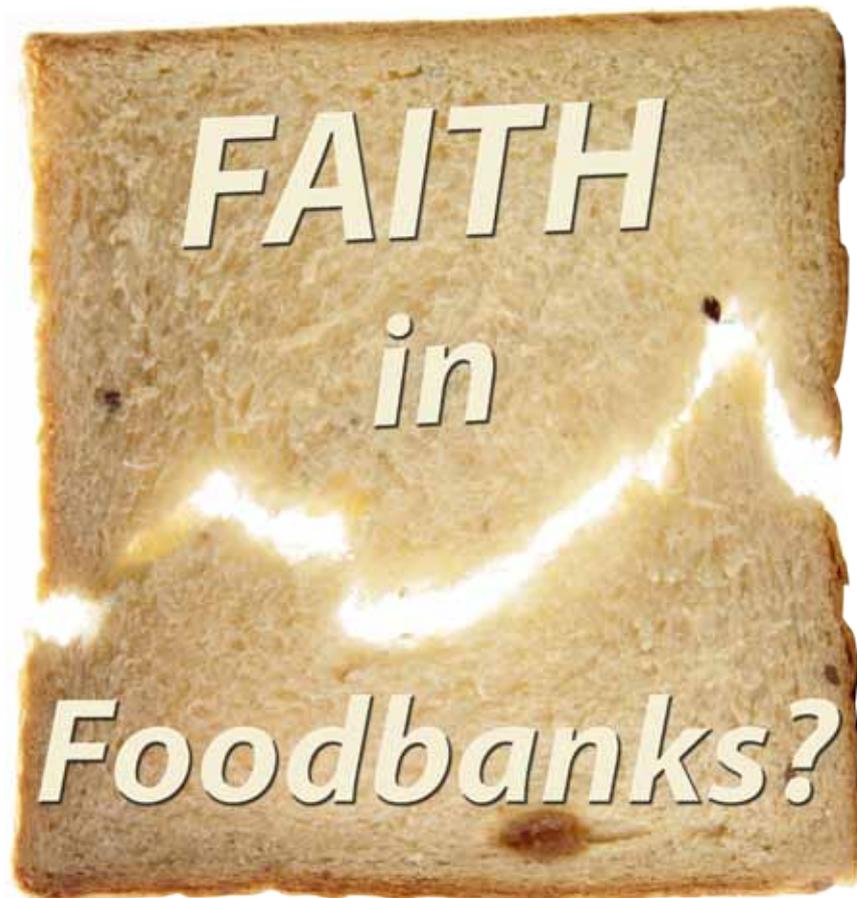


A resource from
the Baptist Union of Great Britain,
the Methodist Church,
the United Reformed Church
and Church Action on Poverty



Resources for Churches



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Our thanks are expressed to Gateshead Foodbank for sharing their photographs.

Foreword

For the past year I have served as the President of the Methodist Conference. This has given me the opportunity to meet and talk to people all around Britain. From Cornwall to Shetland, from Lancashire to Lincolnshire, in urban and rural areas, I have met Christians who are collecting for foodbanks, or working in foodbanks.

In every area I have asked the same two questions:

- » Do you have a foodbank here?
- » Have you seen an increased need for it?

Wherever I have travelled the answers to both questions have been 'yes'.

I am not hearing about small increases in need; rather I am hearing about huge leaps in demand and foodbanks that are struggling to keep up.

I am hearing about generosity of giving in terms of time and food.

I am hearing about, and talking with, people who are falling into unmanageable debt for the first time in their lives.

I have heard many stories about people in crisis. For example, in Clacton-on-Sea I heard about the young man who had been sanctioned, and had his benefits removed, because he was late to his appointment when the bus broke down. He couldn't phone to let them know because he had no credit on his mobile phone. He was told he should have used a phone box but the bus fare had used up all his money, so he had no food.

Although I have engaged mostly with Methodists, very similar stories and experiences are emerging through other denominations and networks, where in many cases Christians are running foodbanks in ecumenical partnership. When Christians hear stories like this, we are bound to respond and to obey Jesus' command to love our neighbour and supporting foodbanks is one way of doing this. Many Christians have also recognised that the need will continue to increase unless we tackle the underlying causes of food poverty. People are asking why new foodbanks are opening across the country every few days when this is one of the wealthiest nations in the world.



The situation is complex, and few of us will feel equipped to fully engage in the debates that emerge. But we have stories to share, and some of those stories are extremely powerful. When presented with honesty and integrity they have the power to challenge all of us, to change hearts and minds. They most definitely have the power to change the policies and attitudes of those who do have the direct power to make a difference.

Telling stories to anyone who will listen, be it to friends and colleagues, family and church family or to press and politicians, is important in helping people understand why hunger in the UK is increasing and what we, together, can do to end it.

The Methodist Church, Baptists and the United Reformed Church, together with Church Action on Poverty, have put these excellent resources together to help us to ask questions, to tell stories and to work together for a fair and just society. I urge you to use this resource pack and to work together to make life better for the most vulnerable people in our society.

Revd Ruth Gee
President of the Methodist Conference
2013-14

Introduction

Across the United Kingdom, in towns, cities and rural communities, there has emerged a rapidly growing network of foodbanks. Some are relatively small 'community larders' while others operate on an almost industrial scale. Local churches and congregations have often played a key role in their establishment.

Church cellars are being transformed by storage bins and shelves full of tinned goods and non-perishables; armies of volunteers are busily sorting and storing daily consignments taking careful note of the all-important sell-by date; Christians are coming together and new friendships and partnerships are being forged as the foodbank movement grows and develops. Hardly a supermarket exists now where we cannot find a collection point, forging new and significant relationships between people of faith, major retailers and the wider community.

Through foodbanks, Christians are able to express key Gospel values and declare something of the faith that defines us. In real and practical ways we are sharing our bread with one another, welcoming the stranger, loving our neighbour and acting as stewards of God's creation and provision. We might argue that this is a return to an age-old tradition; the tithe-barn was a prominent feature of community life in our nation for centuries – a place where food was stored and shared for the common good, inspired and directed by the teachings of the Old Testament.



Christians should be involved in foodbanks because it is a simple, practical response to the imperative of the Gospel.
[Peter, Durham]

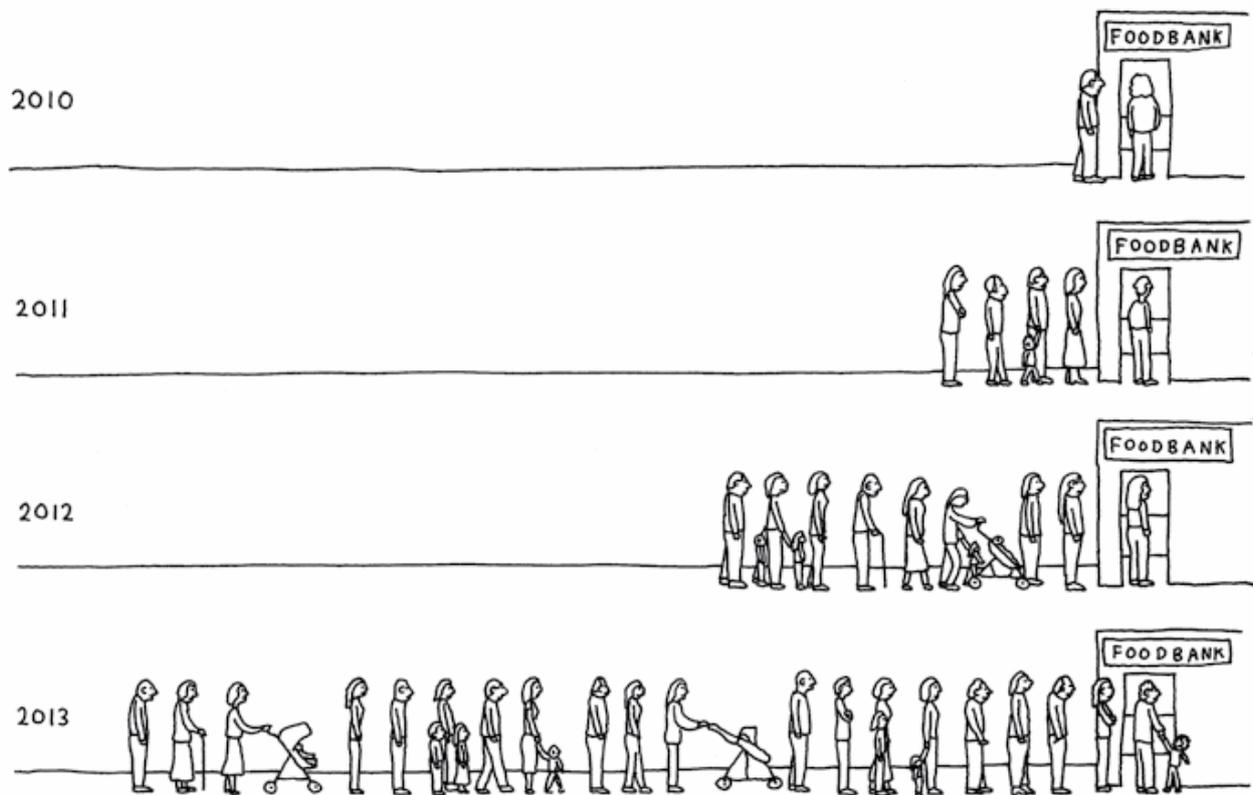
Through foodbanks, we connect with the lives of other people, hear and tell our different stories and provide a place where not only immediate needs can be met, but broader issues considered. Many churches and groups have found creative and helpful ways of building on the work of their foodbank, reaching into the lives of fellow human beings. But as stories are shared and needs are addressed, we cannot help but find ourselves also asking questions.

Why is it that we are one of the wealthiest nations in the world, yet an increasing number of our population are reliant on foodbanks to sustain their families? How is it that some of our key producers of food struggle to maintain a basic livelihood while some food retailers and distributors announce enormous profits? Is it right that something which began as a way of providing an 'occasional stop-gap in an emergency' is becoming more of an ongoing necessity for some? Are foodbanks, and churches, becoming unofficially part of the welfare state?

Jesus invited his followers to pray that they might be given their daily bread. Foodbanks remind us that the provision and distribution of food lies at the very heart of God's engagement with Creation. As Christians, we cannot ignore these deeper questions – to do so would be to overlook God's concern for this most central of physical needs.

These materials have been put together to help churches explore this further, and to make connections between our life, our worship and the work of our local foodbank. As we make these connections we discover and affirm God's sense of justice for those who are vulnerable in society. As we learn what it means to be God's people and to build God's kingdom here on earth, we must ask the questions of justice that inevitably emerge through the existence and ministry of the foodbank movement. By asking these questions ourselves, Christians can become equipped to address them to those in our society who have the power and influence to affect the wealth and well-being of those who are most in need.

THE FOODBANK



PERHAPS WE NEED TO ASK WHY THIS IS HAPPENING

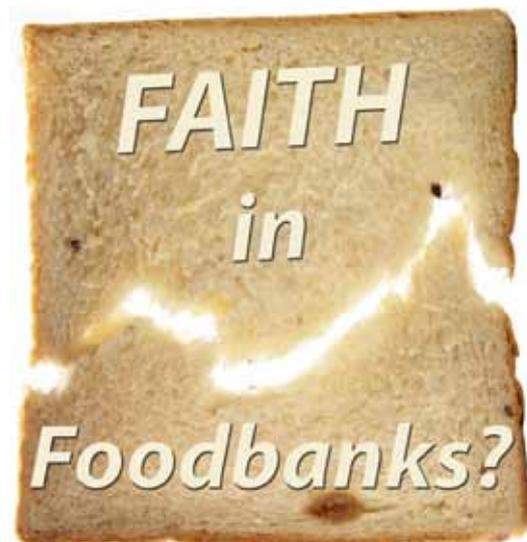
Dave Walker, used with kind permission www.davewalker.cc/the-foodbank

Faith in Foodbanks: Resources for Churches

In this resource you can:

- » Find out about why there has been a rise in the number of people needing foodbanks
- » Learn about the fact and fiction of foodbanks
- » Read the stories of some of the people living in food poverty
- » Find out what you can do
- » Explore foodbanks and the challenges they raise through six bible studies
- » Pray! Explore a range of materials for worship and prayer

You can also find additional resources at www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/faithinfoodbanks-resources



We hope this resource will encourage you in your ministry with foodbanks, and that it will also inspire you to explore the deeper issues that cause food poverty in this country.

Kate's Story

'Kate' (not her real name) works at a community centre in Salford. Despite receiving tax credits to top up her salary, she is finding it increasingly difficult to feed herself and her son:

"[At work] if I'm here all day sometimes I might go almost all day without something to eat, and at home I never have a lot of stock food in. If I go shopping at one of the cheaper places, and I buy bulk vegetables and salads, they go off really quick but they're a lot cheaper than going to one of the higher brand shops. So I tend to buy cheaper, but I end up wasting a lot as well, unfortunately ...

"Just in general, over the last three years specifically, I've noticed that my income hasn't

changed but my expenses have soared, so I've found myself going deeper and deeper into the red every month, and that's just from my basics – I seldom go out, I don't drink, I buy from charity shops, I never go to high street shops ... I don't know where to shop any more.

"Everything is about budget and the cheapest places to shop, from food right down to hygiene. I'll go to the budget pound shops, but I'm still finding myself overdrawn more and more, increasingly over the last three years."

From *Walking the Breadline*¹, Oxfam and Church Action on Poverty 2013

¹ www.church-poverty.org.uk/walkingthebreadline/info/report/walkingthebreadlinefile



Christians should be involved in providing food for the hungry, as the Gospel states that 'when I was hungry you fed me'.

It is also about social justice.

We need to stand up for people who are caught up in a draconian system that abuses power.

[Dawn, Durham]

The rise of foodbanks

Sadly we have always lived in a society where people are hungry. But the figures show that hunger is an increasing reality in the UK. In the last five years, the scale of need for foodbanks has grown exponentially.

The Trussell Trust is a Christian charity which runs the UK's largest network of foodbanks. These fed over 300,000 people in 2012-13. By 2013-14 this number had increased to over 900,000 people including over 300,000 children. The Trussell Trust runs over 400 foodbanks which is around four out of every ten in the UK. It keeps comprehensive data on the number of people using its foodbanks and their reasons for needing help². It is important to realise that the 900,000 number does not include the visitors to the other six out of every ten foodbanks that are not part of the Trussell Trust. The total number of people helped by all foodbanks in 2013-14 was certainly well over a million.

It is a great testimony that so many people have given up time and money to meet this need. It is a great tragedy that so many families find themselves in such circumstances.

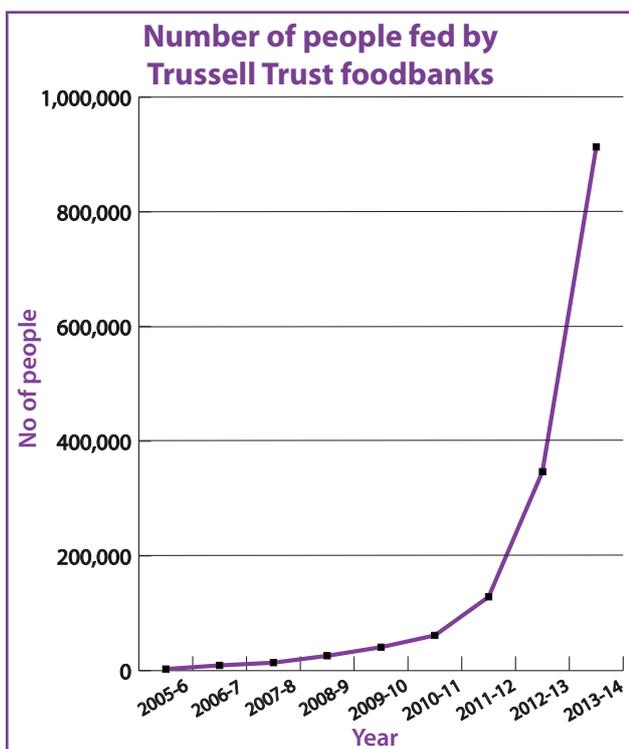


Why are more people hungry and going to foodbanks?

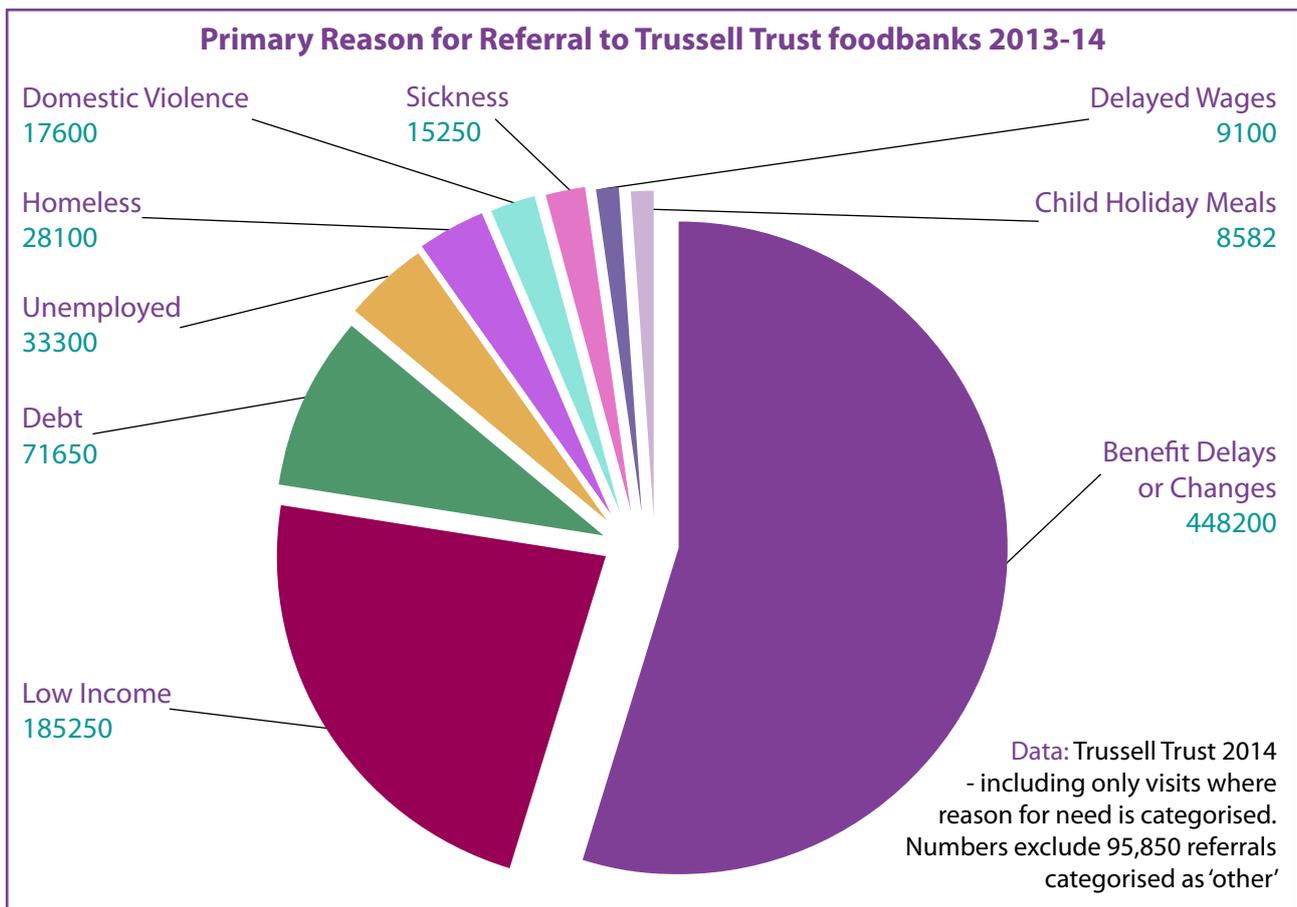
Previously people who were hungry in the UK were, in the main, those in exceptional circumstances – people facing an extraordinary crisis in their lives or people other groups found difficult to reach. These people still remain however it appears other groups are increasingly in need of emergency food supplies.

One of the valuable things that foodbanks provide is the opportunity for a visitor to tell their story and for it to be heard with respect. For people who have often struggled quietly not telling friends or colleagues of their difficulties, being able to talk openly and know that they are valued can be as important a service as the food parcel itself. From conversations we know no two paths to a foodbank are identical but many of the stories share common themes, themes which may be familiar reflected in your own story or that of other people in your church, house group or family.

These themes can also be seen in the information that the Trussell Trust collects from its visitors, and academic research that examines the reasons why more people need foodbanks.



² For information on numbers using Trussell Trust foodbanks see www.trusselltrust.org/stats



This chart shows that the main reason people go to foodbanks is because they are having problems with the benefits system. This does not mean they are unemployed. Only around 1 in 20 families receiving benefits are unemployed - it is much more common to receive payments because of low pay or disability. The problems are mainly around delays in payment, changes to the system and, increasingly, sanctions.

A benefit sanction involves stopping some or all of a person's benefits because they are judged not to be fulfilling some of the Jobcentre's requirements. The rate of referral for sanctions has more than doubled in the past couple of years and is now at around 1 in 10 unemployed people per month (over 1.5 million referrals per year).

Just over a third of referrals for sanction are upheld - and even then almost half of these penalties are overturned if appealed. While this process is going on, benefit payments can be stopped, meaning families often need to turn to foodbanks for help. They also become vulnerable to moneylenders, leaving them with often unpayable debts.

The assumption is often that people are sanctioned for refusing to work, but fewer than

one in 20 sanctions are for not taking up an offer of work or training. Research by the Citizen's Advice Bureau³ indicates that a quarter of people did not even know why they were sanctioned. For those who did know why, failure to attend an appointment on time was a common reason given. Examples include not attending a Jobcentre interview because the person was at a job interview, in hospital, or simply had not been told about the appointment to begin with.

Sanctions are often applied to vulnerable people: for example in the year to June 2013 around 100,000 people with a disability were punished in this way. When so few of the decisions stand up to scrutiny, serious questions need to be asked about this process, and particularly when the impact on vulnerable people can be so damaging⁴.

3 <https://onedrive.live.com/view.aspx?resid=CB5ED957FE0B849F!350&app=WordPdf&authkey=!AJTbB-gzwsSCayQ>

4 Sanctions Statistics: www.gov.uk/government/publications/jobseekers-allowance-and-employment-and-support-allowance-sanctions-decisions-made-to-june-2013. Readable summary is here www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/nick-stephenson/45-rise-in-sanctions-leav_b_4225089.html

Low pay and debt are also significant reasons for needing a foodbank. Unemployment in the UK is typically short but frequent. This is the so-called 'low-pay/no-pay cycle', with people moving between insecure low-paid employment and benefits. Problems with budgeting and debt are consequences of this.

We might reasonably expect that most people come to foodbanks because of extraordinary circumstances such as fleeing from domestic violence, but the stories and statistics tell us that for many people, their simple, ordinary, often working, life can leave them needing help.



Many people in churches identify with the need for 'daily bread' and 'loving neighbour' and respond to well-known scripture passages such as in Matthew 25 "when I was hungry and you fed me". Many churches respond with charity, but amongst such respondents are those who ask the 'justice' issues, and why people are hungry in what is a relatively wealthy nation.
[David, Leeds]



What people say about foodbanks – fact or fiction?

In 2013, the Joint Public Issues Team published a report called *The lies we tell ourselves: ending comfortable myths about poverty*⁵. The report challenged the misleading statistics and stories that have led to those in poverty to be stigmatised and blamed for their situation and the benefit system to be blamed for promoting moral failings such as laziness, fecklessness and addiction.

Foodbanks have attracted the same sorts of unpleasant stories. Foodbank visitors are wrongly portrayed in the role of scrounger. Foodbank providers are accused of being well-intentioned enablers of bad behaviour. None of these stories stand up to scrutiny but they do have the effect of allowing people to feel more comfortable living in a society where hundreds of thousands of people go hungry.

Living in a country where large numbers go hungry should make people feel uncomfortable. The remedy however is not to deny the facts or insult the hungry. The remedy is to make sure those in need get emergency food today and don't need emergency food tomorrow.



5 www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/truthandliesaboutpoverty

Christians should be involved in foodbanks because there are people in immediate need not least as a result of government policy and slow bureaucratic processes.
[Derek, Evesham]

Here are a few such statements taken from prominent journalists and politicians:

- » “People don't need foodbanks – they just come because they offer something for free”
People cannot just turn up at most foodbanks and ask for food. Instead they are referred by a qualified professional – for example, a doctor, social worker, or advice worker - who assesses them to be in immediate need. Foodbanks believe referrals from other agencies are important as they are an indication that people are receiving assistance to help them move beyond needing emergency help to a more sustainable situation. The stories shared in this resource pack are just a few of many that reflect the genuine and difficult circumstances that lead people to visit a foodbank. Foodbank food is also not ‘free’ – it is costly to admit that you can't feed yourself or your family, and many foodbank users and volunteers speak of the stigma felt when first approaching a foodbank.
- » “More foodbanks opening leads to more foodbank users”
The Government has commissioned a single piece of research on foodbanks. Its main conclusion agrees with foodbank providers' assessment that the rise in demand for food banks is not ‘supply driven’⁶. There are not more foodbank users simply because there are more foodbanks. Increasing need is driving foodbank numbers. The evidence suggests that families are becoming more vulnerable due to welfare changes including increasing sanctions and the removal of emergency support such as Crisis Loans occurring alongside an increase in prices of essentials such as food⁷.

6 DEFRA Report Feb 2014 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/283071/household-food-security-uk-140219.pdf

7 Kelloggs/Trussell Trust 2013: Hard to Swallow the Facts about food Poverty <http://pressoffice.kelloggs.com>

- » “Foodbanks create dependency”
Foodbanks provide help in a crisis and allow time for a family to move to a more sustainable system of support. Most foodbanks have systems in place to limit the number of visits any individual can make – not because they are ungenerous but precisely to avoid the situation where their emergency support becomes relied upon long-term.

The dependency problem that is most concerning is that the welfare state may become dependent on foodbanks to support the people it chooses to withdraw support from.

- » “People need foodbanks because they are unemployed and work-shy”
You don’t need to be unemployed to get benefits - old age, low pay, sickness and disability are all more common reasons for needing benefits. All these groups can have problems with benefit system and, with the exception of pensioners, all these groups are experiencing substantial changes and reductions in support.

While benefits problems are the major cause of foodbank use, there are many other reasons – and many users are in work⁸. Indeed, some foodbanks report that people are visiting them in their lunch-hour. It seems particularly important to ask why people in work can no longer earn enough to feed themselves and their families, while others enjoy extravagant remuneration and bonus packages.



co.uk/index.php?s=20295&item=122399

8 www.trusselltrust.org/foodbank-figures-top-900000

- » “Only people who have made poor decisions need a foodbank”

As Christians we recognise we all make poor decisions at times. We also recognise that visitors to foodbanks need to eat regardless of why they are hungry. It is however simply wishful thinking to suggest that good personal choices will end the mass hunger we are seeing today. Moreover this explanation begs the simple question of whether we are really experiencing an epidemic of poor decisions?

Some of us are shielded from the consequences of our poor decisions by savings, earnings or family support. People who end up at foodbanks have often exhausted these ‘cushions’. Blaming the choices of the foodbank visitors may make people feel comfortable that others’ hunger is as deserved as our own lack of hunger, but it is simply not credible.



Christ was unequivocal about how our attitudes and behaviour to those around us in need is a reflection of our relationship to him. Apart from the simple command to feed the hungry, our church was founded in 1835 by a group of men who looked around and saw ‘poverty, ignorance and vice’ and resolved to respond with Christ’s practical love - we are still here following their vision!

[Eryl, Bradford]

10 ideas for things to do now...

These stories and statistics highlight the important ministry that foodbanks offer, both to those who are part of our Christian family, and within the wider communities that we serve. They also highlight the deeper issues that they uncover – and indeed some of the debates and arguments that emerge as a result.

You may have experienced food poverty yourself, or perhaps you've worked as a volunteer and talked with people needing help from your foodbank. Perhaps your church has been collecting food and you want to know why people in the UK are hungry. Maybe you have been moved by some of the stories you have read in this resource. We all have stories to tell and questions to ask. Also as Christians we have an understanding that each person is made in the image of God and is infinitely precious.

Here are some ideas for sharing stories, taking action and reflecting further. Don't try to do them all at once! Just pick the approach that is likely to be the most helpful in your particular situation, or which suits the particular opportunities that are open to you. Please let us know at enquiries@jointpublicissues.org.uk about these or other things that you have done.



1. Follow the food

Whilst some people may volunteer at their local foodbank, the closest others get is putting food in a box at the back of their church. If this is the case for your church, then follow the food. Build a relationship with the food box – for example, find out more about the foodbank you are supporting. How many people is it helping? Why are people coming to the foodbank? Are there other things your church could do to help? Could a volunteer from the foodbank come and speak at a service (you could use some of the worship suggestions in this resource pack, and even hold a Food Poverty Sunday).

If you are more closely connected with your foodbank, then follow the food in the other direction. Offer to speak to churches and other places which collect food for you. Tell them the stories about why people need foodbanks. Help them to understand the causes of food poverty, and what their food box is doing to help individuals and families affected.

2. Write to your MP

Writing to your Member of Parliament is an effective way of letting her/him know of your concern and telling or reminding her/him about the work your foodbank is doing. While some may feel comfortable talking in a political language, asking for particular policies, others will be happier sharing stories or experiences that should inform the thinking of the people who make our laws. You might do this as a local

church, or perhaps a Churches Together group that is running a foodbank. If you are writing as a larger body, be sure to make it clear how many people you represent.

You can, of course, write directly to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and/or their Ministers, but writing to your own local MP and asking them to contact the Secretary of State is actually more likely to get you a response – because your MP should forward your letter to the relevant Minister (even if s/he disagrees with its contents) and there

Find out the name of your MP at www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices or at www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/faithinfoodbanks-resources

is a Parliamentary convention obliging Ministers to reply to MPs' letters. Writing to your MP will also inform them about the issue and possibly persuade them to take further action themselves.

If possible try to write a letter that is unique to your context: if it is crafted with passion and commitment, this will show! While mass-produced letters that follow a template can make an impact, especially when they arrive in numbers, MPs are also aware that these take only a few seconds to despatch and are not necessarily representative of the priorities of all of their constituents.

How you word your letter is a matter for you, but the key thing you may want to get across is that, while foodbanks are providing for a vital need, you have concerns about why that need is growing. You might encourage your MP to find out more, and to support a thorough investigation into the issues and causes behind people needing foodbanks.

If you don't have time to write a unique letter, then you can find a short letter which you can personalise and email at www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/faithinfoodbanks-resources

Signs of the Times?

is a series of Bible Studies that can be used individually or with a small group, for example the volunteer team at your foodbank. They could form part of your church home group programme. These studies seek to explore some of the Biblical foundations for involvement in the ministry of foodbanks, and also offer a Christian perspective on some of the more challenging issues that are emerging. The format for the studies also connects them to the Worship Ideas also contained in this resource pack.



3. Contact other key influencers and policy makers

Once you start writing letters, there are a lot of other people you can write to! For example the All Party Parliamentary Group on Hunger and Food Poverty has launched an inquiry. The terms of reference include understanding the circumstances behind, and the rise in, the number of foodbanks; who is running them; examining alternative sources of food aid provision; examining how adequately food aid providers are meeting immediate and long term needs. Details of the inquiry can be found here - www.foodpovertyinquiry.org - you could write to members of the inquiry panel with evidence. The Inquiry will also be travelling around the country so look out for when they visit your region and see if you can give evidence to them.

4. Develop a relationship with your MP, local councillors, MSP or AM

Why not think about inviting your Member of Parliament/Assembly and local councillors to visit your foodbank and see things for themselves? (Such an invitation could be included if you write to them as suggested above.) A visit is a chance to allow elected representatives to ground their views in the reality of the stories you share.

Foodbank visitors may not wish to talk with MPs and should certainly be given the choice not to take part. If they are willing to talk about their experiences, it is important to make sure that they feel well prepared and supported, perhaps by having a 'buddy' who will work with them. Set out clearly the terms of the invitation when you make it (you may want to stress that it should not be used as a 'photo opportunity'). Importantly, make sure that guests using the foodbank will not be embarrassed by any visit, and that they are not included in any photographs that may be taken

against their will. Make sure that any foodbank workers and volunteers who will meet the visitors are well-briefed and have questions ready.

At the end of the visit thank your visitors for making the time to come and say that you will keep them informed about your foodbank. Mention that you will be looking with interest to see what they say about the issues you have discussed, and will invite them for another visit in due course.

5. Set up a Blog

Why not encourage your foodbank to run a blog, highlighting its work and providing regular updates about its activities?

One way to let people know what's going on would be to write about the last visitor to the foodbank each day. You will need to ensure that the anonymity of the person is fully preserved and that they are happy for their story to be told. This will present a balanced picture and not just be the most heart-wrenching story of the day.

Look at the West Cheshire foodbank blog for ideas - www.westcheshire.blogspot.co.uk You can find guidance to setting up a blog, including a template form for getting stories at www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/faithinfoodbanks-resources

Remember to post links to the stories on Facebook and Twitter, which are a great way to share stories further.

6. Engage with local media

Keep your local newspaper, radio and TV stations informed about your foodbank. Research the local/regional media outlets serving your local community – look at the kind of stories they include and, if it seems appropriate, contact them about your foodbank. All local BBC radio stations will have a Sunday morning 'religious' programme and they may well be interested in hearing about the work the foodbank is doing – think about an angle and send them a short email with brief details about the work. Tell them the number of people you are helping, and how this is may be rising month on month, and try to interest them in your growing concerns about what might be driving this increased demand for your foodbank's services.

Offer the media people who are happy to be interviewed about their work with the foodbank. Make sure potential interviewees are well-briefed and able to answer questions from journalists and presenters. A 'template' foodbank news release is among resources available at www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/faithinfoodbanks-resources

7. Organise a Question Time event

One way to raise awareness locally about increased foodbank use is to stage a 'Question Time' style event. Where these have been held they have been extremely well-attended and done much to stimulate discussion about the wider issues behind foodbank use.

Invite a panel made up of, for example, the local MP, a local church leader, a journalist, an expert in benefits, and someone involved in running the foodbank, and chaired by someone who is authoritative and impartial. Invite questions from the audience (perhaps in advance) and get a debate going. The most successful events are those where a couple of guests who use the foodbank have been prepared to read out statements explaining why they have needed it, or have been interviewed by someone who has helped them to prepare. This needs careful handling, but personal stories are always the most powerful part of the event.

Church Action on Poverty has produced a very helpful document explaining how Question Time events can be arranged. This can be found at www.church-poverty.org.uk/walkingthebreadline/act/questiontime/guide, and Church Action on Poverty will also support you in publicising your event.



Christians should be involved in foodbanks because we have a duty of care for the world, both abroad and within our own communities. "In as much as you did it for the least of my brethren you did it for me".
[Jacky, Cannock]



8. Set up a Foodbank Action Group

Forming an action or task group could be an effective way of co-ordinating and planning any action you choose to undertake around the service your foodbank provides.

You could give the group a catchy name to reflect your concern that, in themselves, foodbanks are not a long-term solution to the problem of food poverty. Such a group could look out for opportunities to raise awareness about food poverty and ask the 'why' question; be a point of contact for media people interested in discussing that question; and seek to link-up with other foodbanks in your area to increase the impact and reach of your campaign.



9. Could your foodbank do other things to tackle food poverty?

Many foodbanks already go the extra mile. Foodbanks do not see themselves as benefit agencies, but places of human compassion and mutuality, offering the chance of a cup of tea and an opportunity to be heard. Much will depend on the attitude of volunteers; the Bible Studies in this resource might be one way of reminding everyone involved that whatever their circumstances, Jesus recognised the value and worth of everyone he met. Perhaps your foodbank is already finding additional ways of helping people. These are some things which foodbanks around the country are doing. Maybe they will give you some ideas!

- » **Providing support and advice** on family budgeting or dealing with debt. This can be done in conjunction with an existing agency or by training foodbank volunteers.
- » **Running a community café** where people can enjoy affordable meals together. Some foodbanks ensure that such cafes run simultaneously with the foodbank to ensure the people attending for food parcels do not feel stigmatised.
- » **Growing your own food**, organising allotment collectives, making locally-produced food available. Do you have any spare ground round your church which you could turn into an allotment?
- » **Establishing a community kitchen** where people can learn to prepare budget meals and share recipe ideas, or publishing and distributing a low-budget family recipe book.
- » **Asking people with experience** of business, HR or training to offer support with literacy, CV writing and job applications

10. Pray

As with every aspect of our work and witness as Christians and churches, we are called to be a people of prayer. Prayer isn't last in this list as an afterthought; rather prayer should underpin everything that we do. Let the stories you hear and share inform your prayers, perhaps seeking wisdom as to how you might respond. Think about coming together as a church or group of local churches to pray over the various projects and tasks you take on in connection with your foodbank work, and also think about ways in which it can inform the intercessory prayer in your regular worship.

Remember to include the foodbank, the guests, the volunteers, and the donors in your personal prayers. Pray for justice for people facing unjust, unfair and frightening situations. Pray for politicians and decision-makers and for those who have the power to influence the long-term causes of food poverty. Encourage prayer groups to include the foodbank and food poverty in their devotions, and try to ensure that your church prays regularly and in an informed way for those who need the foodbank, those who support it, and the situations which cause it.

Worship Ideas

includes a variety of materials that could be used to celebrate and highlight the work of your local foodbank during one of your regular worship services. The various components could be used as 'stand-alone' elements in a more general worship service or you could use the 'Signs of the Times' structure as the basis of a whole service that focuses on foodbanks.



We hope that this resource will encourage you in your work with foodbanks and inspire you to ask some of the deeper questions about what is causing food poverty today.

We would love to hear your stories – about what your foodbank is doing, how your church is (or isn't) supporting you, why you believe Christians need to be involved in this work, and what you have done – or want to do – to look at the reasons why the need for foodbanks is rising. And we would love to hear and share your ideas for how churches can be involved in helping people in need and calling for justice.

Please contact us using the contact details on the back page.

Produced by the Joint Public Issues Team:

*Baptist, Methodist and United Reformed Churches
working together*

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www.baptist.org.uk

The **Methodist Church** 

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