

2021-22
impact report - page 8



spark

news from Church Action on Poverty
winter 2022-23

How church leaders
can transform poverty
discussions
page 6

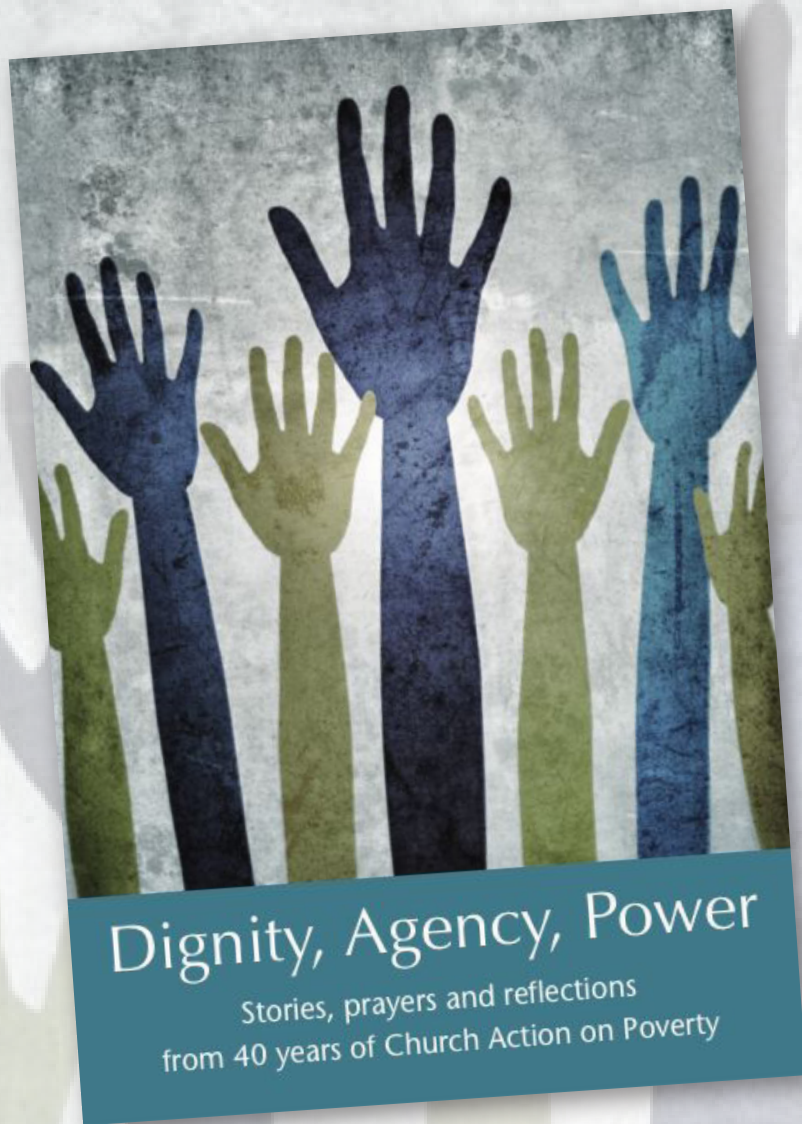
Church on the Margins
page 12



Food, friends and a future

Self-Reliant Groups as a recipe for success - page 10





“Here is liturgical resistance in practice. This is a great book of witness.”

Kathy Galloway,
former Head of Christian Aid Scotland

Stories, prayers and reflections from 40 years of Church Action on Poverty

An invaluable new resource for churches and individuals who want to be part of the movement to end UK poverty. We've drawn on our 40 years of work and on the insights and creativity of over 40 contributors, including many who have personal experience of struggling against poverty, to create an inspiring collection of...

- Prayers, hymns and liturgies
- Stories of people's real experiences and struggles against poverty
- Stories of hope, transformation and challenging injustice
- Poems
- Drama
- Bible studies
- Theological reflections

Order now at

www.ionabooks.com/product/dignity-agency-power/



Wild Goose Publications
The Iona Community



**40 years of
Church Action
on Poverty**

Enacting hope



Our Director **Niall Cooper** has a message for difficult times.

These are tough times. We are apparently now living in a time of 'perma-crisis.' The crises are undoubtedly much much deeper and harder for some people, but we are all affected in some way. In the midst of this, how can we avoid sinking into despair? How can we retain our hope and offer others a message of hope?

As we enter 2023, Church Action on Poverty is determined to offer a message of hope: Another world is still possible, and is already struggling to be brought into being by people and communities 'on the margins' across the country. As Kate Gray, one of the participants in our Pilgrimage on the Margins last year, said: "There are big powers, big ideas and big things to resist, but the ways to act on hope are local."

The message from the Pilgrimage - and from the pages of this newsletter - is that when people come together, we are able to enact hope.

These words below are drawn directly from the wisdom and insight shared by participants in

the Pilgrimage on the Margins. May they offer us all hope and inspiration for the year ahead:

When we come together we are able to...

Challenge authority
Challenge injustice
Challenge power structures
Create a space for dialogue, where everyone's voice is heard

When we come together we are able to...

Make real changes for the benefit of all

Gain understanding and clarity
Pool resources to make a difference

Some people are big names, others are more effective

Get people to listen who wouldn't listen to us alone

Do God's work: Where two or more come together...

When we come together we are able to...

Comfort one another
Celebrate one another
Encourage one another
Believe in each other
Realise we're loud!

When we come together we are able to...

Say enough is enough

In this issue

- 4 News and events**
- 5 Movement: Challenge Poverty Week 2022**
Report on the third annual event
- 6 Act: roundtable discussion**
A challenge for church leaders to transform poverty discussions
- 8 Impact report**
An overview of our work in the last financial year
- 10 Movement: SRGs**
How Self-Reliant Groups change lives
- 11 Voice: Monica Gregory**
Story from an activist with lived experience of poverty
- 12 Act: Church on the Margins**
Summary of our new research
- 14 Pray: Church Action on Poverty Sunday**
Prayers, poems and hymns

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
Registered Charity no 1079986
Company no 3780243

give

Take a collection on Church Action on Poverty Sunday
See page 14

act

Listen to churches on the margins
See page 12

pray

Organise a service on Church Action on Poverty Sunday
See page 14



news

Co-op partnership to see 150 new Local Pantries

Church Action on Poverty has entered a partnership with the Co-op which will allow us to open 150 new Local Pantries over the next three years.

We launched the partnership with a community event at the Pantry in Peckham, London, in November. Instead of an expensive TV ad for Christmas, the Co-op have run a social media campaign promoting Pantries, fronted by celebrity chef Big Zuu.

Find out more at www.church-poverty.org.uk/coop

Working in partnership with



Staff changes

The autumn saw several changes in the Church Action on Poverty staff team. We say a sad farewell to Sarah Purcell, who has been our Research and Information Officer for over 12 years; to Marcia Brown, our Finance Manager since 2010; and to Gloria Martin, who has been our Office Manager and Supporter Administrator since 2019.

We welcome Jessica Clark as our new Events and Digital Communications Facilitator, and Anna Hamill to run our Speaking Truth to Power programme. Other new staff members will fill the Office Manager and Finance Manager roles in the new year. Please bear with us while we manage this time of change!

See our staff team at www.church-poverty.org.uk/who-we-are/staff

Reporting Poverty – email your MP

An Early Day Motion has been tabled in Parliament, condemning the use of derogatory language in the media which can lead to the stigmatising of people in poverty. 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.

Many thanks to the 300 Church Action on

Poverty supporters who have already emailed their MPs, asking them to sign. 48 MPs have added their names so far. Please email your own MP about this, using our simple e-action at www.church-poverty.org.uk/reportingedm



events

Church Action on Poverty Sunday

19 February 2023

Give, act and pray with churches across the UK – raise funds and be part of the movement to reclaim dignity, agency and power.

Get your free resource pack at www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday.

You can get a taster of the contents on page 14.



Church Action
on Poverty
Sunday

Dignity for All conference

10 June 2023, Leeds

An event led by the real experts – people with experience of poverty. We'll build new relationships, listen and learn from each other. Then we'll plan how we can take action together to reclaim dignity, agency and power. We aim particularly to build links between activists who are based in churches, and campaigners with lived experience of poverty.

We're working with the APLE Collective and the Joint Public Issues Team to plan the event. If you or your organisation would also like to run a workshop or give a talk, let us know!

Find out more and book at www.church-poverty.org.uk/dignityconference

CHALLENGE POVERTY WEEK ENGLAND & WALES

17-23 October 2022



The third Challenge Poverty Week in England and Wales took place in October. We're pleased that the impact of the Week continues to grow every year. An even greater range of partners worked with Church Action on Poverty to promote and coordinate the event this year (see below).

Events took place across the UK, ranging from small local drop-ins to major regional conferences. Participants ranged from large local authorities to small community projects. All were united in listening to the real experts – people with experience of poverty – and speaking out for solutions to the cost-of living crisis that can ensure dignity for all.

More than 140 organisations took part in more than 90 events during the week – and those are just the ones people told us about through our website and social media.

The week also sparked a lot of discussion and creativity on social media (see below). People used the #challengepoverty and #dignityforall hashtags to share stories from their events, as well as fun photos, inspiring poems, calls to action, and more.

Challenge Poverty Week England and Wales 2023 is provisionally planned for 16–22 October. Put the date in your diary now, and we'll let you know how you can be part of it soon!



Mayor of Greater Manchester Andy Burnham speaks at a Manchester Food Security Action Network meeting in Challenge Poverty Week



Members of the Your Local Pantry network, like St George's Pantry in Everton, took part in Challenge Poverty Week.



End Hunger Cornwall held two conferences and more than 50 micro events with more than 100 organisations taking part.

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



3 ways church leaders can truly transform poverty discussions



What happens when we truly listen to voices that have been ignored? What ideas emerge, what issues are raised, and what do we learn? Poverty Media Coordinator **Gavin Aitchison** has been working with the Archbishop of York – and listening to the real experts.

Around the table in York

In September, the Archbishop of York Stephen Cottrell hosted a roundtable discussion on tackling poverty in Yorkshire, in collaboration with Church Action on Poverty. Attendees included:

- People with experience of poverty and marginalisation in York, Sheffield, Halifax, the East Yorkshire coast, Teesside and Bradford.
- The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, and several members of Church of England staff and clergy.
- People working in professional roles focused on tackling poverty, including from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Church Action on Poverty.

What we heard

Attendees raised and discussed a range of issues, bringing first-hand insight and ideas. Topics discussed included:

- What support would make a particular difference for families with additional needs?
- How to improve support for people who have been relocated by local authorities
- Types of positive media coverage that can help tackle poverty
- Feelings of stigma
- The lasting impact of adverse childhood experiences and/or addictions
- Above all, the need for truly inclusive approaches that ensure voices of experience are heard and heeded.



Tracey Herrington, Thrive Teesside

Bringing people with lived experience around the table... Let's create our own table, and we're all part and equal around that table and issues are discussed. Reality is put to the statistics and together we collaborate and work out a way forward. So the approach is very participatory, very collaborative.



The roundtable event hosted by the Archbishop of York in September

Challenge Poverty Week: a call to act

In October, as part of Challenge Poverty Week (www.challengepoverty.co.uk), we sent a briefing to all MPs in the Diocese of York, and to all northern Bishops. It reported on the Yorkshire event, and encouraged people to do three things:

- Commit to participate only in **poverty discussions that are truly inclusive**, and to challenge and question the organisation of ones that are not.
- Commit to organising a **roundtable event** on tackling poverty in their own region.
- Engage with local **groups with experience of poverty**, and with national organisations with expertise, to help to make this successful.

Listen up! A call to action

It's easy for society to turn to the same voices again and again, but only by proactively seeking out and listening to voices of direct experience, can we gain a full understanding of any issue.

And remember, we should beware of the trap of thinking we're 'giving a voice'. People in poverty already have very effective, powerful voices – but they have often been ignored or drowned out. We don't have a shortage of voices – we have a shortage of listeners and of people in positions of power willing to engage meaningfully.

We all have a role to play in developing more participatory approaches on poverty. Crucially, we can all commit to participate only in conversations about poverty that are inclusive and which meaningfully involve people with expertise based on experience. We should all open up conversations that we organise, and challenge others to do likewise.

We encourage bishops, faith leaders, community leaders and politicians to do this in full partnership with organisations and people with lived experience, and to learn from good practice.

Broad and truly inclusive conversations can be transformative and can unlock impasses that often hold communities back. They can bring new issues and perspectives to the table, greatly accelerating everyone's learning and bringing solutions closer to fruition, and enable productive processes. They can also help shift public attitudes to poverty, and build recognition of the scale of the change required.

The Yorkshire event enabled the forging of new relationships, which will foster further joint work. It also demonstrated the wealth and breadth of untapped expertise held by people with first-hand experience of poverty, including on issues that have not yet had sufficient attention.

For instance, two people spoke about having been relocated by a London local authority to West Yorkshire, and the lack of support there was around that move, and others spoke about the need of better support for families with additional needs, whether for children or adults.

We hope the Yorkshire event will inspire similar ones in other regions, and the organisations below are all on hand to help interested organisations.

Six organisations with participation expertise

- **APLE Collective**, which supports groups across the country led by people with experiences of poverty.
- **Poverty Truth Network**, a network of people involved in and interested in setting up Poverty Truth Commissions.
- **Poverty2Solutions**, an alliance of organisations with a focus on delivering change on poverty, and demonstrating the value of including the expertise of experience in policy-making discussions.
- **Joseph Rowntree Foundation**, which has a focus on increasing and supporting participatory projects.
- **Church Action on Poverty**, which has long focused on supporting people with experiences of poverty to be at the forefront of change-making processes.
- **ATD Fourth World UK**, which pioneers the involvement of people in poverty in policy debates and in research.

Reclaiming dignity, agency and power: our **impact** in 2021–22

Here are some stories of the change we and our partners made together during 2021–22. For more detail and our full financial report, see www.church-poverty.org.uk/annualreviews

Your Local Pantry

- Your Local Pantry member-run food clubs have been a lifeline to many people during the pandemic. The network of Pantries has continued to grow across the UK.
- As of March 2022, there were 66 Local Pantries within the network, offering dignity, choice and hope to over 25,000 adults and more than 16,000 children. And more are opening every month.
- In December 2021, members and supporters raised £10,000 as part of the 'Big Give Christmas Challenge', enabling Pantries to keep their shelves stocked through the winter, and support the continued growth of the network.



Self-Reliant Groups

- Church Action on Poverty has continued to support the development of a network of Self-Reliant Groups across the UK.
- Most of our members are women living in poverty, and 41% identify as EU migrants, refugees or people seeking sanctuary.
- See the latest news from SRGs on page 10.



Challenge Poverty Week 2021

- Hundreds of people took part in Challenge Poverty Week England & Wales in October 2021, coordinated and supported by Church Action on Poverty.
- About 100 people attended a Greater Manchester Big Poverty Conversation.
- Organisations in North East England explored a rights-based approach to poverty.
- Several communities launched *Worrying About Money?* leaflets produced with the Independent Food Aid Network.
- More than 18 organisations organised local events in Cornwall alone, coordinated by the Cornwall Independent Poverty Forum and End Hunger Cornwall.

Life on the Breadline

- Our partners completed this three-year research project, analysing Christian responses to poverty in the UK during the 'age of austerity'.
- Visit <https://breadlineresearch.coventry.ac.uk> for resources including an austerity timeline; Anti-Poverty Charter; video from a photographic exhibition; toolkit for churches; briefings for policy-makers; and recordings from the end-of-project conference.



The Archbishop of York spoke out in support of Challenge Poverty Week

We must resolve to find ways to

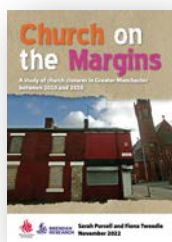
redesign our economic systems,

to loosen poverty's grip,

so everyone can live a full and dignified life

Navigating Storms

- We collaborated with the Sheffield Political and Economic Research Institute on 'Food Experiences During Covid-19' participatory research.
- A panel of people with personal experience of food poverty during the pandemic from across the UK reflected on their own experiences and wider questions in relation to who is responsible for preventing household food insecurity during – and after – a pandemic.
- In June 2021, we published the panel's findings and recommendations for action. In autumn 2021 the Panel shared their findings with senior civil servants, policy-makers, and social researchers in a series of online workshops.
- Find out more at www.church-poverty.org.uk/navigatingstorms



Campaigning and advocacy

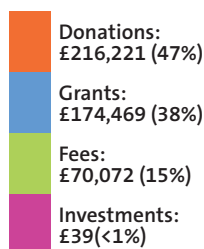
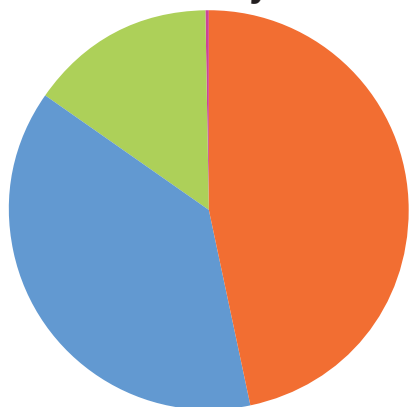
- We partnered in the Reset The Debt campaign with the Baptist Union, the Church of Scotland, the Methodist Church, the United Reformed Church and Jubilee Debt Campaign, calling for a 'jubilee' to write off debts incurred by low-income families because of the pandemic.
- Well over 1,000 supporters of our campaign wrote to their MPs to ask them to attend a debate on household debt in Parliament on 8 July 2021. The debate attracted a range of MPs from across the political spectrum, and it was encouraging to see areas of consensus emerge.
- In autumn 2021, Church Action on Poverty joined with over 70 other national charities and faith-groups in calling on the Government to keep the lifeline for people in poverty by retaining the £20 a week 'uplift' in Universal Credit which had been introduced at the start of the pandemic.
- Over 1,100 church leaders signed a joint open letter coordinated by Church Action on Poverty and Christians Against Poverty urging the Government not to cut Universal Credit by £1,040 a year.

Church on the Margins

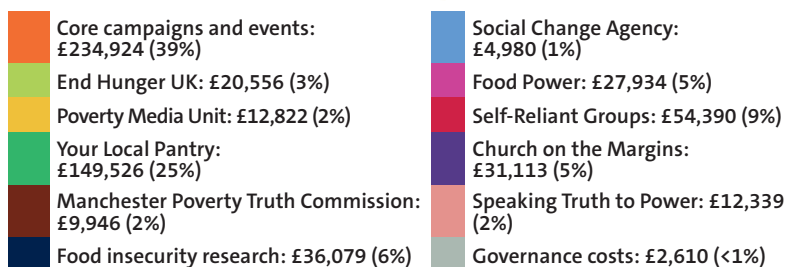
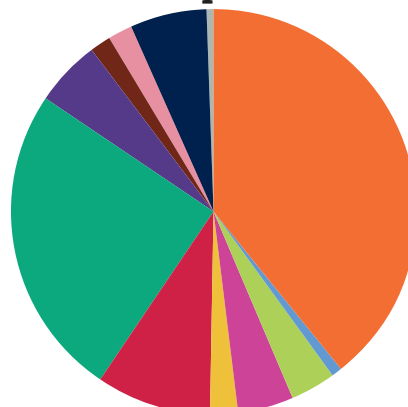
- We continued to explore what it means to be a 'Church on the Margins' through a research collaboration with the Nazarene Theological College and Urban Life in Greater Manchester, and national collaborations with the Methodist and United Reformed Churches.
- See some of the findings and stories from this programme on page 12.

Financial summary

Where our money came from



How we spent it



Food, friends & a future

Food and cookery bring us together, and unleash our potential.

Julia Turshen, the American author and food equity advocate, describes cooking as a “constant reminder of transformation and possibility”. In her book *Feed The Resistance*, she writes: “Cooking shows us over and over again that we can make things happen, we can make change happen, with just our own hands. Food is metaphor personified and within that there is reaffirmation of what we can accomplish.”

We can
make
change
happen,
with just
our own
hands

SRGs bring people together

Self-Reliant Groups, like the ones we partner with in Greater Manchester, Leeds and South Wales, do just that: they bring people together to make change happen – often around food.

Members of Self-Reliant Groups (or SRGs, as we call them) save together, come up with ideas together, and create together. Some focus on crafts and arts, others focus on food. In the photos on this page and the front cover, SRG member Rahela Khan gives a cookery demonstration at the recent Your Local Pantry conference, using recipes from fellow group members.

SRG member Rahela gives a cookery demonstration. This photo and the cover photo by Madeleine Penfold

Self-Reliant Groups are a heartening community success story from our past few years' work. If you received a copy of Church Action on Poverty's 2023 desktop calendar, you'll have seen them featured in the photos and stories there. SRGs show us that amazing things happen when people come together and work together.

What is a Self Reliant Group?

A Self-Reliant Group (SRG) is:

- A group of friends who support each other and meet regularly.
- A group that is independent of funders and doesn't have to tick anyone else's boxes. It makes its own decisions.
- A group that shares skills and learns together.
- A group that saves together (small, manageable amounts like £1 per week) and has the potential to become a business.

Church Action on Poverty supports SRGs with help to get started, sharing and signposting for ideas, learning and queries, networking with others in the SRG movement, and by sharing inspiration from other groups.

What you can do

- Self-Reliant Group members from Greater Manchester and North West England recently produced their own **recipe book**. You can buy it at www.church-poverty.org.uk/ourcookerybook
- If you are interested in **learning more** about SRGs, or potentially setting one up, you can email Joyce Kay on joyce@church-poverty.org.uk



Why I keep **standing up** and **speaking up**

During 2022 we've been sharing stories of people and organisations in the movement to end UK poverty. Activist **Monica Gregory** was featured in our 'Dignity, Agency, Power' calendar in September.

Monica works with homeless people in Oxford in a range of roles, and has been involved in speaking up about social injustices for the past few years.

She was part of the national Food Power programme, took part in a Food Experiences panel in 2020 and 2021 to understand food insecurity in the context of Covid, and is now part of the Speaking Truth To Power programme, supported by Church Action on Poverty.

Monica also now runs a safe space for women in Oxford, and a lived experience forum for people who have been homeless.

“We're not here to tick boxes”

Monica says the work in recent years has helped her to find the confidence to speak up about poverty in Oxford, which is often hidden, and about the broken systems that cause or increase poverty.

“Poverty is getting really bad now, with the cost of living going up, so my job is getting harder and harder because more and more people are becoming homeless as a lot of people cannot afford to pay the rent.

“The new lived experience forum is for people to have their say about services for people who are homeless, and for people who feel they have sometimes just been used so other people can tick boxes. Not everyone's poverty is the same, not everyone's trauma is the same, but people are too often put in the same box.”

“Things need to change”

“A lot of things need to change. What I would like to see change at the moment is Universal Credit. I don't know how they can make people wait five weeks to get the first payment, when they have nothing to live on. I have six clients now waiting five weeks for Universal Credit to start, and they're struggling to pay rent and to put food on the table, and they've had to start using food banks. They now feel embarrassed, so the system needs to change. People do not always realise how much poverty there is. “I started working with Church Action on Poverty through our local food alliance, and now I know I will speak up about things. A lot of people are scared to speak up but I'm not scared to, and I fight for what is right.”



A lot of people are scared

to speak up but I'm not

scared to, and I fight for what is right

Church on the Margins



Our Research Officer **Sarah Purcell** has been exploring how churches can better prioritise and be led by people from marginalised communities.

What should a 'church on the margins' look like?

Since 2020, our 'Church on the Margins' programme has been listening to churches that are doing inspiring work in deprived communities across Greater Manchester. Here are a couple of the stories that emerged from our shared reflections.

"I had this feeling that I belonged"

As a refugee, finding places of acceptance and belonging can be difficult, and a warm welcome is not on offer everywhere. So when one participant was invited to go to church, he politely declined. "I wasn't a Christian at the time," he says, so thought, "I won't go there."

However, his wife was keen to try it, and when she returned saying, "This is the best place we can go because everybody is just hugging you, welcoming you," he was persuaded to give it a try. Not only did he receive a warm welcome, but he felt included in ways he'd never imagined possible.

Thinking that only those who work and pay taxes would be able to be involved in the church's decision-making processes, he was really surprised to be invited by the pastor to attend the church meeting so he could say something. "It was a really great feeling for me ... I had this feeling that I belonged."

It was a really great feeling for me...

I had this feeling that I belonged.

"This is my church! That welcome."

Reflecting on serving an eight-month prison sentence, one participant in Wythenshawe said, "You spend all the time when you're in prison saying – I want to get home, I want to get home – but when I got home, it was very frightening, I was very anxious because you suddenly think you've got a big tattoo on your head that says I've just come out of prison."

Even though the minister of the church she attended, and many of its members, had visited her while she was in prison, she still felt very nervous about returning to church services. The first Sunday she was home, the minister arranged to pick her up and take her to the evening gathering, and she remembers the dread of walking through the doors.

One of the members she knew was on the other side of the room and, on spotting her, shouted over, "I've put you down on the coffee rota because you've got quite a few to catch up on, and will you see Sheila about the flowers?" All she could do was laugh and think, "This is my church! That welcome: you don't need to make a big song and dance about it; you've done it, you've served your time and now you're back, get back to making the brews."

Are our churches becoming deaf to the cry of the poor?

That's what Bishop Philip North suggested a few years ago – saying that church resources are being drained out of deprived communities and focused on the wealthiest places. Is that really happening – and is it true for all the denominations?

To see which communities are being prioritised by our churches, we looked at patterns of church closures in Greater Manchester across the last 10 years, and asked: Have more churches been closed in the most deprived neighbourhoods?

We found that significantly more churches are closing in low-income areas, than in more affluent areas. The reasons for church closures included: a declining number of people attending church services; buildings falling into disrepair (coupled with churches being unable to afford their upkeep); and in some cases, fewer priests and ministers to serve the churches.

Significantly more churches are closing in low-income areas, than in more affluent areas

However, this does not explain why many more churches have closed in deprived areas, in comparison to average and more affluent areas. This points towards wider questions. Are the major denominations retreating from low-income areas rather than adhering to the gospel priority to stand with, and alongside, the poor?

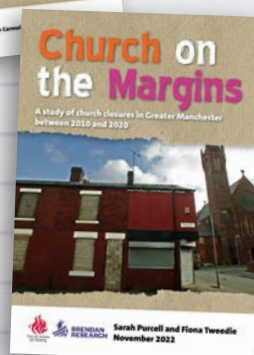
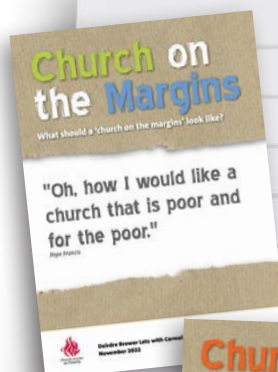
- What effect do closures have on the church community?
- When closures or mergers take place, are people in low-income areas adversely affected compared to people in affluent areas (e.g. due to the time and expense of travelling further to another church)?
- If people can no longer attend church due to a closure, do they lose their church community, support networks, friendships and spiritual fulfilment?
- Have churches and their ministers adapted to today's context, or are they perpetuating an outdated model of church and ministry that does not speak to people, particularly in low-income communities?

Signs of hope

While these questions are important – and we will be pressing the UK's Churches to reflect seriously on them – we also found positive stories to celebrate:

- Some denominations are already adopting policies that prioritise the poorest areas – for example, the Church of Scotland's Priority Areas programme, the Church of England's increased investment in low-income neighbourhoods, or the 'Church on the Margins' programmes recently launched by the Methodist and United Reformed Churches.
- Individual congregations have often demonstrated that 'the church is the people, not the building' by finding creative ways to continue their communal life even when their buildings are closed down.

The full report (see below) includes more detail on all of these, and recommendations for further action.



Find out more – and take action

Our full research will be published in mid-January as two reports: one sharing case studies from the churches we worked closely with, and one laying out the data and stories from our research into church closures.

Both reports will be available to download from www.church-poverty.org.uk/cotm

We plan to build on the work by carrying out similar processes of 'appreciative inquiry' with churches in other regions, and by pressing other denominations to adopt 'Church of the Margins' style programmes that prioritise the poorest communities. Watch this space to see how you can get involved!



Prayers, poems, hymns

Give, act and pray with us on 19 February 2023. This is a selection of materials from our resource pack to use in your church service – get the whole pack at www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday

The Church Action on Poverty Sunday prayer

Holy Trinity, you give dignity to all
Remind us that we all are treasured by you

Loving God, you lift up the lowly
Remind us of those whose value is not seen

Jesus Christ, you bring good news to the poor
Remind us to reach out for justice for all

Holy Spirit, you free the captives, you challenge and inspire us

Empower us to build a society where everyone belongs

Urzula Glienecke

The 'Gerasene demoniac'

This story from Mark 5 can be related to issues of mental health and social exclusion.

Pushed to the edge of the cradle,
needing the nurture I lack,
reaching for dreams that I'd hoped for,
grasping, but always pushed back.

Feeling I'm hounded and harassed,
far beyond what I can take,
mentally stressed out and battered,
mind fit to shudder and break.

Then, of a sudden, I'm falling,
demons are torn from my soul,
while in the breaking I'm healing,
cradled again and made whole.

Through all the chaos of being,
God is still present, I'm held,
raised up to fly like an eagle,
no longer crippled or felled.

© Andrew Pratt 11 August 2022

God's work

The Psalmist tells us
not to put our trust in mortal men –
and women.

They are temporary residents on this earth
and when they are gone
their work is finished –
for good, or evil.

Yet God trusts mortal men and women
to carry on the work
of eliminating poverty, injustice and neglect;
healing and helping those broken down by life;
caring for those alienated, homeless, or bereaved
and tackling evil wherever it may be found.

The Psalmist relied on God
to deal with such problems.

God trusts us,
with the guidance of the Spirit,
to take up these challenges in our daily living
and to be God's eyes, ears, hands, feet and heart
in our everyday world.

So, now, it's up to us!

© Marjorie Dobson

I thought I knew

I thought I knew.
I had read magazine and newspaper articles,
charity appeals,
seen photos,
watched TV documentaries.
I thought I knew about poverty.

But the hardship, the deprivation, the lack of hope,
were kept safely behind the screen,
or tied down in dead words on paper.
I thought I knew,
but I did not know.

Then I listened to the stories of food bank clients,
came face to face
with illness, misfortune, bureaucratic incompetence and
intolerance,
benefit delay, inadequate pay, ill informed choices,
domestic violence, homelessness,
no barriers protecting me from the pain and despair.
I thought I knew,
But I did not know.

For I returned to my warm, comfortable home,
My adequate income and savings,
My healthy, debt-free life.
I thought I knew
But I did not actually know.

Dear God, please give me –
the grace to admit that I do not know what it is to be in
poverty,
the courage to make my voice heard on behalf of the poor,
the will to do whatever is in my power to help,
Amen

Brian Ford

To hear your call

To hear your call, Lord Jesus,
is what we most desire,
to follow in your footsteps,
to love and never tire.
You lived without possessions
and told your friends to share.
We honour your example
and wonder if we dare.

With pure unfeigned affection
you told a rich young man
that he could win heaven's blessing,
fulfil the kingdom's plan,
if he'd give his possessions
to share with those in need.
Alas, he found your summons
too difficult to heed.

You loved to eat together
with high and low alike.
You said, 'Send invitations
not just to those you like.'
We hear your words, Lord Jesus;
explaining them, we're skilled;
but yet we find good reasons
to leave them unfulfilled.

Zacchaeus heard your message
and gave his goods away.
Your very first disciples
shared what they had each day.
Lord Jesus, give us courage,
no matter what we own,
to spend it for your kingdom
and make your gospel known.

Tune: 76 76 D Offertorium or Sally Gardens

Nick Jowett



Simon Fann manages Truro
Foodbank in Cornwall

People are making difficult decisions: the decision whether or not to turn off the fridge or the freezer to save money. The decision whether to wash a school uniform or not. The decision on whether I can afford to eat or not.

Anything Church Action on Poverty can do to bring poverty to an end must be supported.

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”

**Give, Act and Pray as part of
the movement to end UK poverty**

Sign up and get a free resource pack at www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday