

WELCOME

In this issue we recognise the work carried out by schools, church groups and community organisations looking out for those trapped in the web of poverty.

Faith without deeds is dead Northern Prayerhouse

Fix the date now

Places of Welcome

We'd all like to think we have welcoming organisations, but this badge helps others to recognise this too!

It's a crying shame ...

The Together Network has been sharing a story from the head teacher of Morecambe Bay Community Primary School about her experience of how poverty affects children in her school. It reduced some of us to tears – before we became angry again! The full text is [here](#), but some of our children can only dream of the feasts and presents many of us enjoy on Christmas day.



1 **SIOBHAN COLLINGWOOD** IS THE HEADTEACHER OF **MORECAMBE BAY COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL**

One of our children being interviewed recently on the radio about how our school supports families and children, told the reporter that when he was sad and things were bad, he could come to school and that for the whole six hours he was there, he would be happy.

Many organisations supported children and families over the Christmas period – from lunches, to presents collected and distributed, to food hampers. The Salvation Army and Foodbanks worked unstintingly to get hampers out, St John's Ambulance donated an amazing number of toys to children in Blackburn, and communities came together to enjoy a Christmas meal.

So we should always look for the good in all the awful things that are surrounding us – thank you to all who work so hard to ensure that those who need help receive it.

Faith without deeds is dead ...

So said Bishop Philip (quoting James 2) in Blackburn Cathedral at the Northern Prayerhouse service in November. Over 30 faith groups across the North of England prayed for each other and the work being carried out in their communities by people who care for the homeless, the hungry, the sick and the needy.

'It was an eye opener for many,' said Gill Beeley, 'that poverty takes many forms, and is not limited to urban areas.' All the prayers are still on the website at

www.cuf.org.uk/news/northern-prayerhouse

We will be co-ordinating the Northern Prayerhouse in October 2017
Will you be involved?

Fun, friends, food – what else does anyone need?

When school is out and some families find it difficult to manage the demands on finances. They also miss the rhythm of everyday life which is provided by taking children to school.

The good news is that there are many play schemes and activities which are provided in parish halls, community centres and other facilities which are led by faith and community groups.

The benefits of these activities are far reaching. Children have FUN with their friends, good FODD, and a structure. Parents have the opportunity to meet with others, get involved, and takes some of the pressure off the food bill – enabling them to eat, or to provide in other ways for their families.

It's easy to judge – but **children do not choose poverty as a lifestyle**. Wrap around care for children in poverty is the only way that we can ease the pressure for long enough to allow them to focus on aspirations for a brighter future that only a rounded and thorough education can give them. Primary schools provide so much support for children and families – including vouchers for food parcels and emergency funds for fuel, to cope with benefit sanctions.

What more can we do?

Some communities have taken holiday hunger as their starting point and focus on food – cooking lunch together for example. Others have put on themed holiday clubs and ensured that there is good food, and offered something for parents – chats, support from CAB etc. In one diocese, lunch boxes have been provided for collection from agreed centres.

There are a number of frameworks available and experience on which we can build. Contact Greg Smith or Gill Beeley for more information.

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Imagine if you were new to your area - how could you find a safe place to connect, belong and contribute in your new community?

Places of Welcome is a really simple way to do this and we want to see one in every community.

So many churches and groups have drop ins and cafes – to carry this badge as well would make it part of a nationwide movement to open our doors to those in need of company.

To find out more about this, contact Gill Beeley or Lynne Mitchell on together@together-lancashire.org

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