



THE CENTRE FOR
THEOLOGY
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citizensuk



CELEBRATING LIVING WAGE WEEK

IN YOUR CHURCH

Resource by Fr Angus Ritchie

FOREWORD



**Foreword by the Rt Revd
Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani,
Bishop of Chelmsford**

The Living Wage Campaign is one of the most well-known and effective campaigns for change that we have seen in our country in recent years. Perhaps less well-known is the integral role that churches and other faith communities have played in both starting the campaign and achieving change that has had a profound and positive impact on so many people's lives.

The role of the church in organising and campaigning for change and speaking out on issues of social justice is a cause of much discussion and debate. But as Christians, we cannot separate the message of the Gospel from the reality of lived experience.

I thank all those in our churches and worshipping communities who have worked with partners, including Citizens UK and their two local chapters: TELCO in East London and Citizens Essex, who have been part of the Living Wage campaign. Whether you

have been involved before or are taking an interest for the first time, I encourage you to make use of these resources. People in the communities we serve are experiencing the biggest rise in the cost of living for generations and the Campaign for a real Living Wage has never been more relevant or more important.

**Foreword by the Rt Revd
Sarah Mullally,
Bishop of London**



The Church, at its best, is always at the forefront of social movements. That's why I am using my position as Bishop of London to support and champion the real Living Wage campaign across the capital.

I co-chair with Sadiq Khan, the Citizens UK and Living Wage Foundation steering group for the Making London a Living Wage City initiative, which aims to tackle in-work poverty in the capital and put up to £635m back into the pockets of low-paid workers.

Dignity is something we all deserve. Workers should feel valued and respected, yet so many are being thrust into in-work poverty due to low pay.

Saint Paul reminds us that those who work earn their pay, and the prophet Malachi proclaims that the Lord will "bear witness against those who oppress the hired workers in their wages". Wages are not counted as gifts but as what is due. If people are giving their employers a hard day's work, do

they not deserve a fair day's pay – one that is high enough to meet their needs?

Low wages mean people struggle to afford the absolute necessities of life, such as rent, fuel and food. This struggle impacts people's mental and physical health, as well as their spiritual well-being and the ability to live what Jesus referred to as 'life in all its fullness'.

As well as using my leadership to support this important initiative, I want to encourage each of you to do all you can personally and as the church to support the real Living Wage during this cost of living crisis.

**Foreword by the Rt Revd
Christopher Chessun,
Bishop of Southwark**



I strongly support the effort to ensure that all workers receive a Living Wage. I am grateful to Citizens UK, who, through the agency of community organising, enable those who experience injustice to change the situation in which they find themselves.

Although Southwark is a Living Wage Diocese, I continue to hear many stories of people who are working hard, trying to manage several jobs, fitting shifts around caring responsibilities, and still struggle to make ends meet. The ability to sustain oneself and one's dependents financially is a critical

element of human dignity and self-worth. We now face falling real incomes on an enormous scale leading to stress and misery. This is something that should not be happening in a G7 economy.

As we approach the Feast of Christ the King at the end of Living Wage Week, I pray that the King of Justice will open the hearts of all those responsible for those who work to ensure that every person's labour is recognised and remunerated in a way that makes it possible for them and their households to live in dignity.

CELEBRATING LIVING WAGE WEEK IN YOUR CHURCH

Living Wage Week runs from Monday, 14th to Sunday, 20th November, with a special service at the start of the week (see back cover). This pack contains activities to get involved in throughout the week – and material for reflection at your Sunday worship on the 20th, which many churches keep as the Feast of Christ the King.

WHAT IS LIVING WAGE?

The real Living Wage is the only UK wage rate that is voluntarily paid by over 11,000 UK businesses who believe their staff deserve a wage which meets everyday needs – like the weekly shop or a surprise trip to the dentist. The Living Wage is an hourly rate of pay set independently and updated annually, calculated according to the basic cost of living in the UK. Today, the rate is £10.90 per hour outside of London and £11.95 in the capital to reflect the higher cost of living in London.

The Living Wage rates are updated in November each year during Living Wage Week. The calculation is overseen by the Living Wage Commission, an independent body drawn from leading Living Wage employers, trade unions, civil society and academics. The methodology is based on the 'Minimum Income Standard', which is determined by what members of the public think is needed for an acceptable standard of living in the UK.

WHY CELEBRATE?

The Living Wage Campaign – started over a decade ago by religious and civic groups in TELCO (the East London chapter of London Citizens and Citizens UK), has had a huge impact on the lives of low-income families, raising the wages of over 300,000 workers, and putting over £500 million into their pockets in London alone. From being dismissed as 'impractical' and 'unrealistic', it has now grown into a national movement supported by the leaders of all the main political parties, implemented by the Mayor of London, and recognised as having a robust business case by companies such as Barclays Bank and KPMG.

It is important to recognise the central role of faith communities from the very start of the Living Wage Campaign. There would be no Living Wage without the thousands of people of faith who have organised together for change. Faith communities have provided the majority of organised local people who made the Living Wage possible. Christian social teaching is a key motivation for the campaign; the Bible is clear that the earth belongs first to God and that its fruits need to be distributed in a way that ensures everyone has dignity and the material as well as spiritual means to flourish.

HOW

1. Start the week with us in prayer

We will start Living Wage week in prayer – at a special service led by the Bishop of London, with testimony from workers who need a Living Wage. This is at 7pm on Monday the 14th November at St Katharine Cree, near Liverpool St & Fenchurch St stations and Aldgate & Tower Hill Tube.

(www.stkatharinecree.org)

2. Preach on the Living Wage

If you use a Lectionary, the Sunday at the start of Living Wage is The Feast of Christ the King. Notes on the readings are given below, along with other theological resources.

3. Get testimony from workers in your congregation

There is no substitute for personal testimony. Story is the main genre of Scripture and has always been central to the success of the Living Wage campaign. Is someone in your church willing to speak or be interviewed by you about life on poverty wages, or the positive impact of the Living Wage? Alternatively, a member of your congregation – or one of the community organisers from London Citizens – could speak or be interviewed by you about the stories behind the campaign and how it has succeeded.

4. Say 'thank you' to a Living Wage employer

Community organising involves tension and struggle – but it also recognises and celebrates success. Some employers who were at one time resistant to the Living Wage have now become powerful voices for its positive impact.

Contact your London Citizens borough organiser and find out which local employers your congregation can thank. This can be by sending a letter on behalf of the church – or even getting each member of the congregation to write a 'thank you' postcard. (Experience suggests this can be done most effectively, and quite speedily, while the congregation are still all together. Why not distribute postcards – and supply some pens – during the notices? You can either ask people to supply stamps, or collect the cards in and post them in one batch.)

5. Take part in a Living Wage action

Despite the success of the Living Wage campaign, there are still too many families who suffer as a result of low pay. The campaign must continue to persuade, encourage and sometimes agitate employers to do the right things and pay the Living Wage.

You can join us on the afternoon of the 26th November as we gather to encourage social care providers to pay the real living wage.

Sign up to find out more here: www.actionnetwork.org/events/care-homes-and-the-living-wage-london-action.

To join with other churches and take action on issues of poverty and low pay you can become a member of London Citizens. Membership of London Citizens puts you in contact with hundreds of other organisations across the capital seeking the welfare of our city. You will be given the tools and training needed to make change on issues around low pay as well as other injustices you and your community might face. To find out more on how your church can join London Citizens go to:

www.citizensuk.org/join

6. Accredite your church or church school as a living wage employer

Churches that take the step to accredit as Living Wage Employers are not only ensuring that those working in the church are paid a wage that can meet the cost of living at a time when this is more important than ever; accrediting is a symbolic action, positioning the Church as a force for good in the community that it serves, and as an organization that is 'walking the walk' in tackling local poverty.

The cost of accreditation for Churches starts at just £60 annually. In order to accredit as a Living Wage Employer, the Church must:

1. Confirm that its directly-employed staff are being paid the current Living Wage rates.
2. Have a plan in place to extend the living wage to include any third-party staff.
3. The final step is to complete a Licence Agreement which will be shared after enquiring about accreditation.

Once accredited, the Church will appear on the Living Wage Foundation's website as a Living Wage Employer, as well as on a localised map, and will be able to proudly share the Living Wage logo and take part in celebrations in Living Wage Week and beyond. To begin the accreditation process, see this link: [Become a Living Wage Employer | Living Wage Foundation](#). Typically, smaller Churches can expect to be accredited within one month of applying.

You can also encourage your local Church of England School to pay and accredit as a living wage employer. Through accreditation, schools are making a commitment to tackle in-work poverty in their communities. They are ensuring that all staff are paid at least the Living Wage and are independently calculated.



Implementing the real Living Wage - CofE schools Toolkit

WHY IT MATTERS

VOICES OF THOSE IMPACTED BY LOW PAY

“Campaigning for a real living wage means a lot to me; it means I’m able to live more comfortably and pay my bills and debts. It means I’m able to enjoy myself and not have to worry as much about financial issues. It also means I am able to do more such as plan time with family and friends. And for some of my colleagues it means helping them raise their young families a lot more securely.

Before, when I was earning only minimum wage, I experienced problems paying my bills and keeping up with payments. And, as a result, I built up debt. This meant that the money I earned whilst on minimum wage did not allow me to enjoy things and I missed family and social gatherings as I could not afford it which made me depressed. The Covid pandemic was a particularly difficult time for me, my colleagues and my family because of the closures of many businesses and in certain fields of work many redundancies.

It means a lot that I am now earning a real Living Wage, it means a lot more security and ability to enjoy life more. Now, I am continuing to campaign so that other workers are paid enough to live on.’

Matthew Hobbs is a care worker who has benefited from an employer paying the real living wage he is now campaigning with Citizens UK for more people to receive it.



‘The cleaning sector is a very vulnerable sector. A sector that needs lots of support and change so that people from our community can improve their lives. I feel that in the cleaning sector, we are not seen or treated as parents or even as women. We are just the workers that clean. We are invisible. We are very much exhausted. We should all work together to improve the cleaning sector. This issue affects us dearly, mentally and physically. We need our voices to act as one, and continue to organise for an increase in our wages. We need to join our voices, to scream loud so that our voices can finally be heard.’

Leaders from ‘Empoderando Familias’, a Latin American support group for Mums in South London (Gloria, Ruth, Maribel, Maida)

THE BIBLE AND THE LIVING WAGE

Jesus sums up the worker's due in a simple saying: "For the worker is worthy of his wages" (LUKE 10:7) . Labour deserves payment that is appropriate to needs, specifically shelter and food, which the version of the saying in MATTHEW 10:10 makes explicit. But the context of the third appearance of the saying in 1 TIMOTHY makes it clear that this is a matter of honour (5:17), and not just the bare minimum for survival.

Earning a decent living is a matter of dignity, a means to social participation and not just material subsistence. Each of these occurrences of the saying comes in the context that directly concern Christian workers, whether missionaries or pastors. But elsewhere Paul connects this specific issue to more general regulations in the Torah about appropriate pay (1 CORINTHIANS 9:9–14).

This alerts us to the fact the economic aspect of the Old Testament still has relevance with regards to this issue of pay. In fact it is there that we find some of the strongest exhortations about the responsibility of an employer (DEUTERONOMY 24:14–15) ... The dependence of the worker on their employer entails a responsibility to pay properly. Although the explicit issue here is timing rather than amount of wages, the fact that a person depends on their remuneration means that it must be sufficient to live on. Given that

the norm was for a man to do paid work on behalf of his whole family, a decent wage covered the requirements of a household and not just an isolated individual. So, a wage that is enough for a household to live on can be construed as a 'living wage'.

We can get a sharper sense of the right thing to do from looking at what was wrong. A common temptation then was (and still is) to abuse positions of power and ignore workers' needs. This was the problem in Egypt, where Israel were treated as slaves, apparently being paid nothing (EXODUS 5). God's people were warned that if they adopted a monarchy, a centralisation of power like the Egyptian model, the temptations of power would be too great and workers' needs would be ignored (DEUTERONOMY 17; 1 SAMUEL 8)...

Contemporary employers in the UK have a more restricted role than 'masters' or kings. But, as we saw in Deuteronomy, the responsibility for



hired workers' economic needs is no less... Otherwise we would have the bizarre situation that modern Biblical insight & enterprise for social purpose employment entails less obligations towards workers than masters had for slaves, or kings had for subjects.

Where things go wrong is when workers are seen as a means to an end rather than people to be cared for and even loved. Hence the commands in Torah summed up by 'love your neighbour as yourself' (LEVITICUS 19:18) sums up social and economic teaching. This

includes the mandates to leave the gleanings of the harvest (19:9), deal with financial integrity (19:13) and act justly with the poor (19:15) and, most relevantly for us, the directive 'do not hold back the wages of a hired worker overnight' (19:13)...

Paying a living wage is part of how an employer loves his or her neighbour (in this case his or her worker).

From Matt Williams, A Biblical Response to Working Poverty (Jubilee Centre, 2022)



CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING AND THE LIVING WAGE

In his Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris Consortio, Pope John Paul II affirmed a series of human rights relating to family life. They include:

- the right to exist and progress as a family, that is to say, the right of every human being, even if he or she is poor, to found a family and to have adequate means to support it;
- the right, especially of the poor and the sick, to obtain physical, social, political and economic security;
- the right to housing suitable for living family life in a proper way;

In Caritas in Veritate, Pope Benedict XVI wrote that:

the dignity of the individual and the demands of justice require, particularly today, that economic choices do not cause disparities in wealth to increase in an excessive and morally unacceptable manner #32

Later in the encyclical, he considers what is meant by the word “decency” in regard to work:

It means work that expresses the essential dignity of every man and woman in the context of their particular society: work that is freely chosen, effectively associating workers, both men and women, with the development of their community; work that enables the worker to be respected and free from any form of discrimination; work that makes it possible for families to meet their needs and provide schooling for their children, without the children themselves being forced into labour [emphasis added]; work that permits the workers to organize themselves

freely, and to make their voices heard; work that leaves enough room for rediscovering one’s roots at a personal, familial and spiritual level; work that guarantees those who have retired a decent standard of living. #63

This is precisely the logic behind the Living Wage. It is calculated to be the level of pay required to enable workers to sustain a personal and family life, and contribute to the wider life of a community, and still have enough money to meet their material needs.

Perhaps Pope Francis’ greatest contribution to Catholic Social Teaching in this field is his emphasis on the agency of those who experience injustice in winning change. In his address to the World Meeting of Popular Movements in 2015, he asked:

What can I do as a craftsman, a street vendor, a trucker, a downtrodden worker, if I don’t even enjoy workers’ rights? What can I do, a farmwife, a native woman, a fisher who can hardly fight the domination of the big corporations?... A lot!... You, the lowly, the exploited, the poor and underprivileged, can do, and are doing, a lot. I would even say that the future of humanity is in great measure in your own hands, through your ability to organize and carry out creative alternatives, through your daily efforts to ensure the three “L’s” (labour, lodging, land) and through your proactive participation in the great processes of change on the national, regional and global levels. Don’t lose heart!

This highlights the vital connection between the Living Wage Campaign and the wider work of community organising - which aims to place those who experience low pay at the very heart of the struggle for change.

REFLECTING ON THE FEAST OF CHRIST THE KING



Readings:

**Jeremiah 23.1-6 & Psalm 46 (Anglican);
2 Samuel 5.1-3 & Psalm 121 (Roman Catholic);
Colossians 1.11-20 & Luke 23.33-43 (Anglican & Roman Catholic)**

To confess Jesus Christ as “King of the Universe” is to say something important about the real nature of power and authority.

The reading from Colossians underlines the scope of Jesus’ power - “in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

Our Gospel reading shows us the nature of this power. We see who Jesus is, not in wealth and status but in the midst of those who are oppressed - whose bodies are broken by this world’s empires. Jesus enters Jerusalem on a donkey not a horse, and we find him enthroned not on a beautiful chair but on a cross. The Cross of Jesus shows that God is particularly close to those who are overlooked and belittled by this world’s political and economic systems. It shows that, in God’s eyes, dignity and greatness is to be found in very different place from this world’s hierarchies of wealth and status (cf. 1 Cor 1, Jas 2).

In Jeremiah, the promise of a “righteous Branch” from David’s line (a promise Christians see fulfilled in the kingship of Christ) is contrasted with those shepherds who “destroy and scatter the sheep” because of their lust for wealth and power.

So this Feast of Christ the King has a particular resonance with the work of churches in praying and acting for a Living Wage. This work flows from the recognition of the dignity of those the world overlooks, belittles and exploits.

In March 2019, at the start of the Covid pandemic, Pope Francis spoke of it as a “storm” which would challenge our ideas of status and importance. It would reveal, he said, how our lives are woven together and sustained by ordinary people - often forgotten people - who do not appear in newspaper and magazine headlines nor on the grand catwalks of the latest show, but who without any doubt are in these very days writing the decisive events of our time: doctors, nurses, supermarket employees, cleaners, caregivers, providers of transport, law and order forces, volunteers, priests, religious men and women and so very many others who have understood that no one reaches salvation by themselves.

So Living Wage Week 2022 comes at a moment of deep spiritual significance - as we collectively decide whether to act on what has been revealed to us in this pandemic. We stepped out our front doors to clap for nurses, doctors and carers. Pope Francis’ words challenge us all: are we willing to turn to a different way of life, where our economy is placed at the service of human flourishing?

Living Wage week offers us an opportunity to respond - to offer people a glimpse of the Kingdom of God in the midst of the kingdoms of this world.

PRAYER AND ACTION FOR A LIVING WAGE

**COME TO A WORSHIP SERVICE IN LIVING WAGE
WEEK LED BY THE BISHOP OF LONDON WITH
TESTIMONY FROM CARE WORKERS**



7PM MONDAY, 14TH NOVEMBER
HOSTED BY THE GUILD CHURCH FOR WORKERS
St Katharine Cree, 86 Leadenhall Street, EC3A 3BP

Join us for music, prayer, worship, hearing what the Bible says about fair work and a call to action from across our different churches and traditions.

For details and to register:
www.stkatharinecree.org/livingwage

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