

Sharing our Dreams



With our support, artist Stephen Martin created portraits that shared the dreams and realities of people in poverty

It's a conscious effort

I'm making each day

to do something that

makes me feel

happy, and confident

and positive



Church Action
on Poverty
Sunday

19 October 2025
Worship and
fundraising pack

What are your dreams for a world free from poverty? How does your church make tackling poverty part of its mission?

On Church Action on Poverty Sunday, give, act and pray with others – together we can end UK poverty.

This pack includes a range of worship resources and fundraising ideas to help you take part on 19 October 2025.

- **Use the powerful ‘Dreams and Realities’ portrait exhibition to challenge and inspire your congregation.**
- **Use the worship resources to reflect and pray for change.**
- **Celebrate what your church is already doing – and explore how you could do more in partnership with Church Action on Poverty.**
- **Raise funds to support people working together to reclaim dignity, agency and power across the UK.**

Did you already take part in Church Action on Poverty Sunday earlier this year?

We are moving Church Action on Poverty Sunday to October so that it can be part of Challenge Poverty Week in England and Wales. So the event is taking place twice this year, then will return to once year every October.

If you took part in Church Action on Poverty Sunday in March, we're very grateful. This October event is a great chance to celebrate and build on the commitments you've made to tackle poverty locally. Please do join in again! Alternatively, you are welcome to use the resources to plan your own event at another time of year.

If you already shared the ‘Dreams and Realities’ portraits in March, we've included some updates from page 4 about how things have moved on since then for the people featured in the paintings – you could share them with your congregation. Or you could just use the worship materials this time - the paintings are not essential.



What to do

In your church service on Church Action on Poverty Sunday, 19 October 2025:

- Use our **worship** materials to help the congregation reflect on and share their dreams for a world free from poverty.
- Use a **talk or sermon** to explore the concepts.
- If you like, make space in your service to allow the congregation to engage with the 'Dreams and Realities' portraits (see page 4).
- Ask your congregation to **donate** to Church Action on Poverty – and to **sign up** for updates from us – to enable more people to build dignity, agency and power together.

Online worship

We've adapted the materials and ideas for Church Action on Poverty Sunday so that they can also be used for hybrid or online worship:

- Several videos are available for you to stream or download from www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday, and use as part of your service.
- The prayers and hymns are available as slides at www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday/extras, so you can share them in online worship.
- We've made it easy to donate online or by text, so people don't have to use cash.

Other types of event

If you would prefer to mark Church Action on Poverty Sunday outside of a church service, that's great too. Why not use the prayers (and perhaps our 'Scripture from the Margins' Bible studies, available from www.church-poverty.org.uk/bible) in a **house group**? Or hold a **'Zoom and Hymns'** online singing evening and invite people to make an online donation at the end? Or display the 'Dreams and Realities' paintings and stories at a bring-and-share lunch?

Dreams and Realities

If you like, you can download or order the 'Dreams and Realities' paintings and stories at www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday/paintings. Display them in church on Church Action on Poverty Sunday – either by hanging them from the walls or by projecting them digitally.

The exhibition tells stories of people from St Mary's Bramall Lane Family Choir in Sheffield. Each person here lives with strength and dignity whilst facing the challenges of life on the frontline of poverty. Each person is a creative soul, hard-working, with skills to share and a dream. Each person has a reality as part of life on a low income, which has not yet allowed them to realise their dreams.

Both the dreams and the realities are depicted in the portraits, painted by Stephen Martin. The portrait project was funded by Church Action on Poverty as part of the Let's End Poverty campaign, and the portraits toured the UK during 2024.

If you already used the paintings on Church Action on Poverty Sunday in March, we've included some updates on people's stories opposite, and in the printed materials. You could share the paintings again, and let your congregation know about how sharing their stories has changed people's lives and how they are working towards their dreams.

Here's a quick summary of the people featured in the paintings – see the downloadable slides for their full stories:

- **Rebecca** – a secondary school student, a gifted young musician, and a political refugee from Myanmar (formerly Burma). Her dream is to have piano lessons but her reality is that her family “live from paycheque to paycheque”.
- **Michelle** dreams of setting up a charity and being a motivational speaker, drawing on her experience and insights as a recovering addict. Living on the frontline of poverty means she cannot afford the fresh fruit she needs.
- **Damian** – an artist who dreams of improved community projects, but he is often down to his last penny before he has paid for all his needs.
- **Glen** – a professional jazz guitarist and community musician. His dream is to perform at a New York City jazz club, but he is challenged by poor mental health and substance abuse issues.
- **Stephen** – the artist who painted all the 'Dreams and Realities' portraits, including his own. His dream is to safeguard his own mental health, but his reality was that he lived in the dark because he could not afford to have his house rewired.
- **Liudmyla** – a refugee in the UK from the war in Ukraine who dreams of attending university, but in reality she cannot predict and plan for the future.
- **Wayne** does voluntary work and campaigns on issues including racial injustice and homelessness, while himself facing homelessness.
- **Susan** – a craftsperson and a carer for her husband, who dreams of visiting her daughter in Scotland but cannot afford to pay her bills.
- **Sandra** – a refugee from unrest in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Her dream is to set up a healthcare centre in her birth country, but the reality of life on a low income is that she can't afford the bus fares to college.

What's happening now?

Since the Dreams and Realities exhibition, we've kept in touch with a few of the people whose portraits were painted.

- **Stephen**, the artist, had been living for years in a home with no gas or electricity, but he is now in far more suitable accommodation. He says: "My life has drastically changed for the better, I've been on state pension for two months which is double what I got on benefits, and my house has been on the market for three weeks and is attracting interest."
- **Ljudmyla** says: "I have really enjoyed it and I can't believe it! ... I think we made a good exhibition and I hope something changes from some of it. "I feel good that so many people have seen it. I have also told my friends and family, so they all know! Just yesterday one of my friends texted saying they had seen my portrait, and I feel like they know it's important. I feel we have made an important step, and I have enjoyed it. Doing this, I found people in the same position as me, and I heard from other people as well. "What will happen next? Who knows?! But I am doing what I can, I am studying and improving my English. I believe in the future and I'm looking forward."
- **Wayne** says: "My personal situation hasn't changed. I've been working on turning my dream into a reality, and I'm excited to report that I've made some progress. Church Action on Poverty interviewed me for a feature in their magazine. I've also set up a GoFundMe page to support my initiative, Mission50%, which aims to tackle rough sleeping by 50% in one year."
- **Susan** says: "A few things have changed, and I'm working part-time now. It's a start."



How to give



Donations from churches are vital to our work, really enabling people to exercise dignity, agency and power. Please use your event to encourage people to make a donation to Church Action on Poverty.

Physical collections (cash or cheques)

- If you're taking a physical collection at your service or event, please **give out our donation envelopes** so that members of the congregation can make a Gift Aid declaration with their donation if they wish. You should have received some envelopes in your resource pack – just call 0161 872 9294 if you need more.
- Afterwards, you can **donate the proceeds of your event** by card or PayPal at www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday/give. Or make out a cheque for the full amount from your collection, payable to Church Action on Poverty, and send it to:
Freepost RTTY–JGEE–JJEZ, Church Action on Poverty, 28 Sandpiper Court, Water's Edge Business Park, Modwen Road, Salford M5 3EZ.
Please include a note saying that this is a Church Action on Poverty Sunday collection, and where it was taken. Be sure to include any signed Gift Aid declarations along with your cheque.



Online donations

- Make sure the congregation receive our **prayer cards**. The cards include the Church Action on Poverty Sunday prayer, and a code and web address they can use to make an instant online donation. You should have received some prayer cards with this resource pack – just call 0161 872 9294 if you need more.
- Our **worship slides** include codes and links for people to make an online donation – just display them on a screen in church, or as part of your virtual worship. They're available to download at www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday/extras

Making a commitment as a church

Some churches prefer to make a **monthly donation** rather than taking a collection – or make donations to **nominated charities** at the end of each year. If this suits your church better, please ask your leaders to consider giving to Church Action on Poverty in this way. You can find more guidance at www.church-poverty.org.uk/donorchurch

Coffee

If your church serves tea or coffee after the service, why not buy some Church Action on Poverty fairtrade coffee? Every bag raises funds to help people speak truth to power. You can order yours at www.church-poverty.org.uk/give

Worship

Use this collection of prayers, hymns, Bible readings and creative activities to reflect on your own dreams of a world free from poverty.

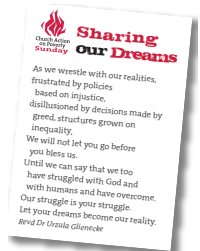
These materials are presented in the format of a traditional liturgical service. If you follow a less structured approach in your church, feel free to select whichever materials will work best in your worship. Please try to let your worship be led by authentic voices of lived experience, and do include a call to take action.

Revd Canon David Primrose has shared some helpful reflections on his own experiences of preaching and sharing stories on Church Action on Poverty Sunday. See www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday/videos

Remember that all of these materials are available as slides to use in online worship too – download them at www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday/extras

A prayer for Church Action on Poverty Sunday

As we wrestle with our realities,
frustrated by policies based on injustice,
disillusioned by decisions made by greed, structures grown on
inequality,
We will not let you go before you bless us
Until we can say that we too have struggled with God and with
humans and have overcome.
Our struggle is your struggle. Let your dreams become our reality.
Urzula Glienecke



Gather: opening responses

Loving God, we come to you with our dreams
We come to you with our struggles

We come to you with our hopes
We come to you with our reality

Walk beside us,
Fight alongside us
As we strive to end poverty in our country
In the name of God the Father who lifts up the lowly

In the name of Jesus Christ who knew what poverty is like
And the Holy Spirit who empowers us all to change the world step by step
Amen

Revd Dr Urzula Glienecke

Listen: stories and paintings

Make the Dreams and Realities paintings (see page 4), and the background and biographies of the artist and subjects of the paintings, available for the congregation to see. You could display prints on the wall or run a slideshow of the digital images and text.

If you have already shared these paintings at a previous service, you could skip this element – or share the updates that we've included in the new version of the slideshow and prints.

Allow the congregation some quiet time to look at the paintings, read the stories, and reflect on the dreams and realities shared by the people in them.

(Visit www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday/paintings to download the slideshow or order printed copies, and to view the video interview.)



Share the word: a collect

Just and loving God, you who are calling us to make your dream for us reality, help us to work together to end poverty for all. Inspire us with agency, guide us with dignity and empower us through Jesus Christ your Son and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen

Revd Dr Urzula Glienecke

Share the word: scripture readings

All these materials draw on the scripture passages which are listed in the Revised Common Lectionary for Sunday 19 October 2025:

- Genesis 32:22–31 (Jacob wrestles with God)
- Psalm 121 (I lift up my eyes to the hills)
- 2 Timothy 3:14–4:5 (All scripture is inspired by God)
- Luke 18:1–8 (The parable of the widow and the unjust judge)

Take a look at our video by Revd Canon David Primrose for some ideas to help you prepare to preach on these texts: www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday/videos

You could use this retelling of the Gospel reading if you like:

Rebecca and Obadiah (Luke 18:2–5)

Rebecca's husband was ill for a long time. He wasn't old, but he couldn't work, so she had to toil away in the fields growing the food to eat or to sell, and they got by. They had a small house on the main street of the town where they lived in Galilee, and Rebecca could often be seen on her way out to the fields or pushing her cart, loaded with grain, down to the market. If children shouted something



Artist Stephen Martin shares his reflections on Psalm 21

When someone is in need – feeling alone, overcome by worries and problems, in times of desperation, when depression or despair are setting in – God will be there to watch, help, protect, guard, and care for them in these times of need

rude at her, she would hurl a handful of pebbles at them, and if neighbours greeted her, they often got little more than a grunt and a scowl out of her. Rebecca and her husband had no children, and her own family lived some distance away in another town, so when her husband died, Rebecca was all alone. For a time she carried on her daily routine as though nothing had happened. But, early one morning, her husband's family came to her house and asked her to leave. When she refused to budge, they carried her out and dumped her on the road and took possession of the house.

As it happened, the town magistrate lived in a house a little further down the street, and Rebecca went straight to his house, banged on the door and demanded to see him.

The magistrate, who was called Obadiah, wasn't a very good judge: he didn't know the law very well, he was pretty careless and he just lived for a quiet life, never mind what was right or wrong. He certainly didn't like stropky widows banging on his door at seven in the morning, demanding justice: didn't she know that the court was only held on the third Wednesday of every other month?

"Wake up, Obadiah," shouted Rebecca. "I've been chucked out of my house, the one my husband left me. His family have no right to it – it's left to me in his will. You should know all about that. Come on, show a leg. I need my house back. I want justice, and that's your job."

"Go away, Rebecca," cried Obadiah without opening his door. "It's too early. Why don't you just go back to your own family?"

"They don't want me," said Rebecca. "Besides, the house is mine, and I'm not giving it up."



“I’ll look into it next week,” shouted the magistrate. “Now go away!”

Rebecca went back up the street, out into the fields and made herself a shelter with branches and leaves; she still had some money for food. Obadiah heaved a sigh of relief, turned over and went back to sleep.

But there was little rest for him in the next days, because Rebecca would arrive every morning at six, beat on his door, demand that he give judgement against the people who had seized her house, and stay there all morning shouting and singing at the top of her voice. If Obadiah came out of his house, she would come up very close to him, stare threateningly into his eyes and repeat her demand, then follow him down the street, gesticulating wildly and making a lot of noise. In the end, Obadiah couldn’t stand it any longer. Although he knew Rebecca wasn’t very popular in the town and people would be glad to get rid of her, and even though her legal case wasn’t crystal clear, he caved in to her demand, convened the court a week early and, after the briefest of hearings, gave judgement that the house belonged to Rebecca. He even organised some townspeople to remove those who had taken over her house, and she was able to take possession of it once again.

The result was that for several months Obadiah was as unpopular in the town as Rebecca. But at least he could sleep soundly in the morning.

Revd Nick Jowett

Respond to the word: dreams and realities (an all-age activity)

You will need art supplies (markers, coloured pencils, large sheets of paper, paints).

Break the congregation into small groups; children and young people can do the same activity in their own groups, Sunday school session, etc. In each group, start by reflecting together:

- What was your immediate reaction to the exhibition?
- Is there a painting or story that connected with you particularly? Why? How did it make you feel?
- Did any of the pictures resonate with your own life, or with those of people you know and work with in the local community?
- What are the realities you face in your community (challenges, struggles, and everyday experiences)?
- How does your group or church respond to those realities?
- And what are your dreams for this community? For the wider world?
- Can you and your church help more people like those in the paintings to share their dreams – and even to make them real? What kind of world would it be if we all supported each other’s dreams?
- If you were painting yourself, or your family or church, how would you represent your reality in the painting? And how would you represent your dreams?

Then, create an artwork that reflects your own dreams and realities. This could be a group activity using one big sheet of paper, and depicting the whole church’s dreams

and realities. Or it could be an individual activity, with each person making their own portrait.

Use various art supplies to encourage creativity. Encourage people not to worry about being talented artists. The idea is to share their dreams and hopes in a fun and creative way, not to produce a masterpiece.

Put all the pictures on display so that all the congregation can see them. If there's time, you could invite each person or group to say a few words about the dreams and realities they've depicted.

Explore the word: Bible studies and activities

If you would like to explore and reflect on today's Gospel reading in more depth – and relate it to your church's mission to tackle poverty locally – you could use some of these additional resources in a house group or Bible study group:

- You can download a Bible study at www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday/extras, which provides context about the situations Jesus was talking about, and uses role-play to put participants in the position of the judge and the widow.
 - There is also a 'Scripture from the Margins' Bible study on the parable of the unjust judge and the persistent widow on page 52 of *Dignity, Agency, Power*, the anthology of prayers, stories and reflections which was published in 2022 to mark Church Action on Poverty's 40th anniversary. You can order a copy at www.church-poverty.org.uk/anthology
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Pray: intercessions

Let us pray for those whose dreams are constrained by a reality affected by poverty, injustice, anxiety and struggle and who yearn for a world where they can imagine new possibilities and have hope for their families.

As we trust God to be with them, we pray that they can experience that presence through the actions of others who walk with them, the words of others who speak with them, and the love of others who stay with them when it feels too much.

We ask this in your name

Amen

Let us pray for ourselves, in churches and faith communities, struggling with the realities of poverty and injustice, or worried for others who are. May we be inspired by God's promise of a new covenant to find the courage and belief to speak out for the possibilities of a new way of being.

We pray for our church leaders, that they be filled with hope and resilience to speak truth to power, and the resilience to keep trying when others appear to turn away.

We ask this in your name

Amen

Let us pray for our political leaders, for those in power and for others who want to be, that they may be filled with wisdom and understanding, to recognise the effect and impact of policies and politics, on the lives of people today and in the future.

We pray that their hearts are softened and minds are opened so they may be inspired by the dreams of those who have little, rather than influenced by those who have too much.

We ask this in your name

Amen

Let us pray for persistence, for ourselves and all who need it as we strive for a more just and equitable world. We ask for the grace to be like the tenacious widow, challenging all in our world who show disregard and lack of care for the troubles of others.

We pray for the faith of the widow, to keep asking and campaigning, regardless of the response, and to trust in God's promise of a world where neighbour will care for neighbour and all will have enough.

We ask this in your name

Amen

We pray for ourselves, and all who work for a better world, at this time of turmoil, conflict and struggle that we may be inspired and nourished by your scripture and its message to us, and not be disheartened no matter how difficult life feels.

We pray for hope and strength, to take up our mission in the world and be voices for truth, justice and love in the face of indifference and contradiction and find the ability to trust in God and dream again.

We ask this in your name

Amen

Miriam McHardy

Give and act: a collection

Either take a collection, or raise funds by asking for donations for refreshments after your service. Make sure the congregation understand that their funds will help more people to speak truth to power, reclaiming their own dignity, agency and power.

Encourage people to use the donation envelopes provided, so that they can boost the value of their gift by making a Gift Aid declaration. Or they can donate online by using the link provided on the Church Action on Sunday prayer cards.

You could also invite people to sign up for email updates from Church Action on Poverty. We'll send regular updates on the impact your donations are making in communities, and actions you can take to tackle the causes of poverty. Use the enclosed sign-up sheet, or download one at www.church-poverty.uk/extras.

See page 6 to find out how to send your donations to Church Action on Poverty – and other ways your church could give.



Send out

Jesus stands among his followers, when they are gathered together.
He leaves them his peace and his Spirit.

Do not be afraid.

May your dreams and visions be bold enough to see his Kingdom,
and may his Spirit strengthen you to build it.

Amen

Revd Marie Pattison

Sing: hymns for your service

Justice hymn

Tune: Alleluia Dulce Carmen (8,7,8,7,8,7)

How to live in peace and fairness,
God, you taught in ancient law.
Jesus showed us love in action -
challenges for rich and poor,
reinforced by tales of wisdom,
parables we can't ignore.

We recall the troubled widow
in the story Jesus told:
she demanded compensation
from the judge in words so bold.
If we do not lose our courage,
will true righteousness unfold?

In a world of greed and suffering
can real justice still be found?
Rich men think they can't be questioned;
poor survive on their last pound.
Can we make the call to fairness
echo through the world around?

Where good laws are still perverted,
might is right and money reigns,
we must never cease from struggle,
cleansing all our social stains.
God, we ask that love for justice
may run deeply in our veins.

Revd Nick Jowett, June 2025

We are loved

*Lyrics, chords, recording and CCLI information at
unifiedpraise.com/songs/477-we-are-loved*

If we are lost in the valley's shadow,
If we lose hope, and all around is grey.
If we can't see the Lord who walks beside us,
Who guards our hearts and keeps our feet upon the Way,

*There is a voice that speaks louder than our fears.
There is a grace that whispers through our tears,
There is a hope, let sorrow disappear;
For we are loved.*

We have a God who teaches us our value
And Christ our Lord who shows us sacrifice,
The Holy Ghost who comforts and befriends us,
And helps us see the whole creation through God's eyes.

*Teach us to love, for love fulfils your law.
Teach us to care; make dignity our goal,
And as we serve, let "Justice!" be our cry,
For we are loved!*

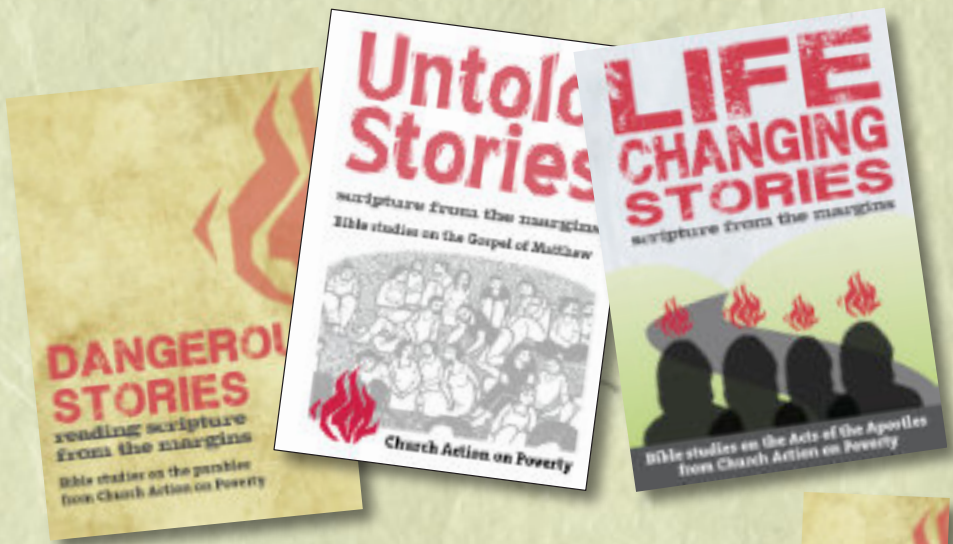
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Other suggested hymns

- A Touching Place
- Abundant Life
- All are Welcome
- And They'll Know we are Christians
- Bread for the World
- Called to Shed Light
- Canticle of the Turning
- Christ be our Light
- Christ is our King
- Come to the Water (O let all who thirst)
- For the Healing of the Nations
- Gather Your People O Lord
- Give me Ears
- Give to the winds thy fears
- God of the poor (Beauty for brokenness)
- Heaven Shall not Wait
- Jesus Christ is Waiting
- Let Justice Roll Down Like a River
- O God who Gives the Fertile Seed
- Remember Me
- Return to God
- Servant Song
- Sent by the Lord am I
- Take my Hands Lord
- Tell out my Soul
- The Cry of the Poor
- The Kingdom of God is Justice and Peace
- There's a Spirit in the Air
- Till all the Jails are Empty
- Whatsoever You Do
- When I Needed a Neighbour
- Within the Reign of God

Scripture from the margins

Free Bible studies – a great way to follow up from your Church Action on Poverty Sunday service



“Accessible, opinionated, challenging, affirming and easy to lead and to build on”

“Plenty of material for spiritual growth and good discussion”

“A very stimulating course, causing one to think about issues not normally dealt with on a Lent course”



Download free at www.church-poverty.org.uk/bible



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

Kathy Galloway,
former Head of Christian Aid Scotland

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