

# Tenants and Landlords

## Who is my neighbour? Faith, housing and the local community

### Opening prayer

### Introduction

This session is about renting a home, and the relationship between tenant and landlord. We hear from Lianna from the South London Liberal Synagogue in Streatham, and Reverend Tif from St Paul's (Church of England), Brixton. We reflect on what the Jewish tradition teaches about being a landlord, the importance of the home in Christianity, and some of the issues faced by landlords and tenants in London.

### Feedback

If you were involved in the previous session, what action have you taken on the issues raised? What has the response been?

### Rounds

Share an experience of being a landlord or a tenant – or an experience of someone you know.

### Context

Rogue landlords and letting agents were one of the three main issues London Citizens identified through the listening campaign in the run up to the Mayoral election. Bad experiences of renting homes are harming our communities. On April 28th 2016, we will be asking the future Mayor of London to act on this issue. You can find out more in the London Citizens Housing Manifesto 2016 ([citizensuk.org/housing\\_manifesto\\_2016](http://citizensuk.org/housing_manifesto_2016)).

Case study: renting in the London Borough of Lambeth

In Lambeth, two thirds of people rent. One in five people rent from the local council, and 16 per cent rent from other social landlords. One in three people rent from a private landlord. Between 2011 and 2015, average private rents in Lambeth increased 24 per cent to £1,235 per month for a one-bedroom flat – whilst most people's incomes have risen very little. Higher house prices are driving this increase: in the last three years, house prices rose 55 per cent. Nationally, the biggest cause of homelessness is the termination of a private rented tenancy.

### Scripture

Luke 19:1-10 (NRSV)

[Jesus] entered Jericho and was passing through it. A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax-collector and was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way.

When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.' So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. All who saw it began to grumble and said, 'He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.'

Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, 'Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.'

### Going deeper

In this passage, Jesus is welcomed into Zaccheus' home. How are hospitality and faith connected?



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## Listening to our neighbours

Students from Saint Gabriel's College, a Church of England Secondary School in Lambeth, visited fellow members of London Citizens to find out how the housing crisis affects their neighbours in the local community. The students filmed and interviewed community leaders to find out how housing affects their institution and what their faith has to say about the housing crisis.

### Watch the video: Tenants and landlords

Share your reaction to the video with the person next to you.

## Questions for discussion

1. Lianna says, "You can't just keep raising the rent... you have to recognise that your tenant is a human being created in the image of God, and that you have obligations towards them as well." How do you think this compares with people's experiences of renting in your local area?
2. Reverend Tif talks about the responsibility of St Paul's Church as a Christian landlord. What does being a Christian landlord look like?
3. Reverend Tif shares a story about a member of the church whose rented accommodation was so damp that she became seriously ill with asthma. How would you know if someone in your church was struggling with similar housing problems?
4. If the home is a place where we can welcome God and find salvation, how does this affect our understanding of housing?

## Decide on an action to take this week, either individually or as a group, for example:

- a) Talk to someone about their experiences of being a tenant or a landlord. Do they know their rights and responsibilities as tenant/landlord? Are those rights/responsibilities effective in giving them what they need?
- b) Create a poster to display in your community promoting awareness of tenants' and landlords' rights and responsibilities, advertising where people can go for advice or information.
- c) Find out more about the **Rogue Landlords' Taskforce** proposed by London Citizens and share with your community.

You may find the following resources useful:

- London Citizens Housing Manifesto 2016: [citizensuk.org/housing\\_manifesto\\_2016](http://citizensuk.org/housing_manifesto_2016)
- Shelter: [http://england.shelter.org.uk/get\\_advice](http://england.shelter.org.uk/get_advice)  
*For advice on private renting, social renting, tenants' and landlords' responsibilities*

## Closing Prayer

Further resources are available at: [theology-centre.org.uk](http://theology-centre.org.uk) Follow the conversation and share photos of your discussions and actions on Twitter: #whoismyneighbour @citizensuk @theologycentre