



An Introduction to the End Hunger UK Campaign for Churches

This introduction has been produced for the use of churches, by the Christian organisations within the End Hunger UK coalition.

For more information and campaign resources, see www.endhungeruk.org



Tackling Food Poverty Together

**Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:
to loose the chains of injustice
and untie the cords of the yoke,
to set the oppressed free
and break every yoke?**

**Is it not to share your food with the hungry
and to provide the poor wanderer with
shelter –
when you see the naked, to clothe them,
and not to turn away from your own
flesh and blood?**

**Then your light will break forth
like the dawn,
and your healing will quickly appear;
then your righteousness will go before you,
and the glory of the Lord will be
your rear guard.**

**Then you will call, and the Lord will answer;
you will cry for help, and he will say:
Here am I.**

(Isaiah 58:6–8)

As many as 8.4 million people across the United Kingdom are living in households that struggle to put enough food on the table. In one of the world's wealthiest countries, this simply isn't right.

Worshipping communities across the UK are responding to this hunger crisis by helping to run food banks, lunch clubs, community larders and more. These are important practical responses, providing essential support to millions of people facing tough times. But food aid in and of itself isn't a long-term solution to food poverty. To do that, we also need to ask why people are going hungry in the first place.

The End Hunger UK campaign has a vision of a UK in which everyone has access to good food and no one needs to go to bed hungry. If you share that vision, please join us to help tackle food poverty together!

**Step up to
the plate,
we can't do
it alone!**

End Hunger UK is open to members of all faiths and none. We are keen to work alongside a diversity of faith groups as part of the campaign. Please contact info@endhungeruk.org if you would like to find out more about the campaign.

The campaign is supported by many national organisations, including: Baptists Together; Caritas Social Action Network; Child Poverty Action Group; Church Action on Poverty; the Church of England; the Church of Scotland; Fareshare; First Steps Nutrition; Food Bank As It Is; Food Ethics Council; The Food Foundation; the Independent Food Aid Network; Food Matters; Magic Breakfast; the Methodist Church; Nourish Scotland; Oxfam; Quaker Peace and Social Witness; Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming; The Trussell Trust; and the United Reformed Church.

The Reality of Hunger

Living with food poverty means a relentless, practical, struggle to make ends meet - making difficult decisions about whether to buy food or pay the bills. Many parents are going hungry so that they can provide enough food for their children. And week to week, many more worry that they will not be able to put food on the table. Instead of being joyful occasions, birthdays, Christmas and the school holidays can bring further stress and anxiety.

As well as these immediate problems, food poverty has a longer-term impact. Children who go to school hungry are often more tired, less able to concentrate, and more likely to have poor behaviour. These factors inevitably make it harder for children to learn, potentially hurting their chances of continuing in education and finding good jobs when they leave school. Food poverty is also associated with poorer health outcomes. Because healthy, fresh food is more expensive, lower income households tend to eat less of it, relying more on processed, less nutritious items. Together with other factors, this contributes to higher levels of ill-health and even a greater likelihood of dying early.

Recent years have seen a huge increase in the numbers of people turning to food banks, lunch and breakfast clubs or community larders. For the vast majority this is a last resort – after all their other options such as cutting back on meals, borrowing money or relying on friends and family – have been exhausted. As such the number of people forced to turn to food aid only represents a fraction of the families who are struggling to put food on the table.

I have lost a lot of weight. My survival tactic is hot lemon and water and sugar because it breaks the wind down and stops the hunger pangs. Sometimes I feel so sick. When I get paid I can eat for the first two weeks. I cook from scratch a lot. I eat chicken and rice, spaghetti bolognese, I eat tins of sardines, frozen mixed veg and stuff, Iceland pizza. And then I'm out of money, then I go to my neighbour.

Patricia, East London,
helped by Tower Hamlets Foodbank
(quoted in 'Below the Breadline',
Church Action on Poverty and Oxfam, 2014)

I became self-employed working evenings. My partner was also self-employed. We weren't earning very much. We were both working very hard and yet couldn't afford basic things like electricity and gas. I remember being in Tesco and my bank card was declined because the bank had taken some charges for bills not paid. I left a whole week's shopping in the store and went to the car and cried. Receiving a food parcel from the food bank would ease the dire situation in our house and I would enjoy putting food away in the cupboards. It would override the embarrassment I felt of being a pregnant women being unable to provide for her family.

A food bank user in Salisbury
(oral evidence given to the
All Party Parliamentary Group
inquiry into hunger in the UK)

Why Are So Many People Going Hungry?

Every person who experiences food poverty has a different story to tell. However, there are also common factors that underpin many of their experiences.

One factor is the squeeze in incomes that many families have experienced over the last decade, particularly in the period since the global financial crisis. The economy has become increasingly characterised by stagnant wages, a growth in insecure jobs and a less generous social security system. At the same time the UK has some of the highest housing costs in Europe, and consumer food prices have increased sharply since 2007. This squeeze is undoubtedly worse for low-income households, which can face additional costs averaging £490 a year for basic goods and services including energy, furniture, financial services and funerals.

This context means it is increasingly difficult for low-income families to meet their regular essential outgoings. However, living with poverty – particularly for prolonged periods of time – also makes it much harder to overcome relatively common challenges, whether that be the loss of a job, a broken washing machine or a bereavement. Adverse life events like these are often the 'last straw' that force people who are otherwise 'just about getting by' to turn to food aid to help feed their families.

Many people assume that in such circumstances the social security system would provide a safety net to prevent people from going hungry. However, the experience of people experiencing poverty often paints a different picture. These stories are backed up by figures collected by the UK's largest food bank network showing that problems with the social security system including payment delays, sanctions and challenges in navigating the system are the biggest single immediate factor driving people to use their services. This means that instead of protecting people against life shocks, the benefit system can often compound an already difficult situation.

The basic safety net that was there to guarantee that people would not be left in hunger or in destitution has actually been torn apart.

Cardinal Vincent Nichols, 2015

Some media outlets and politicians have disputed this evidence, suggesting that lots of people are using food aid because they are in some way 'lazy' or 'feckless' or simply because a food bank has opened up in their town. These arguments are, in fact, far from the truth. Indeed, the government's own research now shows that there is no evidence to suggest that the recent increase in demand for food aid is 'supply-driven'.

I called them every day all day and couldn't get through. And every time I got put through to the answer machine we got charged. It was awful... I thought the system would protect me. I never thought I would be completely ignored. I feel I was let down hugely. My benefits are my safety net – if they're removed, how are families like ours meant to survive?

Kath, a full-time carer who waited eight weeks for a decision to cut her tax credits to be overturned (quoted in 'Emergency Use Only', Child Poverty Action Group, Church of England, Oxfam GB and the Trussell Trust, 2014)

What's the Solution?

In the 21st century UK, food poverty is not inevitable. Faith groups, charities, business and local authorities have an important role to play in ensuring that no-one goes to bed hungry. However, the scale of the crisis requires strong leadership and coordination; something that only the government can provide.

As a first step the government needs to work with civil society organisations to develop a coordinated strategy to end hunger and ensure that everyone has regular access to affordable, good food. This should involve the appointment of a dedicated minister to coordinate and mobilise action across government. Among other things the strategy should include a commitment to ensure that all children have access to good food 365 days a year, review the use of benefit sanctions and take other action to ensure that holes in our social security system do not leave people without enough money to buy food.

What can I do?

▪ **Organise a local meeting**

Get in touch with others locally who work to end hunger, and see what you can do together to make change happen. Email info@endhungeruk.org for advice and support.

▪ **Spread the word**

Download our 'Menu to End Hunger in the UK' and campaign resource pack from www.endhungeruk.org - and share them in your community.

▪ **Pray for change**

Include the issue of UK hunger in your prayers or in a worship service. You could use the worship materials at the end of this pack.

▪ **Call for action**

The rollout of Universal Credit is leaving many people hungry. End Hunger UK is calling for urgent action from the UK Government to fix Universal Credit.

Download the petition and start collecting signatures in your church – see www.endhungeruk.org/universalcredit

Find Out More

References and Data

- Figures in this resource about the scale of food insecurity in the UK are drawn from **Voices of the Hungry** (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations) www.fao.org/3/a-i4830e.pdf
- Find out more about the demand for food aid in your region at www.trusselltrust.org/news-and-blog/latest-stats/end-year-stats (Note: these figures only represent the work of one – albeit the UK’s largest – food aid provider, so are likely to hugely underestimate the scale of the problem.)
- Unlike countries such as Canada, the United States and the Republic of Ireland, and despite calls from MPs, the UK government does not collect objective and statistically robust data on the scale of household food insecurity. See the final report of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee from January 2015: www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmenvfru/703/70302.htm

Further Reading

- **Below the Breadline: the relentless rise of foodbanks in Britain** (Church Action on Poverty, Oxfam UK and the Trussell Trust, 2014) www.church-poverty.org.uk/breadline/read/belowbreadlinereport
- **Emergency Use Only: understanding and reducing the use of foodbanks in the UK** (Child Poverty Action Group, Church of England, Oxfam GB and the Trussell Trust, 2014) www.cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/Foodbank%20Report_web.pdf
- **Faith in Foodbanks: resources for churches** (Joint Public Issues Team with Church Action on Poverty, 2014) www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/FaithInFoodbanks-Full-Resource.pdf
- **Feeding Britain: a strategy for zero hunger in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland** (All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Hunger in the United Kingdom, 2015) <https://feedingbritain.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/food-poverty-feeding-britain-final-2.pdf>
- **Hunger Pains: life inside food bank Britain** by Kayeligh Garthwaite (Policy Press, 2016)
- **Hungry Britain: the rise of food charity** by Hannah Lambie-Mumford (Policy Press, 2017)
- **Hungry for Change** (Fabian Commission on Food and Poverty, 2015) www.fabians.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Hungry-for-Change-web-27.10.pdf
- **No Food for Thought: the impact of hunger in UK classrooms** (Kelloggs) www.kelloggs.co.uk/content/dam/newton/images/masterbrand/UK/R1_Kelloggs%20No%20food%20for%20thought.pdf

Prayer and Worship

These worship materials to support End Hunger UK were compiled by Ruth Wilde, Rach Collins and Paul Parker: staff and volunteers of the Student Christian Movement (SCM), one of the partners in the End Hunger coalition.

Gather

Suggested hymns (worship and gathering)

- Come let us sing to the One (Graham Kendrick)
- Father in Heaven (Daniel Thambyrajah Niles)
- God who made the stars of heaven (Ruth Duck)
- God with us (Alan Gaunt)
- God is here as we his people (Fred Pratt Green)
- Jesus calls us here to meet him (John Bell and Graham Maule)
- The trumpet sounds the angels sing (Graham Kendrick)
- Blessed be your name (Matt Redman and Beth Redman)
- Earth's creator, everyday God (Bernadette Farrell)
- Great is thy faithfulness (Thomas O. Chisholm)
- Immortal, invisible (Walter Chalmers Smith)
- My soul proclaims your mighty deeds (Owen Alstott)
- I sing the almighty power of God (Isaac Watts)
- In the darkness of the still night (Margaret Rizza)
- Sing praise to God (Johann Schutz, Frances Cox, Honor Thwaites)

Call to worship

Loving God, we come to you, not because we have to, but because we can. Not because it's Sunday, but because we want our lives to be full of worship. We bring ourselves, everything that we carry, and all that we are to you, this day. Amen

Adoration and confession

God, who created the heavens and the Earth, who placed the stars in the sky and who knows every creature. We come to worship you.

God, who loves each and every one of us. Who cares for us deeply and knows how many hairs are on our heads. We come to worship you.

God, who is just and true, who weeps for our broken world but never turns away from the hurting. We come to worship you.

We come now to confession. We say sorry for the things we have done and the things have not done. The times we saw injustice and didn't stand against it. The times we saw a need and walked by on the other side. The times our words hurt, rather than healed. We pray God of justice and mercy for our broken selves in your broken world. Believing that in Jesus our sins are forgiven, and we start each morning afresh in you. Amen

Share the word

Suggested hymns (food, God's providence, themes from the Gospel reading)

- For the fruits of all creation (Fred Pratt Green)
- Blest are they, the poor in spirit (David Haas)
- Jesus Christ is waiting (John Bell, Graham Maule)
- Jesus the Lord said (Urdhu)
- Bread is blessed and broken (John Bell, Graham Maule)
- I am the bread of life (Brian Hoare)
- A rich young man came seeking (Marjorie Dobson)

First reading

Amos 5:6–17

Gospel reading

John 6:1–14 (the feeding of the 5,000)

Explore the word

Notes for a sermon: hungry people but also marginalised people

They followed Jesus 'because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick': this verse implies that many of these people were sick themselves.

The mention of the Sea of Tiberias also implies that these people were outcast and marginalised, as the Sea of Tiberias was thought to be 'unclean' – built on the side of the city of the dead (necropolis) Tiberias.

The mention of the Passover in verse 4 – "the Passover... was near" – is another sign that these people were not included in the mainstream. (If they were, they would have been making their way to Jerusalem for the festival).

How are people who experience food poverty in the UK also marginalised and excluded? How do things work against them in a capitalist society? How does loneliness and isolation affect people who are hungry and vice versa? Jesus cared not only for the physical needs of the people in the "large crowd", but also about whether they were brought together in community and included.

Jesus included even the most marginalised outsiders in his following and never had any doubt that he could feed them. We must have a similar faith that – with the guidance of God's spirit – we can find ways to make sure that all people are fed, cared for and brought into community with others, no matter who they are.

Respond to the word

Intercessions

The chorus of 'Beauty for Brokenness' could be sung or said throughout this prayer:

God of the poor, friend of the weak,
give us compassion we pray:

Melt our cold hearts, let tears fall like rain;
come change our love from a spark, to a flame.

(Copyright Graham Kendrick b.1950 / Make Way Music Ltd)

We place our planet into your hands, the tides and seasons, the incredible way it sustains life, and the powerful way it affects our existence. We thank you that there is food for all. Help us to ensure that it is shared and not wasted.

We place our leaders into your hands, politicians and monarchs, church leaders and corporations. We pray for a just world, where your love and mercy reign, and all are protected, supported and nurtured.

We place our country into your hands, the people, the institutions and the way of life. We pray for those who are hungry this day, and those who have the power to change that. We pray for all those in poverty and all those fighting to end poverty.

We place our community into your hands, those we know and those we don't. Those who are in a time of great need right now. We pray we may be your hands and feet in this place.

We place ourselves into your hands, trusting that you know our needs, what we hunger and thirst for. We give ourselves to play our part in your plan.

We place this prayer into your hands, in Jesus' name. Amen

Communion

At this point, you can share the Eucharist if this is included in your service – or have a time of quiet reflection.

Dedication

God of Justice, we stand with you and with each other against poverty. Against the oppression and injustice that leads to people not having enough. We commit to doing our part, to make your world a more just place. Here we stand. Amen

Suggested hymns (response and commitment)

- The Kingdom of God is justice and joy (Bryn Rees)
- When I needed a neighbour (Sydney Carter)
- All the room was hushed and still (Graham Kendrick)
- God's spirit is in my heart (Alan Dale, Hubert Richards)
- There is a new heaven; there is a new earth (Ruth Duck)

Sending out

Blessing

We must go, to hunger and thirst for righteousness as your people.



Thank you for your support!

