

31st October 2022

Dear Church Leaders

We are writing directly to you in a way that we have never done before: all the Presidents of Churches Together in Shire & Soke (Northamptonshire, Peterborough & Rutland) united, contacting every single church leader, Ordained or Lay, in the area we cover with one single request. **In order for the Church to be as effective as possible in both urban and rural contexts we strongly urge you to work together, as never before, with ecumenical partners.**

We may be facing the possibility of an economic crisis not known for decades, rising energy bills, inflation, increasing poverty, no one can be sure how serious this may become. We all know that there is much anxiety and fear as to what may lie ahead, for our communities, for the churches in which we serve, and indeed for ourselves, as none of us will be immune should the situation develop in the way that is being reported.

There is much talk of creating warm places in church buildings, providing soup and hot drinks but this may be beyond some of our communities, and indeed costs money.

It is a truism to state that we can be far more effective together than we can apart. In the coming months we will need to overcome any obstacles that have prevented us from working collaboratively in the communities we seek to serve. The cold and hungry are not interested whether those who care for them are of a particular denomination; therefore, as disciples of Jesus, we need to come together as one.

Only you and your neighbouring colleagues will know what is possible in your context; so, we invite you to meet together as soon as possible to consider what might be done. It may be that you heat a single space for mission, projects (ie luncheon clubs and coffee mornings), or even worship. This does not necessarily mean worshipping together at the same time but in relay, one after another, so that we may maintain our distinct doctrines, practices, and characteristics, yet whilst saving costs and building unity through the act of sharing space collaboratively.

We will endeavour to post on the CT Shire & Soke website and Social Media channels stories of simple/creative/collaborative initiatives that may be helpful in considering what your communities might also do – Please do share your stories with us to build others up.

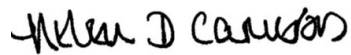
One thing is for sure, whenever the world has been in crisis, God has found new and creative ways of responding and redeeming a situation. This is a time when as one, the churches of Shire & Soke, can rise to the challenge, make a huge difference and witness for Christ in a truly effective and meaningful way.

Every Blessing,
The Presidents of Churches Together in Shire & Soke
(Northamptonshire, Peterborough & Rutland)

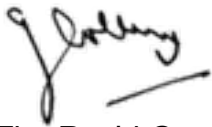
Presidents Letter – Cost of Living Crisis for all

31st October 2022

The Presidents of Churches Together in Shire & Soke
(Northamptonshire, Peterborough & Rutland)



The Revd Helen Cameron
Chair Northamptonshire Methodist District



The Rev'd Geoffrey S Clarke, B.A.
Moderator (East Midlands Synod) The United Reformed Church,

The Rt Rev Donald Allister
Bishop of Peterborough



The Rt Revd John Holbrook (*Bishop of Brixworth (Peterborough Diocese) – and on behalf of
Bishop Donald of Peterborough*)



The Rt Rev David Oakley
Bishop of Northampton (Catholic Diocese of Northampton)



The Rev Lisa Kerry – Regional Minister Team Leader
Central Baptist Association (CBA)



Major Mark Rose
The Salvation Army, East Midlands Divisional Headquarters



Charity registered in England and Wales. No. 1145409 Churches Together in Shire & Soke (Northamptonshire, Peterborough & Rutland)
Diocese of Peterborough – The Catholic Diocese of Northampton – Northampton Methodist District - Central Baptist Association –
East Midlands Synod of the United Reformed Church – East Midlands and East of England Divisions of the Salvation Army
www.shireandsoke.org.uk

www.acrosspeterborough.org.uk www.churches-together-northampton.org.uk Facebook: Christian Peterborough
Facebook: Churches Together in Kettering District Facebook Churches Together in Northampton
Facebook: Shire and Soke - Churches Together in Northampton and Peterborough

Heating, Homes and Cost of Living Concerns

"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in..." Matthew 25 v35

We are all very aware of the issues around Fuel Poverty and the Cost of Living increase - if your church or organisation are already doing things to help then please do let us know what you are doing here at CT Shire & Soke, sharing ideas, good practice and our stories are some of the best things we can do at times like this – with that in mind we are sharing the following helpful resources we know of to help you at this time:

Church Action on Poverty has a page on the Cost of Living Crisis with some suggestions of what can be done: <https://www.church-poverty.org.uk/cost-of-living-crisis-6-useful-church-responses/>

They also have Debt Centres and money courses and can be contacted on 0800 328 0006 or you can find more details here: <https://capuk.org/i-want-help>

Please also check with your local district council as they too will likely have similar pages to the following pages from **Northampton Council** and **Peterborough City Council**, which have some helpful links and suggestions for enquirers too.

<https://www.peterborough.gov.uk/council/campaigns/support-with-the-cost-of-living>

<https://www.northnorthants.gov.uk/cost-living>

Northamptonshire Community Foundation is raising urgent funds to help tackle increasing poverty and the impact of the current cost of living crisis for vulnerable local residence and those already experiencing financial distress. For more information – contact Rachel McGrath, CEO rachel@ncf.uk.com visit website here: <https://www.ncf.uk.com>

Foodbanks - for details of where they, and how to contact them to find out their individual opening hours etc, then please visit: <https://peterborough.foodbank.org.uk>

<https://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/adult-social-care/welfare-support/Pages/food-bank.aspx>

<https://www.restorenorthampton.org.uk/food-bank.html>

There may be Community Groceries, Food cooperatives, Community Fridges, Community Pantry's in your area.

There are also Community Fridges, and this may be something you could look into setting up: <https://www.hubbub.org.uk/the-community-fridge>

Millfield Peterborough Community Fridge - <https://opendoorhs.org.uk/millfield-community-fridge/>

The Abbey Centre Community Fridge, Northampton
<https://www.neighbourly.com/project/619140ca611acc0e8733e9f5>



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Other helpful Links:

Warm Welcome: A national scheme to equip and coordinate churches and community groups to set up 'warm spaces', just launched with the backing of some Churches, being coordinated by the ChurchWorks Commission. See www.warmwelcome.uk

The Evangelism and Growth team from the Methodist Church have produced helpful resources, including a videos and advice on how to set up a warm space.

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/evangelism-growth/respond-to-the-energy-crisis-this-winter/>

(Though this blog helpfully sets out some of the issues that churches should be considering as they think about how setting up a Warm Space sits alongside a commitment to striving for justice: <https://gracetruth.blog/2022/07/13/fuelling-the-problems-by-corin-pilling/>)

Grant Opportunities for Warm Spaces

The ASDA Foundation is offering grants that are intended to deal specifically with the cost of living crisis. This grant of up to £2000 is to enable local community groups meet the demand for "Warm Spaces" for those struggling, or for providing meals and other resources.

<https://www.asdafoundation.org/foundation-grants>

Responding to a Deepening Crisis: A very useful small resource from Jubilee Plus which pulls together lots of simple and sensible suggestions for how churches might respond to the challenges of the rising cost of living: <https://www.jubilee-plus.org/docs/Responding-to-a-Deepening-Crisis.pdf>

Enough to Live: This is the campaign coalition JPIT has been coordinating, formed to highlight the particular impact of rising living costs on people on the lowest incomes, and to advocate for urgent and sufficient government action to address this:

Finally, we will be putting up a page on the CT Shire & Soke website: www.shireandsoke.org.uk in the next short while that will be about these issues, and include any stories or suggestions that we know of and come across going forwards – so please do share your own works with us too.



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