

# IT'S TIME TO CLOSE THE GAP

Church Action on Poverty

## BETWEEN RICH AND POOR

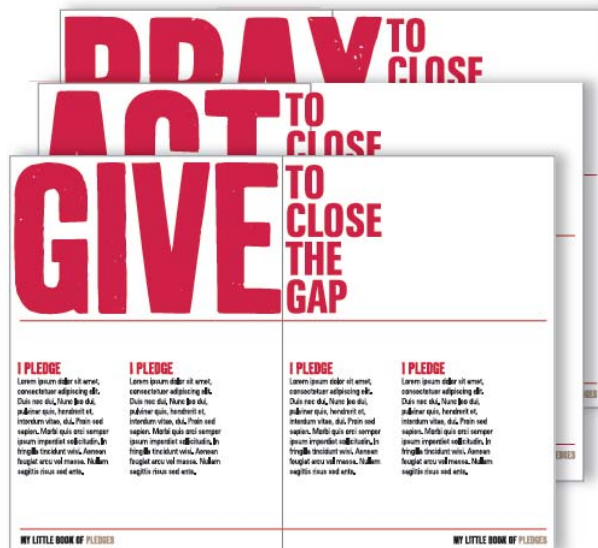
A 3 year campaign, from 2011 – 2013, to mobilise churches and individuals to Pledge to taking specific action to tackle the growing gap between rich and poor in the UK.

### When the poorest suffer it is our duty to speak out

Our Christian duty to speak up on behalf of the poorest and most vulnerable is clear – especially at this time when they are suffering the consequences of the economic crisis and public spending cuts.

In order to flourish in life, every person needs a basic level of financial security and decent housing. Yet some groups are far more likely than others to experience poverty, to lack access to financial products, or to live in substandard housing.

An analysis of living standards in Britain today reveals growing material wealth alongside a persistent gap between richest and poorest.



In spite of the Coalition Government’s commitment to protect the poorest and most vulnerable from the effects of spending constraints, the Coalition has announced cuts of over £18 billion from the welfare budget, with the vast majority to benefits targeted at people on the lowest incomes.

- Up to one million people who – even by the Government’s own definition – are too sick or disabled to work – will lose their entitlement to Employment Support Allowance (ESA), worth up to £91 a week after 12 months.
- Single adults aged up to 35 – in low paid work as well as those who are out of work – will be forced to give up their own homes and move into a single room in a shared property as a result of cuts to Housing Benefit.
- Cuts to Housing Benefit are likely to force up to 50,000 families to move out of high cost areas – particularly London and the South East - causing huge dislocation – and homelessness to many.

### Will You Pledge to Close the Gap?

Our Christian faith tells us that another world is possible. A passionate concern for the poor and the marginalised, and for naming and tackling injustice is at the heart of the Biblical story, from the Old Testament prophets through the Gospels and new Testament. Would the Old Testament prophets, have remained silent as the rich and powerful take from the poor and the vulnerable even the little that they have?

For this reason, Church Action on Poverty is launching a new three year campaign – with a challenge to the Churches: Will you Pledge to Close the Gap? The campaign will mobilise people in churches to take part in specific campaign actions, which will seek to make politicians and others accountable for their actions in narrowing – or increasing – the gap between rich and poor. The aim is to build a more powerful movement in the churches to work for long-term pro-poor change within the UK.

## How will the campaign achieve this?

Pledge to Close the Gap will be built around a series of specific Pledges under the themes of Give, Act and Pray, each designed to provide a tangible way in which individuals, local churches/groups, and other partners (eg church leaders) can contribute to the success of the campaign.

**Give:** Pledges to give will be targeted both at individuals (with a focus on committed giving) and churches, with the aim of making the campaign self-financing over the lifetime of the campaign.

**Act:** Pledges will aim to build support for CAP's 'generic' campaigning capacity – including signing up significant numbers of individual e-campaigners; increasing the reach of the MP Accountability Network; as well as pledges to support more specific campaigns (eg Living Wage campaign, Participatory Budgeting campaign).

**Pray:** Pledges will again be targeted both at individuals (commitment to weekly/monthly prayer) and churches (Action Week, monthly prayer etc), with the aim of building deeper/broader relationships with supporters/churches and a greater sense of ownership of the campaign.



We will aim to secure 10,000 Pledges in the first and subsequent years, with the aim of building momentum (snowballing) throughout the lifetime of the campaign.

Within each theme (Give, Act and Pray) there will be a range of Pledges from 'entry level' Pledges which should be designed to be easy/simple enough for any individual/church to take; through more 'challenging' Pledges which would require a higher level of commitment of time/energy that would be appropriate for more 'dedicated' supporters to sign up to; to 'multiplier' Pledges designed to recruit others to the campaign which would be suitable for those who want to be 'Close the Gap champions' (not necessarily a term we will use in public!) in their locality or network.

As our Christian faith tells us: When we give, act and pray together, we can close the gap.

To find out more visit [www.church-poverty.org.uk](http://www.church-poverty.org.uk)

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