

# A Shared Journey

Bible study course



# Introduction

Thank you for picking up this copy of **A Shared Journey**. We hope you enjoy reading, reflecting, praying and maybe sharing it with others.

This course takes its focus from a Bible verse that has been inspiring our work at Trussell and sums up our longings for justice, compassion and humility in all our relationships.

Here's how **The Message** translates Micah 6:8:

**But he's already made it plain how to live, what to do,  
what God is looking for in men and women.  
It's quite simple: Do what is fair and just to your neighbour,  
be compassionate and loyal in your love,  
And don't take yourself too seriously—  
take God seriously.**

Most of these Bible studies and reflections are written by our friends with lived experience of poverty and hardship, who have encountered God in the midst of their experiences. The Church Engagement team at Trussell has been shaped and guided by this small group of Lived Experience Partners over the past few years. Together we have compiled these studies that share our vision for a world that looks more like 'heaven on earth' for everyone; a world in which everyone can experience the fullness of life promised by Jesus.

By reading these reflections, prayers and stories, you are invited to journey with our Lived Experience Partners thinking about what steps you might take to stand against injustice, to be kind in small ways and larger ways and to try to see our neighbour as God sees them.

If you would like to contact us to explore anything more after using this course, please contact us at [churches@trussell.org.uk](mailto:churches@trussell.org.uk).

You can also visit our website to explore our other resources, campaigns and activities: [trussell.org.uk/churches](https://trussell.org.uk/churches)

May God bless you on the journey,

**Jess Foster**  
Head of Church Engagement



# Week 1

## A 'cup of tea' with our partners

This week's **A Shared Journey** has been written by Trussell staff, with contributions from our Lived Experience Partners.

The Bible readings are taken from the NRSV version, unless otherwise referenced. Each contribution reflects the individual's own experiences, story and theology.

### **be compassionate and loyal in your love** - Micah 6:8, The Message

In our community of food banks across the UK, the phrase '**cup of tea**' is more than just a drink and some biscuits. It describes the warm welcome, conversation and kindness that food banks want to offer to all who access them, even as they respond to the ever-growing need in communities and the demand this brings on food stock and volunteers alike.

'**Cup of tea**' includes some guiding principles and practical tips we follow - to keep **compassion** central in the food banks we support.

We know from many stories in the Bible, and our own experiences, that sharing food and drink together is always about more than just the physical nourishment.

Consider the time a widow gave her last handful of flour to Elijah during a famine (1 Kings 17), or the child who shares their lunch of loaves and fishes (John 6), or The Last Supper (Luke 22). All of these moments use food and drink to point to deeper truths and experiences. They do involve nourishment, but also compassion: shelter, company, conversation, hope and much more.

## Hear the voice of experience

Continue your reflection by watching this short film on the theme of 'A cup of tea', featuring our Lived Experience Partners.



**A cup of tea: the difference a compassionate conversation can make**

To watch the film, please visit: [trussell.org.uk/cup-of-tea](https://trussell.org.uk/cup-of-tea)

As you can hear in the film, a 'cup of tea' speaks to many of our most basic needs as human beings. Needs that your local food bank will be helping to meet for many people near you today include:

## Holistic care. We need to know we are seen in all our fullness.

Food banks embody holistic care when people arrive, and are welcomed by name. People know they are free to talk about whatever is on their mind; that the volunteers and staff there will be attentive to physical, emotional and spiritual concerns.

## Time. We need to know we're worth people's time.

When volunteers and staff in food banks give space and time to people it shows they are valued. The act of offering time to listen and be alongside someone is so much more powerful than any sympathetic words. People can sit down for a few minutes, take the weight off their feet and not feel hurried.

“

A cup of tea can symbolise warmth, it is more than just a drink; it's an invitation to connect and share stories. In our community, this warm welcome fosters understanding and support. Together, we can create an atmosphere where everyone feels at home, reminding us that even the smallest gestures of kindness can make a significant impact in the lives of others.

”

Lydia, Lived Experience Partner

“

Who doesn't like a nice, hot cup of tea; to be met by a smiling face and to have someone to sit with and chat with? That's exactly what I see at the food bank. People are welcomed in and offering tea (or coffee) is a very human thing to do. You only have to watch the soaps – something happens... “let's have a cup of tea...”.

”

Shirley, Lived Experience Partner

## Conversation. We need to know we will be heard and understood.

A 'cup of tea' allows for an open, non-judgemental conversation, led by the person needing support. Being heard and sharing a problem is powerful in itself, and having an understanding human response makes us feel that we've been heard. 'Cup of tea', and compassionate conversations can also lead to signposting for more support and in some cases, prayer might also be offered.



**Whether gathering with friends or welcoming someone new, tea brings people together in a comforting way, inviting conversation and connection. Each cup represents a small moment of kindness, a reminder that everyone is welcome, loved and valued.**



Laura, Lived Experience Partner

## Relationships. We all need to feel we belong and are connected with others.

Food banks can be environments where people feel accompanied 'along the road together', rather than in a 'professional/client' relationship. One of our shared values with food banks is 'community'. The fact that many food banks are run by or linked closely with local churches or other faith and community groups can allow these relationships to develop and grow in other ways with more people.



**The first time I went to the food bank I was homeless and on the drink. I was surprised by their kindness and that they were willing to spend time with me. I was not used to that.**



Alan, Lived Experience Partner

## Bible Reading: Matthew 15:32-39. Feeding the Four Thousand

With compassion in mind, please read this story, considering the various needs of the people found in it.

**Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, 'I have compassion for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat; and I do not want to send them away hungry, for they might faint on the way.' The disciples said to him, 'Where are we to get enough bread in the desert to feed so great a crowd?' Jesus asked them, 'How many loaves have you?' They said, 'Seven, and a few small fish.' Then ordering the crowd to sit down on the ground, he took the seven loaves and the fish; and after giving thanks he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And all of them ate and were filled; and they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full. Those who had eaten were four thousand men, besides women and children. After sending away the crowds, he got into the boat and went to the region of Magadan.**

### Questions for reflection

- Jesus feels and then acts with compassion in feeding the 4,000. When have you received the gift of compassion and in what form was it given? How did it feel to receive compassion?
- What barriers did the disciples overcome in order to respond to the hunger around them?
- What are some of the barriers that hinder us from showing compassion in our local communities and wider society?
- What role can our churches play in tackling the underlying causes of hunger and destitution?



## A prayer for compassion

God of love,

Thank you that you see us, keep us close and seek our good.  
May we be inspired to respond to your call, to join our compassion to yours.

May we see lives full, and hope overflowing:  
as we do our part, giving and receiving, to build trusting communities.  
In Jesus' name,

Amen.

## Take action for compassion

If you would like to further explore compassion, and where it appears elsewhere in the Bible, why not download our Compassion booklet resource from our website?



Download Compassion Booklet:  
[trussell.org.uk/compassion-booklet](https://trussell.org.uk/compassion-booklet)

Or think about when you could share this 'Cup of Tea' film with your small group or a leader at your church? You could even then contact your local Trussell food bank about organising people from your church to volunteer and make cups of tea in a food bank session.



Download 'Cup of Tea' film from:  
[trussell.org.uk/cup-of-tea](https://trussell.org.uk/cup-of-tea)

# Week 2

## Openness to receive, with Val



This week's **A Shared Journey** is written by our Lived Experience Partner, Val. We asked Val for a favourite Bible reading, and she shares this and some of her story below.

The Bible reading is taken from the NRSV version. This contribution reflects the individual's own experiences, story and theology.

### **Bible Reading: Matthew 7:7-8.** **Ask, Search, Knock**

**Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.**

### **Val's story and reflection**

The idea of wanting something and asking for it, was something I learnt not to do. The phrase "I want never gets" was something my Mum used to say whenever I said: 'I want'. I now know that she was trying to teach me to be polite and ask nicely. I am sure it's a phrase many of you may

have heard or said. Unfortunately, I was a very literal child and took everything, especially this, very literally.

I gave up wanting. Clearly wanting was a pathway to endless disappointment.

My Mum died in 1979, she was 55. I was 26. My Dad was the Churchwarden. I had a faith but challenged some of the messages I heard in Church. At my Mum's funeral the vicar never mentioned her name, he used her funeral as an opportunity to berate us about our lack of Church attendance. He was that 'fire and brimstone' kind of vicar and probably very frustrated to see so many non-church goers in church. I walked out of church that day and didn't walk back in for 20 years.

Life carried on, the grief of losing my Mum buried under a sea of busyness and focus on others. I became Mum to my family and friends. Life dealt me a series of challenges, some very painful indeed. My husband started a long-term relationship with another lady. One day I walked out of our marital home and never walked back.

A few months later, encouraged by my sister, I walked back into church. In those 20 years I had travelled alone through life, focusing outwardly, asking for nothing, my faith buried by a tide of unprocessed grief.

The Christingle service I walked into in 1999 brought a glimmer of light into the darkness and disconnection. The Church message that year was the verse from Matthew 7, and reading it, believing it and living it changed my life. I started to live more in faith: to trust, to be vulnerable, to pray and in that, to ask.

I asked and would go find, knock and doors would open. I slowly learnt to receive what was available to me - that was a real challenge.

As I shared this message with others I watched as they grew more into who they were meant to be, and to have more of what they were meant to have.

It became clearer and clearer as to what my mission was. Whilst I endured many more challenges on the journey, each, in their own way, deepened my faith and my sense of purpose. I did my best to go where God led me and to be the messenger he was asking me to be. Now I have an inner knowing that, no matter what, all will be well if I ask, listen, trust and have faith.

I know that we are part of something bigger than ourselves. Whilst I haven't always felt loved by God or by others, I have a passion, and with it purpose. When my faith falters I remember James 4:2 ...you do not have because you do not ask.

## Questions for reflection

- What can we learn from challenging and painful situations? How can we use them to strengthen our faith?
- What brings you hope when you are in difficult times?
- What stops you being open and willing to receive?
- What fears do you have that stop you from caring and sharing?

## Val's prayer

Influenced by the song *Keep Your Eyes On The Prize*, by Peter Seeger.

May we have eyes to see that we are part of something bigger than ourselves.

May we hold on, when we are bound and don't have what we need.

May we recognise others in their need and always be willing to share.

We await the day of freedom for all, from hunger, poverty, slavery, the things of this world that restrict us.

Keep our eyes on the prize and aware of the journey, that we cannot take possessions with us.

Keep us loving and sharing love,  
knowing one day this too, shall pass  
as we enter into God's kingdom.

Amen.

## Take action for openness

How can we help our churches to be more open, and try something new? Why not have a look at our Church Calendar and think about who you could share it with in your church? There are 12 ideas, themed by the Micah 6:8 vision, of how your church can support your local food bank and you could support people in your community who are facing hardship. Let us know if you'd like any printed copies of these calendars too.



Download our Church Calendar from:  
[trussell.org.uk/church-calendar](https://trussell.org.uk/church-calendar)



# Week 3

## Vision and purpose, with Steve



This week's **A Shared Journey** is written by our Lived Experience Partner Steve. We asked Steve for his reflections on a favourite Bible reading which he shares below.

The Bible reading is taken from the NRSV version. This contribution reflects the individual's own experiences, story and theology.

### Bible reading: Isaiah 6:1-9. A Vision of God in the Temple

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said:

'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;  
the whole earth is full of his glory.'

The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. And I said: 'Woe is me! I am lost,

**for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!**

**Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: ‘Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out.’ Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’ And I said, ‘Here am I; send me!’ And he said, ‘Go and say to this people:**

**“Keep listening, but do not comprehend;  
keep looking, but do not understand.”**

## Steve’s reflection

As a health and disabilities advocate, I’m all too aware of the impact of both on everyday life. Isaiah’s vision of heaven helps me to keep focused on God, whatever is going on in life. There is something to hold on to, a vision, that encourages awe and wonder. The impossibility of trying to describe what Isaiah was seeing, something many people have tried since, for example in the book of Revelation.

A lot of things are placed on people with disabilities, like me. Things like: human disobedience and not enough faith – basically victim blaming, along with prayers for healing and generational sin. I know where my health is now, and I know that when Jesus comes again, I will be healed.

In Revelation, it says there will be no more sickness.

When we come face to face with perfection, that amazing sight, in such an incredible scenario, listening to the angels (seraphim) how can we respond? “Holy Holy Holy is the Lord almighty, the whole earth is filled with his glory” – it’s the understatement of the century.

When faced with that, we can realise how human and how imperfect we are but despite that, we can be made whole again, despite earthly limitations. In the passage, Isaiah is in the Holy of Holies, he is made clean and then responds “Here I am send me”.

With my experiences or brokenness and feelings of failure, like Isaiah, I can look up and see God. Even in the darkest of times, my eyes can see something bigger, more amazing.

More than I can ever imagine.

Looking at the struggles around the world, I don't always have a response. But I know I can go before the Lord, and when he asks “who shall I send?”, I know I can respond with “send me”.

Then my focus and purpose shifts, God completely changes my outlook and focus.

## Questions for reflection

- What are the needs in your community?
- Who is being missed out?
- How might you be part of helping to include people?
- What gifts and skills can you share?
- Recognising what we have, how can you encourage others?



## Steve's prayer

God of Majesty,

Help keep our eyes fixed on you,  
in awe and wonder,  
that we might see your glory.

In the light of your glory,  
may we see the world around us.

Looking and listening:  
Here I am Lord,  
send me.

Amen.

## Take action, and make a donation

Steve's experience and drive from his sense of purpose is a great motivator for his activism and volunteering. Could you help us to support more people to campaign and add their voices and stories to our work? If you feel able to make a one off or regular financial gift to Trussell, it would go a long way to support our work. Your gift would empower people to find support and community, continue to speak truth to power, and share their stories authentically, in a dignified way.



If you are able, you can donate at:  
[trussell.org.uk/donate](https://trussell.org.uk/donate)

# Week 4

## Justice and change, with Laura



This session of **A Shared Journey** has been written by Trussell staff, with contributions from Laura, a Lived Experience Partner.

The Bible readings are taken from the NRSV version. This contribution reflects the individual's own experiences, story and theology.

## Hear the voice of experience on our Essentials Guarantee campaign

Begin this session's reflection by watching our short film, **A Shared Voice**. You will hear from our Lived Experience Partners on the difference an Essentials Guarantee would have made when they needed to use the services of a food bank.

An Essentials Guarantee would enshrine into law a protected minimum level of Universal Credit payments, based on the current cost of living. This would mean that when we find ourselves in financial hardship, we would still be able to afford all of life's essentials. It would mean we'd also have enough money to buy the food we want from a shop, rather than relying on a food bank to survive.



[trussell.org.uk/Church-GOE-film](https://trussell.org.uk/Church-GOE-film)

## Bible Readings: Hosea 12:6 & Luke 18:1-8

But as for you, return to your God,  
hold fast to love and justice,  
and wait continually for your God.

Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. He said, 'In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, "Grant me justice against my opponent." For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, "Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.'" And the Lord said, 'Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?'

## Reflection on justice and change

Throughout the Bible we see a constant theme of our God as a defender of justice.

We know that across the UK, food banks in the Trussell community are doing amazing work in providing emergency food and practical support to people facing financial hardship. Food banks in your area are supporting people as they face some of the hardest moments in their lives, but it shouldn't be this way. Food banks are a lifeline – but not the solution.

Social justice must go hand in hand with social action.

We need urgent action on hunger in the UK. That's why we work together to ensure no one in the UK needs a food bank to survive.

What role can we play as Christians, as individuals and churches: to speak out against the injustice of hunger in our local communities and wider society?

The passage from the Gospel of Luke above is a reminder that we should dedicate ourselves to pray for justice. How often do we find ourselves praying for justice in our churches?

As well as praying, what else can we do as Christians to promote justice?

Christians, and churches, are vital partners in calling for justice and for the right level of support when people face hardship. Often as individuals we might feel like our voice can't make a difference. Sometimes policy changes feel like a distant challenge that is someone else's job to tackle.

## Hear from experience on tackling the challenge

Laura is a Lived Experience Partner at Trussell. She uses her own experiences of financial hardship to call for change. She believes that we all have a role to play in calling for just policy changes in our society. Laura shares:

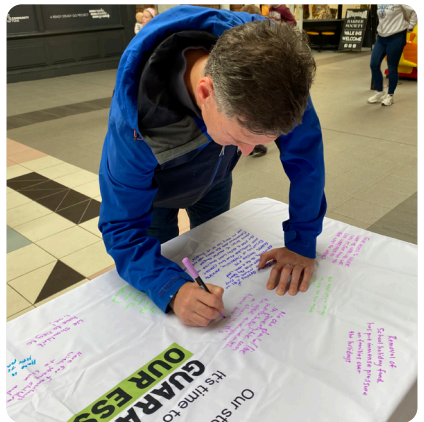
**“Policy doesn’t have to be a scary word. It can seem like something that is ‘over there’, which only politicians can deal with. But you can ‘do’, and affect policy all the time. Food banks do it every single day!”**

**“Sometimes policy sounds huge but it’s just about the way society works for people. It’s the stuff that affects us every day. And it’s when those things go wrong that people’s lives get affected.”**

**“One of the things that I think we can all do to move away from negative narratives about people on low incomes and push for change that matters, is to get behind the campaign to Guarantee our Essentials. It’s a passion of mine because, for me, it’s just clearly the right thing to do.”**

**“Everybody should have the essentials to live on.”**

**“It’s as simple as that.”**



A member of the public joins in our campaign and plays their part in shaping policy: sharing stories of hardship and hope collected on tablecloths.

**“One voice feels tiny but loads of voices all saying the same things get louder and louder. The more people saying the same thing, the more impossible it is to ignore.”**

## Questions for reflection

- How as individuals and a church can you increasingly make justice a focus of your prayers, and your action? How could you engage with local decision makers, policymakers and Government?
- Who are the people with influence in your area who could be like the judge from the parable in Luke 18? How can you pray for them? How could you reach out to share your thoughts on local issues and the Essentials Guarantee?

## A prayer for justice

God our Father,

We know that you are a God of justice.

We know that the injustice and poverty we see in our society is not part of your will.

No one knows the depths of injustice better than you, God. Help us to open our eyes to see the injustices in our communities, our nations and our world.

Lord, you know that change starts with the heart; please open the hearts of many so that we may see people the way you see people - that we may love people the way you love people.

Help us to acknowledge wrongs, give us clear minds and hearts to decipher the truth behind injustice. May we look at every circumstance through your lens Lord,  
a lens of truth, love, grace, and mercy.

Make us your instruments of change Lord.  
Help us to grow as true disciples of your Word:  
so that together, we may speak out in one voice against injustice.

We make this prayer in the name of Jesus.

Amen.

## Take action for justice and change

The Essentials Guarantee has been gathering support for over a year, and there are lots of ways you can join in. Last summer food banks and churches across the UK ran 'tablecloth story events', where people shared stories of hardship and hope - writing them onto tablecloths. Read a collection of these and more about the campaign in a digital copy of The Hardship Times, a one-off publication we took to Westminster in November 2024. Once you have read it, please share it more widely with people you know. If you'd like to find out how you and your church can be more involved, visit our Church Guarantee our Essentials webpage.



[trussell.org.uk/hardshiptimes](https://trussell.org.uk/hardshiptimes)

[trussell.org.uk/church-GOE](https://trussell.org.uk/church-GOE)

# Week 5

## Pressure and gratitude, with Sharron



This week's **A Shared Journey** is written by our Lived Experience Partner Sharron, who shares a Bible verse which brings hope and practical guidance too. The Bible reading is taken from the NRSV version. This contribution reflects the individual's own experiences, story and theology.

### Bible Reading: Philippians 4:4-6.

**Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.**

### Sharron's reflection

There is so much pressure today.

Pressure to have social media and to make it look good. Mass increase in mental health issues, particularly in our young people and alongside this:



isolation in all generations. The cost of living crisis keeps getting worse and the rise in homelessness is just shocking.

With all of this, it is important to be reminded to be grateful for whatever we have.

I am constantly reminded to be grateful, and recognise what might seem insignificant to me, might be precious to someone else. If I have something nice, I am blessed, if I have food to eat and a roof over my head, I am blessed.

As a society we have lost appreciation for the basics and to appreciate what we have, we are driven to constantly want more. There is so much going on in the world around us and we have lost empathy for one another.

This verse from Philippians reminds us to be different: to be thankful, but it doesn't just stop there, it tells us not to worry, God has 'got us'.

It is a good daily reminder, that whatever I face, God backs me 110%. I am encouraged to share this with people around me: 'let your gentleness be known to everyone'.

It is important to be mindful of how we pray and with it how we humble ourselves, and contribute to society.

There is a chance to be different, to live differently and show people there is another way.

Let us not be anxious, let's take it to God.

There is so much going on in the world, and no one is doing anything to stop it, people are invested in being mean, let us be kind.

Scripture encourages us: God is near, lets live like it.

## Questions to reflect on

- What are you grateful for, that you might have been overlooking?
- Who have you empathised with lately?
- What small thing could you do today to help someone?

## Sharron's prayer

Dear Lord,

As we remember the good things we have in our lives,  
And we hold the difficulties we face before you,  
Help us to be mindful of what we can give to people around us.  
Help us spread kindness to our neighbours.

If only giving, receiving and kindness were a reality for everyone!

Lord, how can food banks still exist?  
Families are stressed, and the cost of living takes its toll on everyone,  
especially people on low incomes.

Help us to do something small to help.  
Small gestures of kindness, that can mean so much.

Remind us to spare a thought for people around us,  
and do something nice for them.

Amen.

## Take action from gratitude

There are many studies and much wisdom around the benefits of remembering and being grateful for all we have. Why not spend some time doing this now? Once you're ready, consider your response. If you are able to donate some food to your local food bank, this could be a way your gratitude would then spread through your community: more people have something to be thankful for! To discover how to donate today, visit our donate food webpage.



How to donate food webpage  
[trussell.org.uk/donate-food](https://trussell.org.uk/donate-food)



# Week 6

## Friendship and humility, with John



This last week of **A Shared Journey** has been written by our Trussell staff, along with a contribution from John, one of our Lived Experience Partners. John shares his reflections on Jesus calling his followers his friends, and his own experience of volunteering at his church's food bank. The Bible reading is taken from the NRSV version. This contribution reflects the individual's own experiences, story and theology.

## Hear the voice of experience on churches being welcoming

Begin this session's reflection by watching our short film, *Welcoming Churches*. In the film, you will hear from some of our partners who have a lived experience of facing hardship. You'll hear how churches can create a really good welcome for people, and how some things can get in the way of that welcome.



[trussell.org.uk/welcoming-churches](https://trussell.org.uk/welcoming-churches)

## Bible reading: John 15: 12-17. This is my commandment

**This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.**

## John's story and a reflection on humility

In this passage Jesus tells his disciples that they are no longer servants but friends – friends because they have invited to share in Jesus' relationship with God. But this sharing is not partial, it does not keep back the special bits, it doesn't limit understanding. Jesus says I have made know everything that I have heard from my Father.

John talks about the importance of friendship when he went to volunteer in a food bank based in Hope Baptist Church in Somerset. He says:

**“Upon entering Hope and their food bank session, I felt welcomed, a peace and calm. I got to meet people from the church as several of them were present, some helping practically and some being there to simply to get alongside people.**

**The church offers more than to pick up your parcel and go, you are offered a cup of tea or if preferred, are welcome to make one yourself. There is also a garden to rest in, or get stuck into – helping grow flowers, fresh fruit and veg.**

**I noticed that people walking into Hope are not alone, I couldn't tell the difference between those who were church members, volunteers and people receiving food. Sometimes people are all three!**

**That first Sunday I went to church, I knew people and people knew me. I knew people because they were genuine in showing me compassion. Food bank at Hope isn't just food bank, it's part of Church: Thursday and Sunday you will receive the same welcome. In fact, even when spotted outside of church, there is a genuine 'hello and how are you?'**

**Every member of the church is encouraged to be part of Thursdays, which is a space for food bank, a coffee morning, multiagency support and gardening. A space to simply be together.**

**Sitting and chatting, gardening together is as valuable as handing out parcels and issuing vouchers.”**

John chose this passage from the Bible to sum up his feelings about the church where he now belongs. These friendships have been life changing for him.

Sometimes, when a church runs a project or offers to serve the local community there is a clear distinction between church members volunteering, and people using the service. But John says, at Hope Church, you couldn't tell the difference and some were all three.

Micah 6:8 tells us to walk humbly with God, and this might mean being alongside one another in friendship along the way. Sharing all we can with new friends and making people welcome and central to our church community.

## Questions to reflect on

- How would someone who has faced hunger and hardship be welcomed into your church?
- Are there barriers that might stop people playing a full role in your church?
- Do people have to pay for social events?
- Whose voices are heard in your church services?

## Prayer

Taken from *A Prayer for the Tired, Angry Ones*, by Laura Jean Truman

God, We're so tired.

We want to do justice, but the work feels endless,  
and the results look so small in our exhausted hands.

We want to love mercy, but our enemies are relentless,  
and it feels like foolishness to prioritize gentleness in this unbelievably  
cruel world.

We want to walk humbly, but self-promotion is seductive, and we are afraid that if we don't look after ourselves, no one else will.

Grant us the vulnerability to risk loving our difficult and complicated neighbour,  
rejecting the lie that some people are made more in the image of God than others.

Keep our anger from becoming meanness.  
Keep our sorrow from collapsing into self-pity.  
Keep our hearts soft enough to keep breaking.  
Keep our outrage turned towards justice, not cruelty.

Remind us that all of this, every bit of it, is for love.

Keep us fiercely kind.

Amen.

## Take action for humility

As Laura Truman says in the prayer above, we can want to be humble and connected: but it can feel like a risk to open up to people and be kind. If we are to be humble together before God, we need to learn to trust our neighbour and lower our defences. While this isn't an easy or comfortable thing to do, it can be the next step on a journey to truly see, hear and accept each other.

Will you take up the challenge of exploring how you can build community with humility with your church?

Will you commit to doing what you can to support people who have a lived experience of poverty to be part of your church, and helping to shape it too?



If the answer is 'yes', we have resources to help you.

Why not download our Church Audit booklet which will help you reflect on where you are with this kind of community building, and plan where to go next? You can also read our booklet on Community.



Download the Church Audit booklet and the Community booklet from

[trussell.org.uk/church-resources](https://trussell.org.uk/church-resources)



# Have we reached the end of the journey?

Thank you so much for working through this booklet and praying with us – and for us.

If you would like to hear from us regularly, please sign up for our monthly Church Update emails:

**[trussell.org.uk/church-updates](https://trussell.org.uk/church-updates)**

For other resources and ways to help support people around you facing hardship, as well as taking action towards our vision of a future where everyone can afford the essentials, please visit:

**[trussell.org.uk/churches](https://trussell.org.uk/churches)**



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