona was one of a series of 'Pilgrimage on the Margins' events to mark 40 years of Church Action on Poverty. 18 people with lived experience of poverty participated in the week. We are very grateful to the Iona Community for the financial support that enabled so many experts by experience to attend this week. Read more about the Pilgrimage on the Margins at www.church-poverty.org.uk/40years/pilgrimage

I was surprised to be invited to spend a week discussing dignity, agency and power with people who are experts by experience of poverty and other forms of social exclusion. I had just seen an episode on TV of a celebrity pilgrimage to Iona and it seemed fun. But there was a seriousness to this journey, to have people with first-hand experience of poverty attend with others to celebrate the 40th anniversary and work of Church Action on Poverty.

That work is by no means glitzy or full of glamour. It is very real, ugly, and can be an emotional rollercoaster as one sinks into a world not many want to see or hear about: the human cost of poverty in the UK. But it can be surprisingly rewarding when one sees a little success, or a smile from someone who has not had the chance to smile, or is alienated by the state or has just summoned up the confidence to speak about their lives, experiences, hopes and dreams.

On walking off the ferry to the isolated island, I was a little apprehensive as I slowly got to know the group we were with. *What* had I let myself in for, I thought. Well, over the days I became actually *me* again – the person I was, or thought I had somewhat lost a little. I noticed how different we all were, but also shared the same sense of warmth for friendship. I noticed how unpolluted by modern life the island is: no noise; the air felt and tasted fresh; the grass was greener; the birds actually were not frightened of you; the whole environment was stunning and awoke senses that had been lost.

It became clear to me that Iona is indeed a special spiritual centre for Scotland and Ireland. To have the chance to stay at the Abbey, built on the same spot as the original, gave an extra sense of the importance of the spiritual essence of all. I had the chance, as someone who has spent most of 10 years living on my own and 18 months in isolation, to meet other people and interact. The sessions on dignity, agency and power gave me a deeper understanding of others and the complexities. Was it systems and structures that pose a problem, or ideologies or key individuals, was it the church or individuals in the church, and what does faith have to offer as I am not a Sunday

church person? But what struck me the most was how open and welcoming everyone was. I did not know these people, we were here for a reason, but I felt human and in touch with myself again. We laughed together, argued a little, debated with those with experience of poverty, those educated within the church, artists, and above all those that have a purpose in the work of God. Where else, within one day, would everyone know your name and give a good morning with a smile?

I found my time at Iona gave me much spiritual nourishment. I was invited to play sax and say a few words in Iona Abbey as part of Church Action on Poverty's 40th anniversary service. I have never felt so nervous. This was the centre of all of Iona, where kings of Scotland were laid to rest outside with MacBeth and Saint Columba. A saint! Then one has to take in the abbey itself, a centre for Christianity and prayer and service to God with a community known all over the world. But as soon as I played, it was a spiritual journey for me as I lost myself, and felt the emotional experience of all who were taking part in the service, in the Abbey and online.

On our last day as we went to catch our ferry, I really did not want to go back to where I lived. I felt at home: warm people, home cooking, great conversations with meaning, and people who actually are human-centred and loving and able to share openly parts of our lives. If only the whole of the UK could be like Iona, then we would have no real poverty. Poverty is a battle of invisibility, and in Iona I met those invisible people, who made me laugh, think and hug. I came back to Sussex refreshed: parts of the Wayne I had lost and my belief in good people had been restored.

I thank all those I met: Christians Against Poverty, those in poverty, those that were just on holiday, the Iona Community who smiled and smiled and were so open with their friendship, and above all the Church Action on Poverty team. It is the hardest work of all to walk amongst the poor and let them speak, yet open a door for leaders to engage. Poverty can be defeated and dissolved. We have the expertise, the technology, the money – all we need is the political will.



Mary Passeri, artist and leader in York Food Justice Alliance, also took part in the week

“Often when trying to raise awareness and real understanding of the issues around poverty it feels quite lonely. It’s difficult to remain calm and focused as you try to get your message across to what can often appear to be uncaring, unfeeling officials who can only see ‘policy and not person’.

“After my time spent talking with like-minded people who, despite or maybe because of their own experiences, are passionate about tackling poverty and actively seeking to bring about positive change, I left Iona with a deep sense of peace and purpose.”



Compassion and community



We chatted to **James Henderson**, Network Development Coordinator for Your Local Pantry, about what makes Pantries special and the growth of the network.



Pantry members pay a small weekly fee, and can choose a basket of food. They save up to £1,000 a year.

Pantries are really embedded in communities, and when you go in there is such a buzz, such a nice atmosphere

Get involved

- Find your **nearest Pantry**:
www.yourlocalpantry.co.uk/pantry-listings
- Become a **Friend of Your Local Pantry**:
www.yourlocalpantry.co.uk/help-a-pantry/become-a-friend/
- Follow Your Local Pantry on **Facebook**:
www.facebook.com/yourlocalpantry
- Follow Your Local Pantry on **Twitter**:
<https://twitter.com/yourlocalpantry>

Hi James... Can you start by telling us how the Pantry network is doing?

It's going really well. We were delighted to recently launch the first Pantry in Northern Ireland, which means we now have Pantries in all four nations of the UK, and we are still getting lots of interest.

We've also had our second Pantry open in Portsmouth, and other new ones opening in Leicester, Birmingham, Liverpool, Sandwell, St Helen's, Peterborough, Epsom and Sefton. We are on 80 Pantries now, and it's been really exciting to see the growth and development, and knowing what a difference Pantries are making to communities.

What do you think is driving that growth?

It feels like Pantries are a really current solution to the whole set of circumstances we are seeing just now. People are being squeezed from all sides, particularly with the cost of living. We all want people and communities to have as much dignity as possible, and they are seeing that the Pantry model works.

Something we are developing, and really keen to further develop, is the idea of the Pantry as a wider community hub, providing what members want beyond just shopping. Can other people and services come in to give the Pantries even more value?

You've been in post since late 2021 now. How are you finding it?

I am really loving it! It's a really dynamic team to work with, and we work well together, with a nice mix of skills. I really enjoy getting out and visiting Pantries. It's one thing reading or hearing about things, but to go and meet members and volunteers and coordinators is fantastic.

I love hearing stories from members about the impact Pantries are having on their lives, whether that's helping them save for something important to them, or easing the difficult choices people are having to make, or meeting new people.

I love seeing the compassion of volunteers and coordinators, and seeing how much they really do care for the members. Pantries are really embedded in communities, and when you go in there is such a buzz, such a nice atmosphere. It's lovely to see.



People reading this might want to get involved, or support Pantries. What can they do?

There are a few things people can do. If people want to join a Pantry, you can find your nearest one on the website. If there's not one where you live, and you want to start one, there's a Q&A on the website too, or you can email us for information.

Pantries are all hosted by local organisations, such as community centres, charities, churches or councils, so you might want to find a local organisation that you think could be a host.

If you want to support the network, the Friends Of Your Local Pantry scheme is a great way to get involved. This enables you to support your nearest Pantry and others in the network.

Also, just spreading the word is useful, and if you are a Christian then keep praying for the members, volunteers and coordinators. Half of the Pantries are linked to churches, and I know those Pantry teams really appreciate people's prayers. Some members are in very difficult situations and volunteers are increasing hours, and some Pantries have waiting lists because there is so much demand, so all support is appreciated.

Lastly, do follow us on social media. It's a lovely way to see what different Pantries are doing, and to hear from volunteers and members and coordinators all over the country.



A member picks up her groceries from Yardley Wood Pantry in Birmingham

James (second from right) meets some volunteers at Hitchin Pantry in Hertfordshire



What dignity, agency and power mean to me

Throughout 2022, we're sharing stories of people who bring Church Action on Poverty's values to life. One of those people is **Stef Benstead** – Church Action on Poverty trustee, author of the 2019 book *Second Class Citizens*, and member of Manchester Poverty Truth Commission.



Further reading

You can order Stef's book *Second Class Citizens: The treatment of disabled people in austerity Britain* at www.stefbenstead.com. Stef's story also appears in our new anthology *Dignity, Agency, Power*, available from www.ionabooks.com.

Why I wrote *Second Class Citizens*

"A lot of policies and decisions are made by people who don't really have enough information – people who have expertise as professionals but not by experience. They're often not listening to people with expertise by experience, and the result is a lot of policies are harmful rather than helping."

"The reason I ended up writing *Second Class Citizens* was that I had a background in disability through my own illness and had gone into research. It was very clear that the Government was causing a lot of harm, but I had a lot of friends from a more conservative evangelical Christian background. A lot of friends talked about poverty and sounded like they cared but they felt the Welfare Reform Act was good, and I was sitting there saying no, it's not, it's awful!"

Manchester Poverty Truth Commission

"In the commission, you come together and have repeated conversations, to the point where you have relationships, and it's really interesting."

"Within organisations, a lot of people really care and want to do right, so they're really distressed when they hear they're doing wrong – but they're willing to change. You need people with lived experience in the room making decisions, because that's the only way you get good policy."

What dignity means to me

"Dignity is about having enough to live off – so you're not scrambling for money, constantly wondering whether you can afford to have the heating on, the light on, to eat this food or not."

"It's also a bit more than that – it's having enough to participate in society, it's about being able to have a friend come over and not feel ashamed that your house is cold, or having no milk to offer a cup of tea, or if you have children being able to buy them the latest thing and for them not to be excluded but to enjoy the same things their peers have."

"It's being able to help friends and neighbours and have a reciprocity, so at least some of the time you have something to give to someone else. Also it's about having long-term security, and knowing you'll be okay if something goes wrong. Dignity is partly about having that confidence to look to the future and say actually there are systems that will help me stay on my feet is something goes wrong."

What agency means to me

"Agency is that control you have over your life, to be able to direct where it goes and to make choices, so if you apply for a job you're not just stuck taking the first job no matter how awful it is. Or it's being able to pick the subjects you do at school, or what school you go to – being able to control where your life goes."

"What a lot of people face is not having that agency. If you're on unemployment benefits, you're always being told how many hours you have to do, what jobs to apply for. There's no trust in you to make your own life better."

What power means to me

"Power, I think, is about having an impact on the world around you. Agency is partly about having impact on your own life, but power is going: 'Actually I can make changes in society as well'."

"Maybe that means being a governor of a local primary school, it might be in a residents' association, it might mean being part of political or religious association, or maybe it's just knowing I'm someone who, if you go to police or social care and say there's an issue, they'll take me seriously and involve me in the decision-making process."

"We tend to have professionals who make decisions, then people who are affected, and there's a lack of power. In general, the more money you have the more power you have, and that doesn't generally lead to a country that works for everybody."

I would like to see Christians

take seriously the command

of God that we all pursue justice

for the poor and oppressed



**POVERTY
TRUTH** MANCHESTER

**DIGNITY
AGENCY
POWER**

**Church Action
on Poverty
Sunday**

19 February 2023



Gemma Athanasius is a
campaigner with Church
Action on Poverty and Cornwall
Independent Poverty Forum

“Everyone should

have a fair say

in what happens

in society”

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