

# Social Responsibility in the London District

Spring 2014

## Special points of interest:

- Spring Synod & District Lenten Activities adopt Food Poverty theme
- **Healthy Living Sunday 19th October 2014** remember to put it in the autumn plan—resources soon to follow

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## Bow Foodbank

Revd Stuart Jordan, District Chair attends the opening of new foodbank

Tower Hamlets has almost a quarter of a million residents in its 7.6 square-mile borough. 70% of these households survive on an income of less than £20,000 a year. This unfortunately has impacted the lives of its children and families the most — with Tower Hamlets being home to the worst place for child poverty in the UK, with a staggering 52% of all children in the area living below the poverty line.

In response to this Bow Foodbank has been launched, a new community founded project - being supported by: St Mary & Holy Trinity, Bow Parish, Rotary Club of Tower Hamlets, Bromley by Bow Centre, Ismaili Centre London, Our Lady & St Catherin's Methodist Church, Queen Mary University & Student's Union, St Mary le Bow Church, Devon Street Mosque, the Borough of Tower Hamlets & Citizens UK.

Through working together, this entirely community run project helps to feed and provide for the hungry and vulnerable, regardless of race, religion, gender or age. The variety of contributors gives the foodbank a strong standing point to offer follow up services and support networks to those utilizing the service.

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## Why I fast

Revd Michaela Young, District Chair, expands on the practice of fasting

During Lent 2014 all three London District Chairs partook in a special Lenten programme focusing on food poverty across London. Alongside meetings with local MPs, visits to food-banks and talks with

charities—including Action for Children the Chairs have been observing a fast on Ash Wednesday and every Monday throughout Lent..

Communications Assistant Toby Fairclough caught up with Revd

Michaela Youngson to find out more...

**TF:** How did you go about your fast?

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## End Hunger Fast

Over 10 million people live in poverty in the UK alone, fuelled by a climate of rising prices, job insecurities and benefit caps.

The End Hunger Fast campaign is a uniting of Christians, across the denominations, to take



food poverty seriously and raise awareness of the dire state literally millions of people are in across the UK.

Alongside regular fasting throughout Lent, the End Hunger Fast campaign provides free resources including posters, Bible studies and postcards to write to MP Ian Duncan Smith, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions.

Culminating the campaign was the National Day of Fasting on 4th April 2014., which saw over 2,500

people join together in fasting and prayer in protest to food poverty.

The Right Revd Michael Perham, Bishop of Gloucester, wrote a prayer for the occasion:

God of mercy and of plenty, Your Son fasted in the wilderness and shared food with the people in a desert place: give us courage to resist the injustices around us, the will to end the hunger that shames our society and a

## Foodbank App



*A new smartphone app that gives you details, news and shopping lists for local foodbanks.*

*Search 'Foodbank' in your app store to download it for free!*

share in Your vision for a new world where all shall have a place at the table of the feast; through Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life. Amen

For more information, please visit:

[www.endhungerfast.co.uk](http://www.endhungerfast.co.uk)

## Why I fast? continued

**MY:** On Ash Wednesday, and each Monday in Lent, I fasted between breakfast and my evening meal. So in effect I missed one meal, snacks and all drinks other than water. It wasn't a huge challenge, but it seemed wrong to not fast in some way when thinking about food poverty.

**TF:** How did it make you feel?

**MY:** I did feel hungry, but also more aware. We often eat without thinking. For many people in British society we just take the availability of food for granted. The meal at the end of the fasting was particularly welcome, and I tried to make sure I really took note of what I was eating—the taste and

the effect it had on me. Even not eating for just a few hours had an impact on my energy levels and made it more difficult to focus and concentrate

**TF:** Why did you fast?

**MY:** Along with the other Chairs of the London District, I have been focusing on food poverty during

Lent and have supported the End Hunger Fast campaign. In fasting, there is a sense of solidarity with those who are hungry, as well as a sharper understanding of our relationship with food, which is unbalanced. In all issues of poverty there is a huge and unjust gap between those

that have plenty and those with nothing.

**TF:** Does Methodism have a tradition of fasting?

**MY:** Fasting was an important part of the Wesleys' spiritual discipline and there is a great deal in the Bible about fasting. Isaiah 58.6-9 sums up for me the kind of fast that God requires...

### Isaiah 58.6-9

Is this not the fast I have chosen:

to loose the chains of injustice  
and untie the cords of the yoke,,  
to set the oppressed free  
and break every yoke?

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry  
and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter -  
when you see the naked, to clothe them,  
and not turn away from your own flesh?

Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,  
and your healing will quickly appear;  
then your righteousness will go before you;  
and the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.  
Then you will call, and the LORD will answer;  
You will cry for help, and He will say 'Here am I'

**TF:** Would you recommend fasting to others?

**MY:** I think fasting can be a helpful spiritual discipline, as it helps us to spend time in prayer and to be in solidarity with those who do not have food to eat. It needs to be thought through carefully, rather than casually, but it is a fine Christian tradition indeed!

## Bow Food Bank *continued*

Co-founders, Rotary Club of Tower Hamlets, helped prepare for the event by organizing a successful food collection at Waitrose, Tower Hill. The 19 volunteers collected nearly 2,000 items of non-perishable food in donations from customers and the supermarket. Another co—founding group, the Ismaili Centre in London, arranged a collection for the opening day in a local community centre, receiving donations from its local congregation.

Revd Dr Stuart Jordan, one of the London District's very own Chairs, attended the launch of the Bow Foodbank on 10th March 2014. He met with the cross-cultural groups that started the foodbank, learning about the processes involved in setting up such an operation.

He recalled: "The sheer diversity and unity amongst the group was very impressive. Seeing Methodists, Anglicans, Muslims and non-religious groups all working together to tackle a common issue was just inspiring"

Revd Jordan also had the privilege of observing the foodbank in action— meeting several people using the service on its very first day of being open. He was amazed to witness such a dedicated group of people, united in their involvement in something bigger than themselves.

### **Did you know...**

*...that the Social Responsibility Commission works to pilot some of its projects with a number of 'church partnerships'?*

*Often found in some of London's most deprived areas, or sometimes just selected because they've got a great idea, these 'Pilot / Partner Churches' provide a chance for the SRC to test out ideas for healthy living, social justice, poverty alleviation, etc.*

*Once they've proved their sustainability, these projects can be developed to fit the needs of other churches across London, and even across the whole Methodist Connexion.*

*Peter Baffoe is the SRC Liaison for Church partnerships. You can reach him on 020 7378 0162.*

*Our church partnerships include:*

- Bermondsey
- Chelsea
- Ealing Trinity
- Whitechapel

## Film & Resources



*Funded by the SRC, Applecart Productions have produced a short film exploring the Wesleyan Tradition of Social Action.*

*Alongside the film, Dr Paul Kybird has produced a Study Guide for individual, small group or church use—including Questions, Bible Studies & Use in Worship.*

*To view the film and download your free resources, please visit:*

[www.methodistlondon.org.uk](http://www.methodistlondon.org.uk)





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JPIT

The Government is trying to tackle the rising issue of Food Poverty across the UK with its Welfare Reforms - by trying to wean people off a 'dependency culture' it believes

However, these reforms have not been widely accepted, with notable religious figures, including Archbishop Vincent Nichols, publicly critiquing the reforms as a "disgrace".

The Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT)-a united front against injustice and

inequality from the Baptist, Methodist and United Reformed Churches, added its voice to the critiques - saying that the Government's statistics "focus only on the positives [...] ignoring the negatives" - the largest perhaps being the 2.8 million families that will be worse off following the reforms.

Paul Morrison, Public Issues Policy Adviser said: "Child poverty [in particular] is set to increase for the rest of the century "Perversely the strategy

trumpets measures that will actually increase child poverty. "

If you would like to get involved, you can write to your local MP highlighting the issue.

For more information on this issue and other social action issues, please visit:

[jointpublicissues.org.uk](http://jointpublicissues.org.uk)

Did you know...

...that the Social Responsibility Commission works with many community and ecumenical organizations across London? Some of our key partners are:

- London HIV Chaplaincy
- London Citizens
- Faiths Forum for London

Trussell Trust

With a network of over 400 foodbanks and around 1,000 distribution centres, Trussell Trust is the biggest network of foodbanks, making up around half of the total foodbanks across the UK.

A recent study by the Centre for Economics and Business Research found that at least 4.7 million Britons are living in food poverty—having no choice but to spend over 10% of their household income on food.

In 2013, Trussell Trust foodbanks provided at least three day's emergency food packages to over 700,000 people. Doubling the number served in 2012; with 2014 likely to see further increase in demand.

In order to receive food from a Trussell Trust Foodbank frontline care

professionals such as doctors, social workers and school liason officers must recommend those in need.

Trussell Trust Foodbanks are run by donations and volunteers. It's estimated that over 30,000 people currently give up their time to serve in a local foodbank—and over 3,400 tonnes of food are donated each year.

Around 30% of claimants are made due to Benefit Delays, nearly 20% due to low income and a further 15% from Benefit Changes. Partners include Waitrose, Ethos, IFCO and Tesco—who operate a give-back scheme in which they match all donations made to foodbanks in their stores.

To find out where your local foodbank is, and ways

that you can help—please visit their website: [www.trusselltrust.org](http://www.trusselltrust.org)

Our vision:

*"Sharing the good news of Jesus Christ throughout Greater London and the surrounding areas*

*and improving the well-being of people and their communities*

*by engaging pastorally and prophetically with the communities in which our churches are located and with the wider region."*

UK Foodbank Map

