

Prayer stations

Kinnecting with God and UK poverty and homelessness

Use these kinaesthetic prayer stations to help people engage with general prayer for UK poverty and homelessness. Each one details what if any equipment you need to get together in advance, instructions for setting up, and the text for the instruction signs you will need to display – (simply copy and paste these into a word document, enlarging the font so that the instructions are clear enough to read).

Used together, the stations should take 50-60 minutes to work round, but if you have less time you can obviously leave out a couple. You can use them within an intercessions slot, have them set up as an installation for a special service or day of prayer where people can come and go independently and/or use them individually as prayer or intercession responses.

They can be worked round in any order, but 'What is poverty' should ideally come first.

You might also like to use mp3 worship tracks of songs celebrating God's love for people, and his heart for the poor to create a playlist or CD to play in the background as people are moving round the stations. (If you're stuck for ideas, check out some of our songs, or use our 'Outward focused song index' at www.thesanctuarycentre.org/whereworldandworshipmeetl-songs)

1. What is poverty?

Equipment needed: pens, small slips of paper, Bibles and a print out of the sign you have made using the 'For display' text you have used below.

Instructions for setting up:

1. In advance: Get together all the items that you will need.
2. On the day: Lay out the items and display a copy of the sign you have made.

For display:

What is poverty?

- Using one of the Bible's provided, look up some of the following references that talk about God's heart for those living in poverty, and his instructions on how we should behave towards them:
 - Proverbs 14:31
 - Luke 4:18-19
 - Isaiah 58:6-9
 - Jeremiah 22:16
- Take a slip of paper. Think for a minute about how you would define poverty in the UK and then write a single word or phrase to summarise this on to your piece of paper.
- Read the statistics and definitions below:

- Poverty is defined by the Government as 'household income below 60 percent of median income'. The median is the income earned by the household in the middle of the income distribution.
- There are basically three current definitions of poverty in common usage: absolute poverty, relative poverty and social exclusion:
 - **Absolute poverty** is defined as the lack of sufficient resources with which to keep body and soul together. **In 2012, 5.8 million people in the UK were thought to be living with this level of poverty** (The Rowntree Foundation, 2012).
 - **Relative poverty** defines income or resources in relation to the average. It is concerned with the absence of the material needs to participate fully in accepted daily life.
 - **Social exclusion** is a new term used by the Government. The Prime Minister described social exclusion as "...a shorthand label for what can happen when individuals or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown. (House of Commons.)
- People are poor for many reasons. But explanations which put poverty down to drug and alcohol dependency, family breakdown, poor parenting, or a culture of worklessness are not supported by the facts (CAP, citing wide ranging research.)
- Think again... how would you define UK poverty now? Write a new word or phrase on the other side of your slip of paper if your thoughts and feelings have changed.
- Consider any of the statistics that you find shocking or that raise questions for you. Lift them to God now.

2. You don't have to be able to spell it...

Equipment needed: child template outline such as the one below, pens, paper, scissors print outs of case-studies on children living in poverty from www.thechildrenssociety.org or a similar organisation, and print outs of the signs you have made using the 'For display' and 'To print out for the station' text below.

Instructions for setting up:

1. In advance: Spend some time looking at www.thechildrenssociety.org or other similar websites to source case-studies and pictures and make copies of the 'For display' and 'To print out for the station' text below.
2. On the day: Lay out everything and display the sign and print out that you have created.

For display:

You don't have to be able to spell it...

- Read the statistics below. And then look at some of the stories behind them... how do they make you feel?
 - A family with two adults and two children needs to have £349 each week in order to be above the poverty line. (Barnardo's 2013.)
 - 3.6 million children in the UK live in poverty – that's more than 1 in 4. (Department for Work and Pensions 2012.)

- **One third of British children** are forced to go without at least one of the things they need, such as three meals a day or adequate clothing. (Barnardo's 2013.)
- Where you live makes a big difference... in 100 local wards in the UK, between 50 and 70 per cent of children are living in poverty. (End Child Poverty 2011.)
- Child poverty blights childhoods. Growing up in poverty means being cold, going hungry and not being able to join in activities with friends. (CAP 2013.)
- Using the template provided, draw and cut out a paper child shape. Choose one of the stories that has particularly impacted you and write the name of the child on your paper. Hold it in your hands and pray for this child and others in similar situations.
- Spend some time thanking God for individuals and organisations (such as The Children's Society) who help children living in poverty in the UK.
- Now spend a few moments considering whether God might be bringing anything to mind for you to do to help.
- Finally, use the written prayer provided to bring your thoughts and prayers together before God.

To print out for the station:**P-O-V-E-R-T-Y**

It makes me sad
That you don't have to be able to spell poverty
To live in it.
And it makes me angry
That you don't have to be a grown-up
To worry about bills,
Look after adults,
Or struggle with a disability.
But I know you understand how I feel Lord Jesus
Because you felt it first.
You saw our pain and gave up everything to come and rescue us.
Please help me to turn my emotions into actions too –
Until all your children have a better childhood.



3. Banking on your next meal?

Equipment needed: some staple food items such as potatoes, carrots and tins of beans, a bowl full of jelly beans, pens and paper, (optional) copies of a list of key items needed by a foodbank local to you and a print out of the sign you have made using the 'For display' text below.

Instructions for setting up:

1. In advance: Get together everything you need, including a list of key items and make a print out sign using the 'For display' text below. (If you don't have a food bank near you and/or you don't want to make the key items list available, amend the last bullet point of the sign accordingly.)
2. On the day: Lay out the food items, put the jelly beans in a bowl and display a copy of the sign you have made using the 'For display' text below.

For display

Banking on your next meal?

- Most of us know when and where our next meal is going to be... and perhaps even what it will be. Take a moment now to imagine yours...
- Look at the food items displayed and give thanks for your cupboards of food at home or your next food shop.
- A growing number of people in the UK are hungry... with 13 million living below the poverty line, thousands are thought to be going to bed hungry every night (Trussell Trust 2013).
- Eat a jelly bean and pray for all who don't know where their next meal is coming from, or who are skipping meals themselves to prioritise other family members.
- Thankfully, a growing number of areas are setting up food banks. The Trussell trust now have 250 and aim to set one up in ever town that needs one. Pray for them and all who use them.
- Is there a food bank near you? If so, how might you be able to help?
- If you'd like to consider including a few extra items in your own food shop which you can pass on to others, take one of the shopping lists provided.

4. Debts and deficits

Equipment needed: laptop or other means of showing video clip with headphones, video clip such as one of those provided at www.capuk.org/realstories or similar, some loose change or monopoly money and a copy of the sign you have made using the 'For display' text below.

Instructions for setting up:

1. In advance: Get together everything you need, including sourcing the video clip, and make a sign using the 'For display' text below.
2. On the day: Lay out everything and display a copy of the sign you have made using the 'For display' text below.

For display:

Debts and deficits

- Personal debt has been an increasing issue in the UK over the past couple of decades. There are many different reasons for this, but in almost all cases, the feelings of panic and fear are significant.
- However, in the current climate redundancies, growing youth unemployment and rising costs are all making difficult situations desperate:
 - In January 2012 8.4% of the working population (2.68 million people) were unemployed.
 - Rising fuel bills, food prices etc make things more difficult to manage for many families.
 - Many people are on reduced incomes – 13.6% of those working part-time do so because they couldn't find full-time work.
 - Over-commitment to credit is a significant factor. But others include divorce or separation; and rising costs leading to payday loans and other unsustainable solutions which create further problems. (The Debt Support Trust 2013.)
- Watch one or more of the video clips.
- After you have finished watching the film, hold some of the money in your hand and pray for:
 - The people featured in these films.
 - Christians Against Poverty and other organisations helping people to get debt-free.
 - All those struggling with debt in the UK.

5. Talking about the weather...

Equipment needed: a pile of two or three blankets and a copy of the sign you have made using the 'For display' text below.

Instructions for setting up:

3. In advance: Get together what you need and make a sign using the 'For display' text below.
4. On the day: Put the blankets out and display the sign you have made using the 'For display' text below.

For display:

Talking about the weather

- In the UK we all love to talk about the weather... and mostly moan. But the reality of our colder, wetter climate – particularly in the winter months – presents an extra challenge to those living in poverty – or on the streets.
- Inadequate housing and fuel poverty leave people cold and vulnerable to illness:
 - 7.4 million homes in the UK fail to meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard.(Shelter 2013.)
 - 1.4 million children live in bad housing. (Shelter 2013.)
 - Fuel poverty is defined as a household that needs to spend more than 10 per cent of their income on fuel to maintain a satisfactory heating regime, as well as meeting their other fuel needs (lighting and appliances, cooking and water heating). It affected nearly five million households in 2010. (National Office of Statistics.)
 - Thousands of people across the UK sleep rough every night (stats vary greatly but it's a lot!)

- Try to remember the last time you were really cold. What did you do to get warm? Have a bath; turn on the heating; light the fire; make a hot water bottle... what if you couldn't do any of those things, or couldn't afford the energy required to make them happen?
- Take a blanket and wrap it round you. As you do so, read the following statistics and pause after each one to pray for each group of people affected.

6. Back story

Equipment needed: ipod, stereo or other means to play music, headphones, mp3 of track such as Phatfish's 'Walk on by', a print out of an image of a homeless person on the streets such as the one provided below, a print out of the meditation on psalm 139, a print out of the double sided cards provided at the end of this document and a print out of the sign you have made using the 'For display' text below.

Instructions for setting up:

1. In advance: Get together everything you need and print out what is required including the sign you have made using the 'For display' text below. Cut up the cards and laminate them if desired – if you don't have a double-sided print facility, you will need to stick the two pieces of paper together before you do this to create the double-sided cards the station needs.
2. On the day: Lay out everything and display a copy of the sign you have created using the 'For display' text below.

For display:

Back story

- Homelessness is a much bigger problem in the UK than we think:
 - In 2009/10, more than 62,000 households were found to be homeless by local authorities. (Shelter 2013.)
 - At the end of September 2010, 49,000 households were living in temporary accommodation arranged by local authorities. Just over 38,000 of these households had dependent children. (Shelter 2013.)
 - In 2009 the number of repossessions rose to 48,000 from 25,900 in 2007, and it is predicted that repossessions will remain high in the coming years. (Shelter 2013.)
- It is also much more complex, with it being likely that a number of different personal and social factors have contributed to each person's situation. These may include one or more of the following:
 - **individual factors** including drug and alcohol misuse, lack of qualifications, lack of social support, debts - especially mortgage or rent arrears, poor physical and mental health, relationship breakdown, and getting involved in crime at an early age
 - **family background** including family breakdown and disputes, sexual and physical abuse in childhood or adolescence, having parents with drug or alcohol problems, and previous experience of family homelessness
 - **an institutional background** including having been in care, the armed forces, or in prison. (Shelter 2013.)
- Listen to 'Walk on by' – how does it make you feel? Do you recognise your own thoughts and reactions in some of the lyrics?

- The most obvious face of homelessness – those living on the streets – is surrounded by stigma and misunderstanding. Look at the labels commonly used when people talk about the homeless – then, turn them over to read some of the ‘back stories’ that most often lead to people being in this situation.
- Do any of these ‘back stories’ surprise you?
- Pray for people facing homelessness today – that they would find practical help for their immediate and medium term needs, but also help with addressing some of the related issues that have contributed to their situation.
- Pray for yourself, and others to see each person you encounter in this situation the way God does, and to respond accordingly.
- Read the meditation inspired by Psalm 139 and respond in prayer before moving on to the next station.

To print out for the station:



Meditation inspired by Psalm 139

You have searched me, LORD,
and you know me.
You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.
You discern my walking around and my huddling down;
you are familiar with all my ways.
You know my fears, my struggles,
you understand my memories and my empty comforts.

Before a word is on my tongue
you, LORD, know it completely.

Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?
If I go up to the high street, you are there;
if I make my bed under the arches, you are there.
If I beg by the station, or sit in this doorway,
even here your hand can reach me.

If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me
and no one will find me in this alleyway,"
even the darkness will not be dark to you;
you will always still see me.

For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
I carry your image with beauty,
even when no one but you recognises your reflection in me.

All the days you planned for me were written in your book,
before one of them came to be.

Your plan for my future is full of hope.
Your thoughts about me are constant God!
I can't finish counting them even when I lie awake all night.

7. Hidden homelessness

Equipment needed: a sofa, a pillow, a duvet, a rucksack and a copy of the sign you have made using the 'For display' text below.

Instructions for setting up:

1. In advance: Get together everything you need and make a sign using the 'For display' text below.
2. On the day: Make the sofa into a makeshift bed using the pillow and duvet, and put the rucksack on top of it. Display the sign you have made using the 'For display' text below.

For display:

Hidden homelessness

- Much homelessness is hidden with many people – including large numbers of young people – 'sofa-surfing' in friends' and families' houses. Such situations can be very transient, unsettling and in some cases unsafe:
 - It is estimated that around 80,000 young people experience homelessness of some kind each year. (Centrepont 2013.)

- Look at the rucksack and imagine only being able to keep the possessions you could carry... what would you have to leave behind? What would it be like to only have one or two changes of clothing available?
- Try to make yourself comfortable on the sofa... how much sleep do you think you would get... put the duvet over your head and imagine other people coming in and out of your room as you try to sleep and the possibility that tomorrow you might be asked to leave and have nowhere else to go. How do you feel?
- Stand back up and look back at the sofa – pray for all those who don't have to play act or imagine this scenario – for lasting solutions to their situation.
- Thank God for all who open up their homes to provide emergency accommodation to friends or family members in difficulty, and for organisations and individuals who work together to help those who fall through the net by securing them short-term accommodation in volunteers' houses.

8. Helping Hands

Equipment needed: pens and paper, scissors, print outs of information on organisations local to you and national organisations such as Crisis (www.crisis.org.uk) and Shelter (www.shelter.org.uk) and a copy of the sign you have made using the 'For display' text below.

Instructions for setting up:

3. In advance: Get together everything you need, including sourcing the information about the various organisations and create a sign using the 'For display' text below.
4. On the day: Lay out everything and display a copy of the sign you have made using the 'For display' text below.

For display:

Helping hands

- Read some of the information provided about organisations working to help the homeless and champion their cause – locally and nationally. Spend some time thanking God for staff and volunteers at these organisations and praying blessing on their work and finances.
- Take a sheet of paper and draw round your hand. Cut out the hand shape. On it write one organisation from the ones whose information is provided here that stands out for you. Hold the hand in your own hands and pray for this organisation's work in more detail.
- Turn the hand over and spend some time asking God to bring to mind anything he might be asking you to do to help this organisation or those in need generally. Write down anything you want to pledge to do as a result.
- Take the hand away with you to remind you to continue praying for this organisation, people living in poverty and homelessness in the UK, and to help you take action on anything you have pledged to do.

<p>ABUSED AS A CHILD</p>	<p>FATHER IN PRISON</p>
<p>ALCOHOLIC MOTHER</p>	<p>GOT SICK AND LOST JOB</p>
<p>WORKED TOO HARD AND GOT BURNT OUT</p>	<p>LEFT THE ARMY AND FELT ISOLATED</p>
<p>MUM REMARRIED AND STEPDAD DIDN'T WANT ME AROUND</p>	<p>STRUGGLED AT SCHOOL BUT NO-ONE CARED</p>
<p>MARRIAGE BROKE UP AND HAD NO WHERE TO LIVE</p>	<p>TOOK DRUGS TO ESCAPE THE PAIN, NOW I'M ADDICTED</p>

BUM

ADDICT

SPONGER

LOSER

DIRTY

LAZY

SMELLY

ANTI-SOCIAL

DRUNK

SCARY