## Churches Changing Lives and Communities Pledge

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**Why a Pledge?**

One of the recommendations of an independent evaluation of Life Expectancy Wirral (a Diocesan initiative to support churches to engage with issues of inequality and poverty) in 2013 was that we facilitate the creation of a ‘Pledge’. The aim of the pledge is to harness the enthusiasm and commitment that we see in individuals and churches and to support them in responding to the Gospel imperative to have compassion for the poor in our local communities.

**What is the Pledge and how was it created?**

We used the ‘Listen Up’ process designed by the Diocese of Sheffield to plan 4 events in each of the 4 Wirral Constituencies to gather feedback for the Pledge. We invited Wirral Borough Council Constituency Managers and Public Health representatives to take part in presentations and discussions. To create the pledge, we needed to find out the strengths of each church and to identify the issues that people are passionate about. 68 people attended the events, representing 24 churches.

The resulting ‘Churches Changing Lives and Communities Pledge’ is a commitment by churches to work in partnership with others to help tackle poverty and inequality through practical action and prayer. The Pledge consists of 8 statements. To help churches turn these vision statements into reality, we have created a wealth of supporting information including examples of how to respond to them, web links, local contact details and other resources.

**Putting the Pledge into action**

We have gathered together ideas, examples, contact details and sources of information to help you to put the Pledge statements into action. Look at the 8 Pledge statements and choose one to start with. This may be something that your church is already doing and you want to expand it or celebrate it or it could be something new that you want to focus on. You can build on this by choosing additional statements to work towards.

It is important that the whole congregation is regularly reminded of the aims of the Pledge and that they feel a part of any Pledge related activities or developments – this could be by prayer or active involvement. Make the Pledge a part of the mission planning for your church!

You may of course have other ideas that are not included in our list of suggestions. Please let us know if you would like to add anything to the list or if you try something and it works. It would be great to share good practice with other churches. Any feedback you have on putting the Pledge into action would be greatly appreciated and we would especially appreciate any stories you have of successful relationship building.

Contact: Wendy Robertson Mobile 07956044573

##  Pledge Statements

## http://www.chester.anglican.org/dev/images/LEWprayinghangs.jpg

**Make prayer central to all our work in tackling poverty**

* Create a prayer Board/Station – a central point to pass on items for prayer in your church
* Create a prayer bookmark or pocket prayer card which could be distributed to the congregation
* Link with prayer partners to pray about issues relating to poverty and inequality
* ‘Information’ for prayer (statistics etc.) – For up to date facts and figures about health, deprivation etc. in your area, the Church Urban Fund has developed a resource which provides information about poverty on an Anglican parish level. This gives a general picture of levels of poverty in different parishes and allows for easy comparison with other parishes - <http://www2.cuf.org.uk/lookup-tool>
* Link with local organisations to pray for their work and specific families or individuals that they work with
* Pray for Life Expectancy Wirral pairs:
* St.Chad, Leasowe with St. Johns in the Vale, Meols
* St. Bridget, West Kirby with Laird Street Baptist (and St. James)
* Make use of prayer resources on Christian websites e.g.:
[Christian Aid](http://www.christianaid.org.uk/resources/index.aspx) -  (look under ‘churches’)
[Church Action on Poverty](http://www.church-poverty.org.uk/pray)
[CAFOD](http://www.cafod.org.uk/Pray)



**Share our resources in a way that benefits the local community**

* Find out what services/activities are offered in your area and consider how you can support them. The [Community Action Wirral](http://wirralwell.org/) website may be helpful.
* Build on existing groups in your church e.g. mums and tots, luncheon club, etc. How could you develop them to reach more people or to improve the quality of service? Can you encourage people to make their own way to your service to improve their confidence? Could you provide a lift rota for those who are not mobile enough to get out of their homes alone? Could you consult the people you spend time with to find out how you can best support them to help themselves? Appreciate what you are already doing – can you raise the profile of your service by celebrating with the community? Use advertising board/leaflets to highlight what activities your church offers
* Audit your resources – what have you got to offer in terms of people, rooms, outside space, equipment? Could you redeploy church members to support a local charity e.g. offering debt management rather than fulfilling a role in church which isn’t really necessary?
* Visit other churches around the Wirral to share ideas and experiences. Can you deliver a similar service to another church? Can you share resources?
* Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) is a ‘movement which considers local assets as the primary building blocks of sustainable community development. Building on the skills of local residents, the power of local associations, and the supportive functions of local institutions, asset-based community development draws upon existing community strengths to build stronger, more sustainable communities for the future’ (ABCD Institute). How can you use the principles of ABCD to build communities together with local people?



**Be outward focused in a way that improves health, wellbeing and quality of life within our communities**

* Build relationships through talking to people who use facilities or activities at your church. Could you hold an informal lunch/picnic/BBQ for local people to chat and get to know you and each other?
* Liaise with other churches to see if they are doing anything and whether you as a church could support them in their work or whether you could set something new up together. Share resources
* If you have an idea for an activity, approach statutory or voluntary sector organisations who may be able to help you.  For example your local school, your Local Authority area Constituency manager (<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/councillors-and-committees#wgSM-1>) ; [Wirral Age UK](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/wirral/our-services/) , Social Housing providers. Could you arrange a meeting with representatives from some of the above to talk through your ideas?
* Visit the [Hope Together](http://www.hopetogether.org.uk) website for ideas on working together in different kinds of mission
* Can your church form a link with one of the Wirral organisations helping to tackle poverty and inequality e.g. by providing volunteers? Some examples can be found here:

**Bread of Life, Birkenhead** – Supporting families in crisis with food
Office Tel: 07963460538
E-mail: office.breadoflife@gmail.com

**Charles Thompson Mission** – providing food, refreshments, clothing, trips away and support to homeless and others in need

Office Tel: 0151 647 7303
E-mail: ctmission0@gmail.com

**Wirral Churches ARK Project** – providing direct access accommodation and support to both male and female homeless people over the age of 18, with a view to resettling them back in the community
Office Tel: 0151 649 0111 E-mail: enquiries@wirralark.org.uk

**The Besom** – a lay led interdenominational organisation which aims to provide a bridge between those who want to give time, money, things or skills and those who are in need
Derek Durrant  E-mail: contact@besominwirral.co.uk

**Wirral Foodbank** – emergency food for local people
Office Tel: 0151 638 7090 E-mail enquiries@wirralfoodbank.org.uk

**Christians Against Poverty** – Providing debt advice, Money Courses and a Job Club

Moira Nelson Mobile 07583 123169
Email: moiranelson@capuk.org

**Citizens Advice Bureau** – advice on working rights, consumer issues, benefits etc.

Office Tel: 03444 77 21 21
E-mail: volunteering@wirralcab.org.uk
Or volunteer for one of the many projects run by churches, they are always looking for volunteers – [check WirralWell](http://wirralwell.org/)or individual church websites for ideas

**Work together with other churches, creating opportunities to share with and encourage each other**

* Keep your own church website up-to-date
* Make use of social media – Twitter/Facebook to connect with churches
* Pairing - Think about the possibility of your church being paired with another in a less/more deprived area. For more information about the process, get in touch with Wendy (contact details above)
* Celebrate locally - Join with a few other churches in your area to put on a lunch/picnic/barbeque/coffee morning to spend time socialising with each other, sharing experience and building relationships. New ideas and partnerships leading to more effective work can spring from informal conversations.
* What are other churches doing in your area? Can you share activities/support/events going on in your church on each other’s websites? Could you make a short video explaining what you do and upload it?



**Keep poverty, health and inequality in our hearts and minds**

Keep poverty, health and inequality in our hearts and minds by

* listening to God’s Word
* listening to people and communities
* informing ourselves about local poverty and inequality

Listening to God’s Word:

* Prayer (refer to first statement)
* Access the resources created for use in services or small groups;
1. [Introduction to all resources](http://www.chester.anglican.org/dev/docs/social/Resources_info.docx)- **Read this first for an explanation of all the resources below**.
2. The Fathers Daughters: [Story](http://www.chester.anglican.org/dev/docs/social/story_sheet.doc), [Discussion Sheet](http://www.chester.anglican.org/dev/docs/social/fathers_daughters.doc), [Bible Verses](http://www.chester.anglican.org/dev/docs/social/Bible_verses.docx)
3. [Photography Session](http://www.chester.anglican.org/dev/docs/social/Photo_session.docx)
4. [Poverty Quiz](http://www.chester.anglican.org/dev/docs/social/Poverty_quiz.docx)
5. [Bible verses on wealth](http://www.chester.anglican.org/dev/docs/social/Bible_verses_wealth.docx)
6. [Background information](http://www.chester.anglican.org/dev/docs/social/UK_poverty.doc)
7. [Language and nature of poverty discussion document](http://www.chester.anglican.org/../dev/docs/social/Language_and_nature_of_poverty.pdf)
* Mark a special Sunday with a sermon on this Pledge statement
* Access Christian websites to read reflections and notes on Biblical references to poverty

Listening to people and communities:

* If you have several activities run from your church, gather together representatives from each to chat about their feelings about their community, what they like about it, what they think it has to offer, what issues are important etc.
* Attend local events and conferences run by churches and faith organisations to hear what others are doing on the Wirral to tackle poverty and inequality
* Use [Tearfund’s Discovery Resource Pack](http://www.tearfund.org/~/media/files/main%20site/resources/church%20resources/discovery/discovery.pdf) which helps churches to reach out and support local communities
* Appoint a church member to liaise with your Local Constituency Manager (<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/councillors-and-committees#wgSM-1>)

Informing ourselves about local poverty and inequality:

* Keep your church congregation informed of local poverty by highlighting the issues in a service 2 or 3 times a year. For up to date facts and figures about health, deprivation etc. in your area, the Church Urban Fund has developed a resource which provides information about poverty on an Anglican parish level. This gives a general picture of levels of poverty in different parishes and allows for easy comparison with other parishes <http://www2.cuf.org.uk/lookup-tool>. Also listen out for personal stories that can be shared
* Invite a speaker from a local organisation tackling poverty, inequality etc. to come  to your church or go and visit them to hear more about their work and the issues faced by people they work with (see statement 3 for examples of organisations)
* Or volunteer for one of the many projects run by churches, they are always looking for volunteers – check WirralWell, church websites for ideas
* Pairing churches - Think about the possibility of your church being paired with another in a less/more deprived area. For more information about the process, please contact Wendy (contact details above)

**Engage with the political process and policy makers to promote God’s justice and righteousness**



* The local authority has a Constituency Manager for each of the four parliamentary constituencies in Wirral. Their role is to connect constituents and organisations with the political process. Explore the website and consider how the church can connect with the manager for your area <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/councillors-and-committees#wgSM-1>
* Refer to websites of existing pressure groups e.g. [Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT)](http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/) . The JPIT has been formed by the Church of Scotland, the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist church and the United Reformed church. It helps the four churches work together on issues of justice and inequality.
* Check out websites to see what issues are being challenged by Christians nationally and find out how you can support them below:
1. [Church Action on Poverty](http://www.church-poverty.org.uk/)
2. <https://www.churchofengland.org/our-views/home-and-community-affairs/home-affairs-policy.aspx>
3. [Make Poverty History](http://www.makepovertyhistory.org/extras/aroundtheuk.shtml)
* Display contact details for your MP <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/elections-and-voting/elections>and councillors <https://Wirral.gov.uk/councillors-and-committees/councillors> on a church notice board and support and challenge local policies. Is it appropriate to invite these people to church events?
* Visit the Church of England Parliamentary Unit [web page](http://churchinparliament.org/)



**Work together with the Local Authority, NHS and community partners to develop mutual trust to better support our communities**

* Find out what’s going on in your community – what are other groups doing? Refer to Community Action Wirral’s [WirralWell](http://wirralwell.org/) website. Can you help them in any way?  Make information available in your church so that members are able to signpost people who need additional support to other services e.g. debt, mental health
* Join with other churches to work together to make best use of statutory resources e.g. funding opportunities
* If you have an idea for an activity, approach statutory or voluntary sector organisations who may be able to help you.  For example your local school, your local area Constituency Manager <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/councillors-and-committees#wgSM-1> ( find out what the Local Authority priorities are for your area for example isolation is one of the priorities of Wirral South), [Wirral Age UK](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/wirral/our-services/), Social Housing providers etc. Could you arrange a meeting with representatives from some of the above to talk through your ideas? Think about how you can help them as well as how they can help you.