**Life on the Breadline:
Poverty & Discipleship
in an Age of Austerity**

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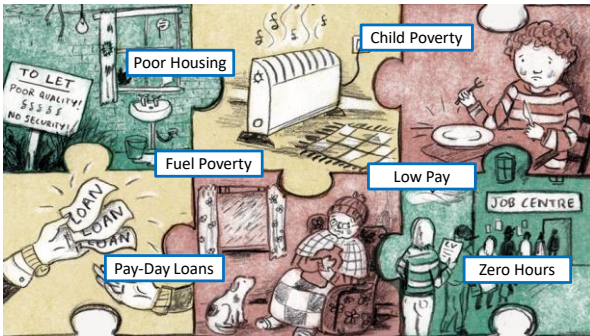
Coventry University
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Trust, Peace and
Social Relations

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Poverty is Multidimensional

- 'a metaphor for the ways in which multiple forms of inequality combine and compound themselves' (Crenshaw, 2007)
- 'Like a monstrous octopus, it projects its nagging tentacles in towns and villages all over the world.' [MLK, 1964].
- When food poverty, low pay, zero hours, poor housing, fuel poverty & delayed benefits meet…
- **Too often theology engages with just one face of poverty.**

2

Poor Housing
Child Poverty
Fuel Poverty
Low Pay
Pay-Day Loans
Zero Hours

3

Poverty is Systemic

- Moralising poverty: strivers vs skivers & the deserving vs undeserving poor.
- Gutierrez – 'systemic sin' not individual moral failings.
- Grenfell Tower – Poverty as a by-product of neoliberal capitalism
- 'Marks of Mission': Transforming Structural injustice…
- **Too often theology fails to engage with structures & systems.**

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Poverty – the worst form of Violence

Galtung [1990] –
The triad of violence: Direct violence <>
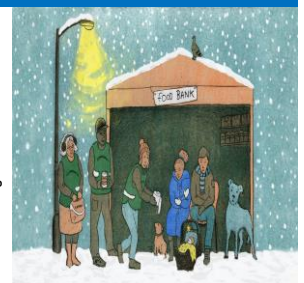Structural violence <> Cultural violence

Nick Davies [1997] –
'Poverty kills with stealth, like a silent assassin.'

Gutierrez [1988, xxi] - 'Poverty means death: lack of food and housing, the exploitation of workers, permanent unemployment...Poverty destroys peoples, families and individuals.'
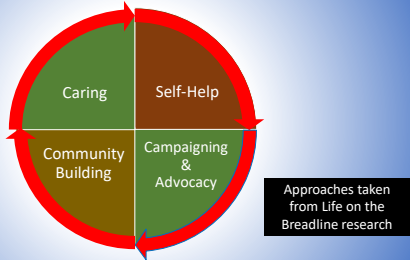
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Why the Church matters

- 'New visibility of religion'….
- Church's grassroots social capital in marginalised communities
- Key player in struggle against austerity age poverty
- God's Preferential Option for the Poor
- Caring but disengaged institution 'Bandaging the wounds of the broken'?
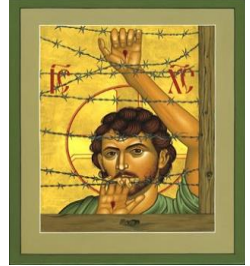- Dynamic social movement - a 'spoke in the wheel of injustice'?

6

'Four Christian Approaches to Poverty…'

Caring

Self-Help

Community Building

Campaigning & Advocacy

Approaches taken from Life on the Breadline research

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Life of the Breadline – A few Resources

- Life on the Breadline project website
- Life on the Breadline Church leaders' Report
- Anti-Poverty Charter
- Life on the Breadline Lent Course
- Life on the Breadline – Animated Video 1
- Life on the Breadline – Animated Video 2

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