



spark

news from Church Action on Poverty
autumn 2021

MPs debate Covid
debt relief
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'Life on the
Breadline' resources
for churches
page 14

**“Speak up.
Shout loudest.
It’s the
only way
to be heard.”**

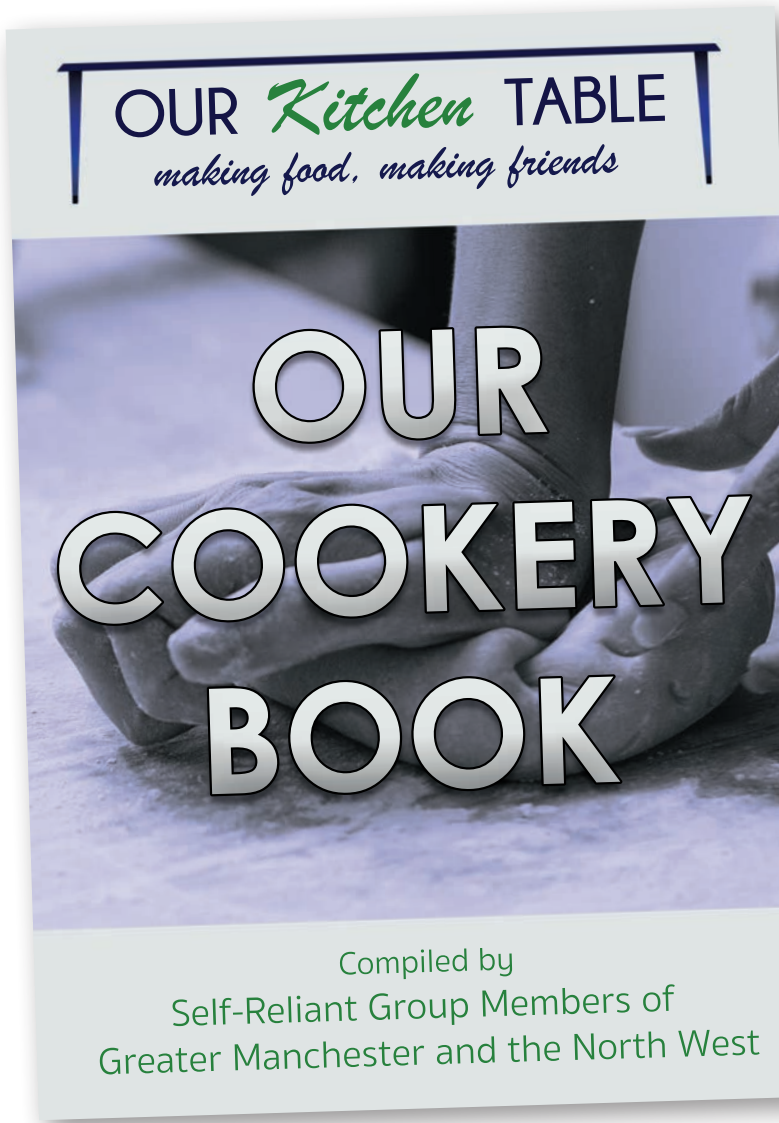
Penny Walters on what she’s learnt
as a food justice activist: page 10



Making Making

food, friends

New cookbook compiled by Self-Reliant Groups



Church Action on Poverty is delighted to sell copies of *Our Kitchen Table*, an inspirational cookbook compiled by members of the Self-Reliant Groups we support in the North West.

SRG members share favourite recipes, together with stories about what cooking and sharing the food has meant to them in their lives.

All proceeds support Self-Reliant Groups to continue their work.



Order your copy – and find out more about how Self-Reliant Groups uphold people’s dignity, agency and power – at www.church-poverty.org.uk/srg

Join the **movement**



Our Director **Niall Cooper** asks: **What inspires and sustains you to be part of a movement to end poverty in the UK?**

As we move towards Church Action on Poverty's 40th anniversary next year, and seek to build a movement within the churches and wider society towards achieving long-term change, this is a question we have been returning to frequently in the recent months.

One of the things that has most inspired me at Church Action on Poverty has been the people I have met over the years. Countless ordinary folk up and down the country, struggling against the odds sometimes personally, but also with a generosity of spirit and a passion for social justice. I'd definitely count among them Wayne from Worthing, Penny from Newcastle, and Matt, who was our 'poet in digital residence' during lockdown last year. Their stories are shared in this edition of *SPARK*, and I hope you find inspiration from them too.

Challenge Poverty Week (11–17 October in England and Wales, a week earlier in Scotland) provides a great opportunity to celebrate

all the fantastic work that people are doing in local communities across the UK to challenge poverty in big and small ways, to reflect on the role community can play in 'building back better' after Covid-19, and to encourage our politicians, civic, faith and business leaders to 'step up to the plate' and prioritise challenging poverty over the months and years ahead.

Looking further ahead, Church Action on Poverty Sunday (27 February 2022) is a key opportunity to mark our 40th anniversary in churches up and down the country. For some, this will be a time to look back at the struggles and achievements of the past four decades. For me however, the challenge is always looking ahead. Our vision remains a poverty-free UK, and our task is still to build and inspire a movement that builds the dignity, agency and power of people and communities struggling to bring this about.

Whatever you feel able to do to join in – you are most welcome.

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give

Plan a service for
**Church Action on
Poverty Sunday**
See page 16

act

Organise an event in
Challenge Poverty Week
See page 8

pray

See the **Life on the
Breadline** resources for
churches
See page 14



news

Guitar showcase

There was a showcase evening in Sheffield in July for the Food Glorious Food guitar circle, who have worked with Church Action on Poverty several times in recent years.

Supporters gathered at Heeley Church of the Nazarene to watch members perform 11 well-known songs, including 'Brown-Eyed Girl', 'Dream', 'Songbird', 'Fields of Gold', 'Jolene' and 'Let It Be'.

The group was set up by Yo Tozer-Loft in 2019, bringing together volunteers and attendees from the Gleadless Valley Food Bank in Sheffield. Previous work had led to several choirs being set up around food banks in the city in recent years, and Church Action on Poverty worked with one group of singers during the End Hunger UK campaign in 2018, when they sang at a campaign event in Sheffield Cathedral, and featured in the *Daily Mirror*.

The guitar group was created following the sudden death of a local community supporter, Danny Baker, who had been a keen guitar player. The new guitarists had nine weeks of rehearsals in early 2020, before the start of the pandemic forced the showcase evening to be postponed at the last minute. Church Action on Poverty supporters may be familiar with the group because they are featured in our 'Dignity, Agency, Power' calendar for 2021.

The project drew a wonderfully generous local response, with many people donating or restringing guitars, providing teaching support, giving free space for rehearsals and/or providing funds to make the project possible.



events

Challenge Poverty Week England and Wales

11–17 October 2021

Events will be taking place across both countries during the week, celebrating the work of local projects and building a stronger movement to end poverty in the UK. If you can, please support any events taking place in your local area, or join us at a national online event.

There is still time for projects to plan their own events, and we can provide a toolkit and training to help you.

To find out more, see page 8 or visit www.challengepoverty.co.uk



Church Action on Poverty annual conference

20 November 2021

Join us online for sessions exploring 'Dignity, Agency and Power' – the values driving our work to build an anti-poverty movement in the coming years. There'll be opportunities to learn more about our projects and partners, and how you and your church can be part of it.

Use the enclosed leaflet to book your place, or visit www.church-poverty.org.uk/conference

Church Action on Poverty Sunday 27 February 2022

Use our free resources to organise a service in your church exploring the theme of 'Dignity, Agency and Power'.

Raise funds to help build dignity, agency and power, and be part of nationwide activities marking Church Action on Poverty's 40th anniversary.

See page 16 for some excerpts from the resources. Use the enclosed leaflet or visit www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday to order a resource pack.

Reset the Debt:

MPs debate action



In July, Parliament debated the impact of the pandemic on household debt. **Paul Morrison** of the Joint Public Issues Team, our partners in the campaign to Reset the Debt, analyses what was said and what needs to happen next.

Well over a thousand supporters of our campaign wrote to their MPs to ask them to attend a debate on household debt in Parliament on 8 July. Thank you to the Church Action on Poverty supporters who took part!

The debate attracted a range of MPs from across the political spectrum, and while a wide range of views and issues were raised and there were disagreements, it was really encouraging to see areas of consensus among MPs.

Covid debt is a real problem

The most important area of agreement was that household debt is a problem that the lockdown has made much worse. The most quoted number came from a report by our friends at StepChange – that 11 million people in the UK have taken on around £25bn in debt during the pandemic. There was also an acknowledgement that the effects of lockdowns had been grotesquely unequal, with those already struggling being forced to take on debt, while the more affluent were able to pay off debt and save.

It is great that Parliamentarians from across the political spectrum are now acknowledging the scale of the problem.

Contributors also talked about problems that were building in the system prior to the pandemic. There was a wish to improve lending practices and regulation, and a recognition of the reality that low-income families do need to borrow from time to time, so it is vital that ensure that cheap, non-exploitative credit is available.

Concern was expressed about family incomes. A number of contributors, including a Conservative MP, questioned the Government's decision to cut Universal Credit by £20 a week this September, and highlighted that many families coming for debt advice have "negative budgets" – where essential expenditure is greater than total income. Without

adequate income, debt is both inevitable and unaffordable.

Covid household debt

We are asking Government to recognise that the debt racked up by low-income families during the pandemic is the result of an extraordinary situation that requires an extraordinary response.

Genuinely affordable credit for low-income families, better regulation of the sector, and adequate incomes are hugely important. John Glen, the Government Minister who responded, outlined some welcome plans to make progress on this. We hope they will make things better over the long term, but for many families, their budgets barely worked before the lockdown – so making their budget work with large debt repayments is unimaginable.

Responses to the crisis

We are asking for the Government to set up a fund to pay off the debts unavoidably racked up by some low-income families during the pandemic. It was encouraging that some opposition members mentioned our proposals. There is some acknowledgement that there needs to be a policy response to Covid household debt – but there is still much work to be done to build agreement around what an appropriate policy response should be.

The next step

Backbench debates rarely result in an immediate change of policy. They can however be an important step towards change by highlighting concerns, exposing areas of agreement and disagreement, and bringing forward new ideas. The debate was a step forward.

So thank you to all those who were part of that first step who have taken actions as part of this campaign. Please keep following and share the campaign far and wide so we can gather more people to join in the next steps.

Reset The Debt is a campaign calling for a 'jubilee' to write off debts incurred by low-income families because of the pandemic. It was launched by the Baptist Union, the Church of Scotland, Church Action on Poverty, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church, working with Jubilee Debt Campaign. You can sign up for updates, and email your MP to call for action, at <https://resetthedebt.uk>

Refusing to be invisible

Wayne Green has been striving for 25 years, alongside Church Action on Poverty, to improve society. He was first moved to act by his own experience of eviction, poverty and injustice, but he has gone on to take part in many powerful campaigns locally and nationally. And he keeps going still today.

Wayne was featured in the June page of Church Action on Poverty's 2021 'Dignity, Agency, Power' calendar. We asked him to talk about some of the work he has been involved in, but also to outline his own path to campaigning, his inspiration to keep going, and the lessons he would share with younger campaigners seeking to make society better:

Why I started campaigning

I got involved because I had two young children. At that time, I had been made unemployed as a young man, my wife had just given birth and we were renting a flat in Worthing and when the baby was three months old we were evicted.

I was shocked because I came from a middle-class background and I had never experienced anything like this before. Here I was with my wife and three-month-old baby with no work, nowhere to go, nowhere to live, and I was shocked.

I put my baby in a cardboard box, wrapped up in a woollen cot sheet, and we went in the back of a garage van at nine o'clock at night and drove for 12 hours to Cornwall to live with my mother-in-law.

I was really angry. I was told at the local authority, "Sorry, can't help you". That was it. I thought, "Oh my gosh, what do I do!?"

Later we moved back and ended up in Shoreham and we moved in to this new flat we managed to rent. This woman over the road saw us and almost adopted us. Jocelyn Underwood. She was an inspiration to me and a guiding light to me on the issue of social exclusion and poverty and the work of the church, and justice and peace, and also the issues of good local people and what can be achieved.

She basically said to me: you can do anything, and always challenge the system. She was very inspirational and she brought together a group of church-goers at our local church, St Mary de Haura.

Starting to speak up

We started a group called Adur: Local People National Voice and we put together our first ever poverty hearing in the local area and we attracted 300 local people. Our local MP didn't turn up but other local politicians did, and Church Action on Poverty came down and gave us full support.

It was interesting to turn the dynamics round. Here we were, a group of six of us on a panel who were in poverty, unemployed, speaking to our local decision-makers and local population...

The experience of being part of a poverty hearing, going up and speaking to 600 leaders was quite frightening but the process leading up to it was quite empowering. It broke a lot of barriers... We had a really good core group of people around us who would nurture us as well. and we found that was good and gave us access to a huge amount of people you'd never believe, like politicians and church leaders. I used to pinch myself, saying, "Am I meeting these people, are they actually listening to me?"

What happened next?

Wayne helped to organise a further local poverty hearing in Worthing, and went on to speak at the first National Poverty Hearing.

The National Poverty Hearing itself, to my mind, unified the conscience of the country. It pricked the conscience and said, "Here we are". We were opposite the House of Lords, the Houses of Parliament and we were saying, "Come over and speak to us". Unfortunately, the leaders of the parties didn't come but other politicians did. I remember in the afternoon a massive argument started in Parliament and I thought, "At last, we're having a proper debate", which was good. It was quite empowering.

Next up was the Future Of Work report, which influenced the thinking of many politicians, including Gordon Brown when he was the incoming Labour chancellor in the 1990s.

You actually felt you had something really to say and people were prepared to listen and we were part of this policy group that went across the nation and brought people together and we covered everything you cover today.

Those with first-hand experience through Church Action on Poverty were encouraged to meet once a month or once a quarter, and put our findings together of our experiences of policy. And we covered all the areas of the benefit system, the welfare system, we covered all the areas of work, housing, tax, food, living, but most importantly how society sees you at the local level and national level.

That's where I said what I still say today: poverty is a battle of invisibility. It's not being seen and if those in power do see you, they will see you but not let you join in on the actual policies themselves.

What has kept you going?

If I go back into my personal life... I was adopted, I also have Black African-Caribbean ancestors who were slaves. I think there's a genetic resistance in me; I want to see a better world. I care about the world.

I'm not a truly religious Sunday person, but I believe all faiths have a golden thread running through them and I believe it is possible to change society and one must keep going on this issue.

What do you see as the church's role?

Jesus was a radical. He was on the outside and he saw change. Not only that, if you look at other issues

of the church, its roots are deeper than politics in the community. I find the church an area that does actually listen to you. If you talk to a local vicar, you'll probably find they're very academic people, quite willing to listen.

I've been critical of the church, saying it's become too middle-class and feels too safe, and won't want to go on the radical side of life, but it's slowly having to because of our morals and ethics. For me the church is a fundamental pillar for change.

What do you say to new campaigners?

First and foremost, your experience is proof that you exist. Secondly, you are equal to anyone else and your knowledge is probably more than the person you talk to who wants to know. Thirdly, I'd say to young people, don't ever give up on a cause, because that's what they want you to do, to walk away. Don't. Be a thorn in their side. Rock that boat. Be a troublemaker! Troublemakers help change.

Believe in yourself. The experience you have is unique to you. Poverty is a battle of invisibility and you must be seen. Demand to be seen. And don't ask for the lowest. Why should we ask for the lowest? We want the best out of our society. And everyone should have the best.

Visit www.church-poverty.org.uk/wayne to read more of Wayne Green's story – or to listen to him on our 'Podcast to End Poverty'.

We all want a better world.

We have the money,

we have the expertise,

we have the technologies.

It's just political will.



Photo by Philip Flowers

CHALLENGE POVERTY WEEK ENGLAND & WALES



11–17 October 2021

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. There's still time for you to take part in this year's event.

Aims of the Week

- To build awareness and support for sustainable responses to the pandemic that focus on enhancing the dignity and agency of people in poverty.
- To raise voices in unison against poverty and shine a light on visions for a more just, compassionate and opportunity-filled country.
- To show what is already being done at community level to challenge and alleviate poverty.
- To change the conversation around poverty and help end the stigma.

Community after Covid

The overarching theme for 2021 is community after Covid. Participants are encouraged to consider what needs to change for everyone in their community to be able to thrive as we emerge from the pandemic. This will vary across areas. For instance, you may want to consider how the food system needs to change, how to increase digital inclusion; how to improve the economy where you are; or how to reduce economic, physical and social marginalisation.

Consider whose voices need to be heard during the Week. As we look beyond Covid, the voices of people living in poverty and people challenging poverty need to be more audible and prominent in public debate. We hope CPWEW will provide an opportunity for organisations responding to need in local neighbourhoods to become more vocal about the underlying causes of poverty and solutions.

We encourage participating organisations to work together with people and groups that have direct experience and insight of injustices, particularly around the way poverty links to race, gender, sexuality and regional inequalities.

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 get involved in the Week where you are:

London Challenge Poverty Week (also 11–17 October)

[https://](https://londonchallengepovertyweek.org.uk)

londonchallengepovertyweek.org.uk

Scotland Challenge Poverty Week

(4–11 October)

www.challengepoverty.net



Get involved

Taking part in Challenge Poverty Week can be effective and rewarding. Last year's Week was held entirely online due to Covid restrictions. This year, we expect a mixture of offline and online events, throughout England and Wales.

Attending events

You can show your support for local anti-poverty projects by attending events they organise during the week. There will also be some online events that are open to anyone in the country.

Visit www.challengepoverty.co.uk/event-listings to see what events are happening near you.

Organising an event

If you or your church are involved in running an anti-poverty project, we invite you to organise your own event and use the Week to spread your message.

We have a range of ideas for how you could use the week:

- 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

How we can help

To support your involvement in Challenge Poverty Week, we can:

- Provide social media graphics, draft press releases, and useful letter templates for writing to your MP.
- Provide advice and support with organising an online discussion on Zoom.
- Provide advice on media, social media and how to build support for solutions to poverty and push for change. For advice, email gavin@church-poverty.org.uk
- Promote your activity through social media, local media, and our events calendar.

To get help with your event:

- Download our free toolkit at www.challengepoverty.co.uk/resources
- Find out about training events at www.challengepoverty.co.uk/training
- Sign up for Challenge Poverty Week emails at www.challengepoverty.co.uk/get-involved

Get in touch

Planning on getting involved? Let us know by submitting information about your action to our online calendar at www.challengepoverty.co.uk

Email: jessica@church-poverty.org.uk

Website: www.challengepoverty.co.uk

Phone: 0161 872 9294

Facebook: www.facebook.com/challengepovertyweek

Twitter: @CPW_E_W

Instagram: @challengepovertyweek

#ChallengePoverty



Taking it **step** by **step**

Penny Walters from Newcastle became a campaigner for food justice with support from our Food Power programme. Here, she shares some of the lessons she has learnt along the way. And she recaps on what it is she's hoping to achieve.

When dozens of people are talking at once, how can you make yourself heard? When you speak to people in positions of great power, how do you retain your own? Penny (featured in our 'Dignity, Agency, Power' calendar earlier this summer) has some strong insights into these questions.

Church Action on Poverty's work alongside Penny reflects our core value of 'agency' – the essential autonomy and ability of each individual to say and do what they believe in, and to do what it is they want to do.

Social justice movements are made up of countless people, with different experiences and perspectives. Activists, supporters, charities, professionals, politicians and more all come together at times – and often all have a view on what should be done.

At Church Action on Poverty, we believe people with personal experience of poverty should be heard above all others. We have always worked closely with people, and we always aspire to ensure campaigns and media work are led and directed by people who have lived the issues.

Penny's work

In the past few years, Penny has been one of the people with whom we have worked most closely.

She and her daughter Heather have been part of the Food Power Newcastle group. They've been interviewed on Channel 4 News. They've spoken to MPs and a committee of the House of Lords. They've

travelled to America to share their insights with international organisations. And they've frequently spoken up about the challenges in their

community, with a view to making things better – and all while volunteering in local food projects as well. In 2019, Penny said:

"When we went to the End Hunger UK conference in 2018, we just expected to turn up for the conference and talk to some people, and that would be it. I did not expect all the things it would lead to but it has been very exciting and I am pleased with what we have achieved, and certainly there is more yet to come."

Five tips for aspiring activists

Two years on, Penny shares a few tips she has learnt from campaigning, which others might find useful:

"Speak up. Shout loudest. It's the only way to be heard. People in power don't always want to listen, or they are used to listening to each other, or they have their own ideas. You need to make yourself heard. I've always had views but for a long time I did not voice them. Now I do."

"Have someone fight your corner. It can be difficult or daunting doing a lot of things. If you have someone who stands up with you, it makes all the difference. So for instance, Ben at Church Action on Poverty is very good at doing that when he's working on anything with me. People working with charities should make sure there's someone they can count on."

"Don't think you can't do it. Inside you sometimes feel daunted, but if you know deep down you can do something, then do it, and you'll be glad you did. You can do this if you have the will and support. But, at the same time..."

"Do what you want to do. Make sure you say no if something doesn't feel right, and make sure you can genuinely give your ideas, so you're not just going along with what other people are saying."

"Take it step by step. The first thing I did was go to an End Hunger conference and do a TV interview, and from there a lot of other things have happened. Do what you are able to do now, and then you can do a bit more and a bit more."

Food Power, a programme run jointly by Church Action on Poverty and Sustain, came to an end this summer. Visit www.church-poverty.org.uk/foodpower to read more about how it tackled food poverty through people-powered change.

FOOD
Power

Don't think you can't do it.

Inside you sometimes

feel daunted, but if you

know deep down you can

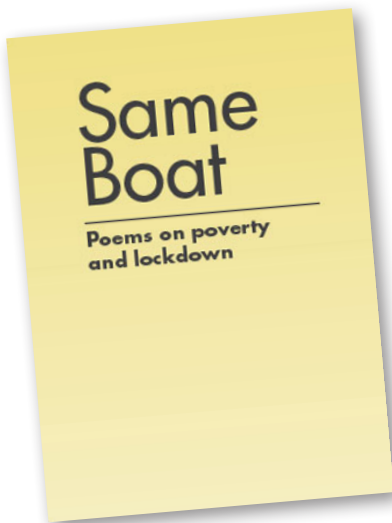
do something, then do it,

and you'll be glad you did



Using poetry for social change

Poet **Matt Sowerby** harnesses the power and resolve of people in poverty. We spoke to him about the importance of dignity, agency and power in his work.



Visit www.church-poverty.org.uk/sameboat to order the poetry anthology, or to watch a short film featuring two of the poems

Matt started using his skills as a route to social justice when he became involved in the End Hunger UK campaign. From there, he hasn't looked back. In 2020, he became poet in digital residence at Church Action on Poverty, and worked with fantastic campaigners around the country to produce *Same Boat?*, a powerful anthology of poems based upon poverty and the pandemic.

Poetry as a force for good

Church Action on Poverty supporters might recognise Matt, as he appeared on the July page of our 2021 'Dignity, Agency, Power' calendar. We asked Matt how and why he became involved in social justice movements:

"I'm really interested in the way that poetry can be activism and poetry can make the world a better place. I think especially in this sector, there are some things that are so unjust you feel you need to do something about it.

"There's a very thin line between making something, and making a change, so I think it does teach us something about our agency and the ways we can make a difference in the world, the more we engage in the arts."

Creativity and crisis

Matt talks about the number of people who became creative at the start of the pandemic, turning to the arts as a vital response to the crisis. He talks also of poetry as having the power to fossilise the feelings of a particular moment, and the empowering force of the *Same Boat?* anthology:

"The feedback I got was that it did mean so much to so many people, to engage in the process but also to be able to say 'I am a published poet' at the end of that and to know that for the rest of their lives, that that is part of who they are."

There's a very thin line

between making something,

and making a change

Hear more of our conversation with Matt in the Podcast to End Poverty:
www.church-poverty.org.uk/podcast



Photo by Madeleine Penfold

Poetry can be activism

and poetry can make

the world a better place



How have **Christians** responded to **poverty** during **austerity**?



Dr Stephanie Denning looks back at what our partners at the 'Life on the Breadline' research programme learnt over the last three years.



Image credit: Beth Waters and Life on the Breadline

There are many ways that Christians are responding to poverty in the UK, from food banks to food pantries, to campaigning on housing injustice and responding to serious youth violence

Visit <https://breadlineresearch.coventry.ac.uk> to find out more and access a wide variety of resources:

- Austerity timeline
- Anti-Poverty Charter
- Video from the photographic exhibition
- Toolkit for churches
- Briefings for policy-makers
- Recordings from the end-of project conference

More than 15 million people are living in poverty in the UK (Legatum Institute, 2021). So how are Christians responding to poverty in the UK?

Life on the Breadline has been a three-year research project (2018–21) analysing Christian responses to poverty in the UK during the 'age of austerity'. Together the project team – Chris Shannahan, Robert Beckford, Peter Scott, and myself – have undertaken the most in-depth empirical theological analysis to date of poverty in the UK.

The most recent period of austerity in the UK began over a decade ago following the 2008 global financial crisis. At the start of Life on the Breadline, we created an austerity timeline – available now online – that explains key austerity policies and how austerity has affected people's daily lives.

During the research we interviewed national Church leaders in the UK, undertook an online survey with regional Church leaders in the UK, and spent time with six case studies of groups and projects responding to poverty in different ways. One of our case studies, and our project partner, has been Church Action on Poverty.

Over the course of the project we developed a wide variety of resources, which are now available online. We invite churches and campaigners to make use of them:

Photographic exhibition

The exhibition features photographs taken by the research team and by local residents, volunteers, and staff at the six case study projects. It shows that there are many ways that Christians are responding to poverty in the UK, from food banks to food pantries, to campaigning on housing injustice and responding to serious youth violence.

The exhibition was shown in Coventry Cathedral during July, and we are exploring other possible venues to host it in future. A video of the exhibition is available online.

Anti-Poverty Charter

We launched an Anti-Poverty Charter, developed collaboratively with church leaders, practitioners, and Life on the Breadline research participants. It is an action-orientated statement of the shared values that motivate and shape Christian action on poverty and inequality. Churches can read the Charter and sign up at <https://breadlineresearch.coventry.ac.uk>.

Toolkit for churches

Our toolkit designed to help churches respond to poverty in the UK is free to download at <https://breadlineresearch.coventry.ac.uk>. We'll also soon be publishing our report for church leaders on the website.

Briefings and report for policy-makers

Briefing documents and a report for policy-makers based on our findings are available to download, giving guidance on how policy-makers, church leaders and local churches can work together more effectively to tackle UK poverty.

Coming soon...

We are also working on a Lent programmes for churches to use in 2022, exploring the project's findings and recommendations for action.

Navigating storms



Poverty Media Coordinator **Gavin Aitchison** has been part of a group listening to people's experiences of food insecurity during the pandemic.

Everyone should have secure and reliable access to the food they need. That has been a core value running through much of our work in recent years, and this autumn we will take another important step.

Over the past year, we have been working with the University of Sheffield and Kings College London on the 'Food Experiences During Covid-19' research project. People from around the UK came together as a panel and met regularly online. Panel members and the project team have shared their personal experiences of accessing food during the pandemic and have used their collective insights and wisdom to suggest what could be done differently in future.

We need robust and simple food systems, not just during crises such as the pandemic but always. We all want the UK to be a just and compassionate country, where people can reach their full potential and live free from poverty. Tackling the root causes of hunger and food insecurity is vital.

Through the conversations, Zoom meetings and phone calls of the past year, we have gathered lots of evidence of what should change, and we have just completed the report on that part of the work. Now, as we enter the final phase of the work, we want to ensure the messages are heard. If things are to change, people in positions of power need to hear what has been said.

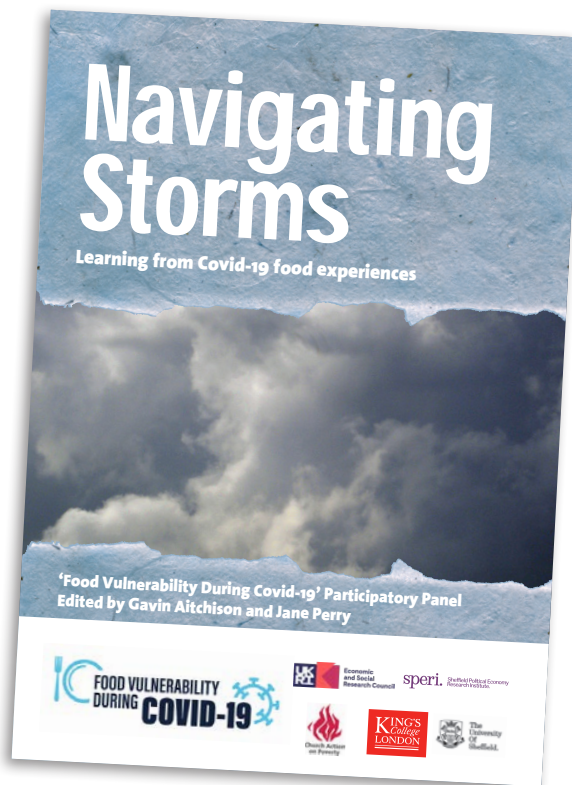
Over the coming months, we will be arranging meetings and discussions between panel members and a small group of people with policy expertise.

We plan to host four online workshops, in which the panel members and policy specialists can consider findings together, share perspectives and reflect on the implications for future policy and practice.

The first phase has been really insightful and encouraging, with a wide range of suggestions and ideas around the benefit system, the way people in poverty are involved in decision-making, the importance of seeing food access as a fundamental human right, and the different roles for different organisations. We're optimistic that the second phase will also be successful, maximising the chances of the work helping to shape the post-pandemic society.

The work will include participatory methods to deepen everyone's understanding of who and what can influence food security, including looking at difficult policy choices and trade-offs, and trying to develop collective visions of the future.

We're still working on the list of participants, but we hope to include people who have experience of working on policy issues around food security, such as politicians, civil servants from a range of Government departments, local government officials, NGOs, campaign groups, business leaders, academics and journalists.



The first lockdown was seriously bad ... there was no food in the supermarkets

It's our inadequate benefit system that leaves people in great need

Dignity, agency and power

prayers



These prayers are taken from a liturgy by Church Action on Poverty trustee **Urzula Glienecke**. The full liturgy will be included in the resource pack for Church Action on Poverty Sunday, available soon.

Opening responses

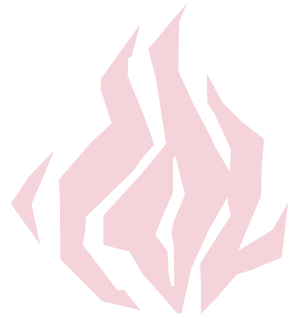
Holy Trinity, you give dignity to all
Remind us that we all are treasured by you

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



40 years of
Church Action
on Poverty



Church Action on Poverty Sunday

On **27 February 2022**, join with other churches across the UK in giving, action and prayer. Celebrate the transformational possibilities of people coming together to reclaim their dignity, agency and power.

Use our free worship resources to reflect and pray for change, and raise funds to uphold dignity, agency and power.

Register and get your free resource pack at www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday

Affirmation of faith

(Luke 1:46-55)

Together with Mary we say:

“My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,

for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.

His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.

He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;

he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever. Amen

Prayer of thanksgiving

Loving God, you who have created all of us with worth, dignity and a say, we thank you for your care.

Jesus Christ, you who were laughed at and humiliated, we thank you for your compassion.

Holy Spirit, you who lift us up, we thank you for touching our hearts and moving us to reach out to those who still feel worthless and powerless.

Trinity of love, we ask you to inspire, empower and guide us to work for a more just society in which everybody has dignity, a voice and is able to stand up for their and each other's rights. Amen

Blessing

May God in whose image we are all created empower us

May Jesus who knew the pain of rejection comfort us

May the Spirit, She who is within us

lead us on to become the change we want to see.

Amen