



Dignity. Agency. Power.

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

Invitation to submit content

Welcome

Thank you for expressing an interest in this exciting project to mark the 40th anniversary of Church Action on Poverty. This document introduces you to our editorial team and attempts to answer any questions you may have.

Who are we?

The process of collating and editing the material for the book is being managed by Liam Purcell, Church Action on Poverty's Communications Manager (liamp@church-poverty.org.uk). If you have any questions about the book or the process, Liam is the person to ask.

Some of the content for the book will be written by Niall Cooper, Director of Church Action on Poverty (niallc@church-poverty.org.uk) and Gavin Aitchison, our Poverty Media Coordinator (gavin@church-poverty.org.uk).

The workshops where we generate ideas and content will be facilitated by Chris Howson, chaplain of Sunderland University, and Matt Sowerby, our Poet in Digital Residence.

What is the book about?

2022 is the 40th anniversary of the founding of Church Action on Poverty. The Iona Community's Wild Goose Resource Group has agreed to work with us to mark the event by publishing an anthology of prayers, worship material and creative writing. Aimed at a Christian audience, it will...

- provide resources for churches to embed a concern for poverty and justice into their worship;
- creatively tell stories of people's lived experiences of UK poverty;
- communicate the theology of liberation and justice that has always driven our work;
- share our vision of a better world where everyone is able to exercise dignity, agency and power.

Our vision is that the UK can and must be transformed into a country where everyone can live a full life, free from poverty.

Poverty is an outrage against humanity. It robs people of dignity, freedom and hope, of power over their own lives. We believe that our vision – an end to poverty in the UK – can become a reality.

Our strategy for the coming years focuses on how we can build a movement that ensures everyone can access **dignity, agency and power**. Those three core values will be the themes of the anthology.

What kind of material are we looking for?

- There will be three sections in the book, exploring the different themes of dignity, agency and power. Each section will include a 'grab bag' of all kinds of content – some for individual reading and reflection, some suitable for use in church worship and prayer.
- Each individual item can be up to 500 words long.
- We would be interested in any of these kinds of material:
 - Prayers
 - Liturgies

- Short reflections
- Sermon notes
- Songs and hymns
- Poems
- Retellings of Bible stories
- Original stories
- Drama (either original drama, or versions of Bible stories)
- This list is not exhaustive or exclusive. We are open to receiving all kinds of material, so long as it connects to our themes. If you have something that's especially innovative or unusual, it would be helpful if you could send us a short commentary saying how it would be used.
- Each section will also include content produced by our staff team:
 - an introduction to the theme and its roots in our faith and theology
 - stories from people in our networks that share their experiences of poverty and show how they are loosening its grip by exercising their dignity, agency and power
 - a closing story that reflects our vision of the kingdom of heaven and a better world
- Anything you write needs to be clearly linked to one of the three themes. At the end of the document you will find an explanation of each theme, together with a summary of the stories from our networks that are likely to be featured in that section of the book. We will also be producing a list of scripture passages that are related to each theme. Please use any or all of this for inspiration and guidance.

Who can contribute materials?

We will consider all contributions, but we are particularly interested in writing from people who are actively involved in anti-poverty work in churches and elsewhere.

The book will be sold to a predominantly Christian audience, but you don't need to be a Christian to contribute, and the materials do not all need to have a faith basis.

Most importantly, we want the anthology to highlight the voices of people with lived experience of poverty. We are inviting many people to take part who have that experience. We encourage writers who don't have that experience themselves to work on their materials in partnership with marginalised people in their communities, making sure the writing is shaped by those experiences too. If necessary, we can arrange for you to meet with people and projects in our networks, to work alongside them on your ideas. At our planning workshops, we will discuss ways of doing this effectively.

How will the book be planned and collated?

We are arranging a series of online workshops to generate ideas, shape the plans, and inspire people to get writing. Two of the workshops are focused on theology, scripture and worship materials; two are focused on poetry and creative writing. You are welcome to attend any or all of the workshops, but you may prefer to focus on just one of the 'strands'. (For example, if you're not a Christian, you may not be interested in the theology sessions; if you're a writer of liturgies, you may be less interested in poetry. That's fine.)

The sessions will be:

- 24 March, 6–8pm: Theology and prayer workshop number 1 – introducing the themes, generating ideas for content, thinking how to involve as wide a range of voices as possible
- 28 April, 6–8pm: Poetry and writing workshop number 1 – introducing the themes and generating ideas
- 26 May, 6–8pm: Theology and prayer workshop number 2 – reviewing materials written so far, generating more ideas, involving a wider range of voices
- 23 June, 6–8pm: Poetry and writing workshop number 2 – reviewing materials written so far, generating more ideas, involving a wider range of voices

If you can't attend the workshops or can't do online meetings, you're still welcome to submit material, using the content in this document for inspiration.

How do I submit what I've written?

You can email it to liamp@church-poverty.org.uk or post it to Liam Purcell, Church Action on Poverty, 28 Sandpiper Court, Water's Edge Business Park, Modwen Road, Salford M5 3EZ. Please send it by 31 August 2021 at the latest.

Please make sure you tell us your name and contact details, including your job title and organisation if appropriate.

Will my contribution definitely be included?

We promise to consider every item that is sent in, but we can't guarantee that everything will be included in the published anthology.

If we want to suggest edits or changes to your material, we will let you know and get your approval before including it.

If we decide not to include your submission in the book, we may still be able to share it on our blog, newsletter or other communications. We will ask for your permission before we do this.

What are the timescales?

- Writing workshops will take place once a month from March to June.
- Writing will take place through spring and summer. All content needs to be submitted by the end of August.
- Church Action on Poverty staff will collate and edit the materials, and send the manuscript to Wild Goose by the end of October 2021.
- The anthology will be published on or soon after Church Action on Poverty Sunday, 27 February 2022.

How will the book be promoted and sold?

- Church Action on Poverty will promote the book heavily to our own supporters, in connection with wider activities to mark our anniversary, and also linked to regular events such as Church Action on Poverty Sunday.
- We will run our own press and PR campaign around the book, offering excerpts, features and interviews in the Christian press.
- Wild Goose will promote and distribute the book through all their usual channels, including events of the Iona Community's Common Concern Network (which has a focus on UK poverty), and possibly readings and online events at the bookshop on the island.
- There will be a 'Dignity, Agency, Power' week on the island of Iona in summer 2022, with workshops and activities on the themes. Contributors to the book will be invited to attend and possibly deliver some of the content.

What about copyright?

Any material that is published will be the copyright property of the author (who will be named) and the publisher. This is standard practice for such anthologies.

How much will the book cost?

- The book will cost £14.99 in shops, or £12.99 directly from Wild Goose's website.
- 10% of net receipts will come to Church Action on Poverty, funding work to uphold the dignity, agency and power of people in poverty.

- Each contributor will receive a free copy and be entitled to order further copies at 35% off the website price of £12.99 (so the discounted price will be £8.44).

About our themes

Use this section as guidance and inspiration for your writing

Scripture

Here is a list of scripture passages that might be useful starting points for your materials – perhaps you could write a study or reflection, a monologue dramatising the thoughts of one of the characters, or a prayer rooted in the story. This is not an exhaustive list – if you want to explore how another Bible passage relates to dignity, agency or power, go ahead!

- Genesis 16:1–16 and 21:8–21, Hagar’s story – God’s presence always follows the most vulnerable and excluded people in the story
- Matthew 14, Mark 6, Luke 9 and John 6, the feeding of the 5,000 – Jesus insists that his disciples use their own agency to go out and find food
- Mark 5:25–24 or Luke 8:43, the woman with a haemorrhage – she uses her own agency to seek healing from Jesus; in one version we don’t hear her voice, but in the other she tells her whole story
- Mark 7:24–30, the Syro-Phoenician woman – uses her agency and her voice to challenge Jesus
- Mark 10:46–52, Blind Bartimaeus: he persists and demands Jesus’ help; Jesus acknowledges his agency by asking him what he wants
- Mark 12:41–44, the widow’s offering – she uses her agency to be generous and make a difference despite her poverty
- Luke 1:26–38, the Annunciation – Mary is an active partner in God’s work
- Luke 1:45–55, the Magnificat – God overturns conventional ideas of power
- Luke 16:19–31, the rich man and Lazarus – we hear the rich man’s words, but never Lazarus’s. What might he have to say?
- John 4:4–26, the Samaritan woman by the well – she discovers her own agency
- John 8:1–11, the woman caught in adultery – where is the man? Why does he have no voice or accountability in this situation?
- Multiple passages, the Moabites and the Samaritans – examples of racial exclusion

Dignity

This section will explore our conviction that every human being is made in the image of God and has unique value – and how we can challenge the negative impact poverty has on human dignity.

Stories of dignity from our networks

- An interview with Church Action on Poverty’s ‘poet in digital residence’ exploring how creativity can help people use their voice and dignity, and feed into activism
- The story of the 1999 Pilgrimage Against Poverty which saw people in poverty walk all the way from Iona to Westminster to meet with Gordon Brown; and how its legacy continues with annual events in Sheffield today – with input from David Price of our Sheffield group (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/477576.stm>)
- Interview with activists who are working with us to explore how poverty affects LGBT+ people
- A story of how grassroots projects are connecting Black Lives Matter with anti-poverty work

- Stef Benstead's story: how her faith motivates her to work for change, how Poverty Truth Commissions acknowledge people's dignity, and how she works to uphold the dignity of people with disabilities (https://youtu.be/wFKKxf8x_Os)
- How Self-Reliant Groups bring together migrant workers and support people's dignity (<https://www.church-poverty.org.uk/migrant-support-how-to-work-with-people-to-rebuild-dignity-power/>) – emphasis on this as part of a vision of a better world

Agency

This section will look at the gospel priority for people in poverty, the need for people to have a say in the decisions that affect them, and how we can loosen the grip of poverty when solutions are designed by the real experts – people who have experienced it.

Stories of agency from our networks

- The story of an exchange trip we arranged between people in poverty in Stockton-on-Tees and the Philippines – how UK poverty is about a lack of agency and community
- The story of how we enabled local councils across the UK to use participatory budgeting techniques from Latin America to give people in poverty a say in how money was spent in their communities (<https://pbnetwork.org.uk/about/>)
- The story of how community organising and creative digital campaigns made a rip-off lender listen to low-income customers - and how those customers are active campaigners for justice, years later
- The story of Church Action on Poverty North East's roots in some of the region's poorest communities, how they told their own stories through photography and met with the UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty
<http://www.church-poverty.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Images-for-Change-report.pdf>
<https://www.church-poverty.org.uk/bearingwitness/>
- The story of Jayne Gosnall and others - how Poverty Truth Commissions and Self-Reliant Groups helped people have a say in how cities tackle poverty, poor mental health and addiction – emphasising how it relates to a positive vision of a better world where everyone has agency

Power

This section will explore how the gospel demands we speak out prophetically and transform unjust structures in society – and show the impact people in poverty can make when they speak truth to power.

Stories of power from our networks

- The story of how the first Poverty Hearings in the nineties planted seeds so that people and organisations are still speaking truth to power more than 25 years later
- The story of how we persuaded all the UK's major churches to support the Living Wage, giving them the authority to speak truth to power about the issue themselves
<https://www.church-poverty.org.uk/livingwage>
- The story of the 'Hearing the Cry of the Poor' call to action published by Church Action on Poverty in the 1980s and its impact on churches
- The story of how our Debt On Our Doorstep campaign had a hand in closing down Wonga and reforming the high-cost lending industry
(<https://affairsay.wordpress.com/2013/11/25/a-cap-on-the-cost-of-credit-is-an-important-first-step/>)
- Closing story – the young people in Lancashire who are becoming the next generation of campaigners and activists after being part of our 'Food Power' programme – emphasising how it reflects a vision of a better world where power is shared fairly