

Resources

CAFOD – Catholic Agency For Overseas Development
www.cafod.org.uk

Church Action on Poverty (a social justice charity)
www.church-poverty.org.uk

Faith Based Regeneration Network (Fbrn)
www.fbrn.org.uk

Housing Justice
www.housingjustice.org.uk

Jesuit Refugee Service
www.jesref.org

National Justice & Peace Network
www.justice-and-peace.org.uk

Operation Noah (Faith communities tackling climate change)
www.operationnoah.org

Pax Christi (an international Catholic movement for peace)
www.paxchristi.org.uk

Joe Aldred, Sophie Hebden, & Keith Hebden, *Who Is My Neighbour? A church response to social disorder linked to gangs, drugs, guns and knives*, CTE, 2008. Available to download at www.cte.org.uk Click on: Resources+Shop > Publications.



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TOGETHER IN CHRIST

6 Working Together for the Common Good



Christians cannot close their hearts to the crying needs of our contemporary world. The contribution they are able to make to all the areas of human life in which the need for salvation is manifested will be more effective when they make it together, and when they are seen to be united in making it. Hence they will want to do everything together that is allowed by their faith.

Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism, n. 162
Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity

We are invited to serve Christ by building a just and compassionate society where everyone can flourish and grow into the person God created them to be. This invitation challenges us to apply Gospel values to contemporary social issues. When we work together for the common good, we grow together as Christians and witness to genuine unity. Working ecumenically in practical ways on burning concerns is attractive to Christians today and leads us into deeper relationships as we get to know one another and develop a common life. Working together ecumenically can often lead us to develop partnerships with secular organisations in wider society, giving us opportunities to explain our motivation and share our faith.

Ask yourselves

How do we feel compassion for our neighbours – both at home and overseas?

When the Holy Spirit touches our hearts with compassion, we are motivated to act, especially to bring God's love and care to grieving, lonely, marginalised and oppressed people, recognising each person as made and loved by God and needing support.

How can we find out the real needs of the people in our neighbourhood and the gaps in provision?

There is a growing desire to find ways to work together for the common good, rather than each Christian community acting separately as we did in the past. Often we become aware of needs through our conversations with people over coffee after Mass, in the shops or through reports in the local media. Councillors, council officers and the local social services will be pleased to share their knowledge and concerns.

What are our current concerns and how can we address them?

Churches Together groups can develop an ecumenical network of interested people who can be consulted, informed and mobilised to respond in ways that can contribute to local, national or international concerns. They can share resources by drawing on people with expertise from across the churches and the local community. A good communication system is essential.

Who are possible partners?

Individuals or small groups need partners to take action and be effective. These may be people from other churches or other faith communities; local voluntary organisations and community workers often welcome taking part in a joint activity. It is essential to establish trust and good working relations.

How about

Prayer

- Pray regularly for the work being done by the local churches and secular organisations.

Lifestyle

- Invite people to talk about living a simpler lifestyle and how they can support one another. *'Be the change you want to see in the world'*, Mahatma Gandhi.

Environment

- Organise planting sessions, working with the local Leisure Department and Garden Centre.
- Repaint a building covered with graffiti – contact local stores for free paint.
- Organise countryside walks to monitor footpaths, stiles and fences.

Poverty

- Contact the local Citizens Advice Bureau for advice on debt management and offer church premises for meetings.
- Set up a small grant scheme for purchasing cookers and electrical equipment – find a local organisation that might check them free of charge.

Good Neighbour

- Organise a barter service, swapping services e.g. baby sitting and gardening.
- Visit lonely and housebound elderly people.
- Set up a 'helping hands' group of volunteers from churches and the wider community to help local people.
- Organise a weekly lunch club to offer friendship and support for elderly people in the community.

Homelessness

- Prepare Emergency Support Packs by collecting food, cleaning materials and toiletries. Contact local organisations supporting homeless people and work with them.
- Organise a weekly meal or soup kitchen in a church hall for lonely or homeless people.

Asylum Seekers/Migrant Workers

- Contact your local support group to find out what help is needed.
- Support migrant workers.