



**We believe in the power
of relationships and community
to change lives.**



**CHURCH
URBAN
FUND** ⊕

Inspired by our Christian faith, we work with and through local partners to address complex needs and help build connected, hopeful and confident communities. Every year, we help enable thousands of people to live more flourishing lives. Our faith is inclusive and welcomes diverse voices to contribute, shape and motivate our actions. This has been CUF's way for over 35 years.

**TOGETHER
NETWORK** ⊕

The **Together Network** – local partnerships between CUF and 19 Church of England Dioceses – promotes collaborative, local social action through network building, strengthening of relationships, sharing of best practice and the development and delivery of programmes to tackle social issues including food poverty, loneliness and homelessness.

**NEAR
NEIGHBOURS**

Near Neighbours helps local people make their communities stronger. By encouraging people to get to know each other and work together, relationships of trust – which transcend difference – are built and neighbours are empowered to improve their communities together. Our focus is on building bridges between people of different faith groups, cultures and backgrounds.

**JUST
FINANCE
FOUNDATION**

The **Just Finance Foundation** promotes a fairer financial system and equips people to manage their money better. A key focus is on helping primary-aged children, through their schools, develop a positive relationship with money and embed habits, learning and behaviours that build financial resilience into adulthood. We also develop 'train the trainer' community finance programmes to help people budget, save and spend wisely.

Introduction

Recently, we met with a national funder to discuss a project that will, all being well, train hundreds of new volunteers from churches and community groups to befriend people experiencing homelessness.

Having a friendly and familiar face walking beside you on the journey from the streets to a home can make the difference between sustaining a tenancy or throwing in the towel.

After a pause, the funder said that “**what you lot do is provide hope – and that matters**”. They’re right – we do. Countless stories from hundreds of programme participants demonstrate the depth and breadth of ‘faith in action’ and its power to change lives. Providing hope and confidence are essential to transformation – as are the practical resources, skills and relationships many of us may take for granted.

Every person has experienced unprecedented impact from the pandemic – but none more so than those who were already facing hardship prior to the arrival of Covid-19. Throughout this time, our belief in the potential of faith-based social action to change lives has remained steadfast.

There are all kinds of reasons for CUF to exist at a moment like this: increasing need, social fragmentation, unwavering support from stakeholders within and beyond the Church of England who believe CUF has a vital role to play or the swathes of community leaders and volunteers who are worn down from the pandemic and need all the support they can get. But, in and of themselves, they offer a functional answer to the question of ‘why CUF’?

Our ‘why’ is fundamentally theological and makes us a distinctive contributor to the landscape of social justice in England. We are drawn by a vision of the world as God intends it to be, we are driven by the biblical cry for righteousness, justice and peace and we are directed by Christ’s example to prioritise those experiencing poverty, injustice and inequality.

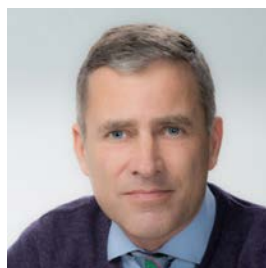
Over the past twelve months there’s been an up-surge in community spirit and local engagement across England. The pandemic has challenged all kinds of assumptions – including who does the helping and who needs help. We feel privileged to be playing a part at this extraordinary moment and are so grateful you have chosen to join us on this journey.

Thank you.



Rachel Whittington
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rachel Whittington".



Andrew Barnett OBE
Chair of Trustees

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andrew Barnett".



Rt. Revd. Adrian Newman
Bishop-in-Residence

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "A. Newman".

The Web of Poverty

Research we commissioned during the pandemic led by Common Vision, identifies that faith-based initiatives are, in part, distinctive due to their holistic social mission which seeks to address a series of interlinked factors that have a significant impact on an individual's ability to flourish.

All CUF's programmes are designed to fill gaps, identified by our local partners, that enable people to release themselves (or prevent themselves being caught) in what we call the Web of Poverty.

Evidence suggests that taking a holistic approach to tackling poverty also helps restore social confidence and recognition of our interdependence with others. Through the lens of faith, we might say that there is an increased recognition that 'I am, because we are'.

And, when social confidence is restored, people have a stronger belief in their own agency and efficacy – they believe they matter and belong in society.

They also have greater trust in others within the same community and different communities as the beliefs and values they hold in common are perceived to be more important than the differences which exist.

POVERTY OF RESOURCES

A lack of essential resources, such as food, shelter, education, financial provision, qualifications or health to achieve a good standard of living.

Where resources are limited, so are people's choices and opportunities.



POVERTY OF RELATIONSHIPS

A lack of strong and supportive relationships on which individual, family and community is built, resulting in loneliness and isolation.

Where relationships are under pressure or where communities are fragmented and hostile, it is difficult to thrive.



POVERTY OF IDENTITY

Our sense of our identity emerges from a complex web of factors (personal, social, cultural, technological, religious and spiritual), all of which contribute to a sense of knowing who we are in the world.

Where any of these factors is limited or missing it can lead to low self-esteem, diminished self-confidence, exclusion from a shared understanding of life, a loss of meaning and purpose, an inability to feel loved or valued spiritually, a lack of resilience and aspiration and poor mental health.



How are we being called to respond?

The Church of England's parish network is one of the country's greatest assets – deeply rooted in every community.

There are more church buildings in the country than pubs. And in many of the most marginalised communities where the local shop, library and village hall may have closed, the church and the school remain. Around 40% of churches (or over 16,000) belong to the Church of England and Church of England schools reach over 1 million children and their families.

Both form part of the parish network which – through its local reach, lived experience, persistent presence – provides a unique infrastructure through which we can both listen to and serve communities across the country. Church Urban Fund has existing, local partnerships with 50% of dioceses. We are well on the way to engaging all dioceses over the next few years.

Our task, working with the Together Network and Near Neighbours, is to grow our local reach in breadth and depth so that people on the front-line in communities can access CUF's resources and relationships to catalyse locally-led social action.



Why is this important? Because most faith and community groups are being asked to do more with less and we have the capacity to listen to what they need and respond.



CUF also commissioned an inquiry during the pandemic led by Dame Julia Unwin which captured the opinions of people engaged in social action across the church. The findings suggest that, in order to help realise the full potential of faith in society, CUF needs to:

- ✓ Take a locally driven approach to faith-based social action which is informed by and also amplifies the lived experience of people
- ✓ Develop a clearer focus on the development of leadership across all generations
- ✓ Develop a fresh narrative about what faith-based social action is and how it contributes.

Our national vision?

Communities of hope acting together
to serve and strengthen society.



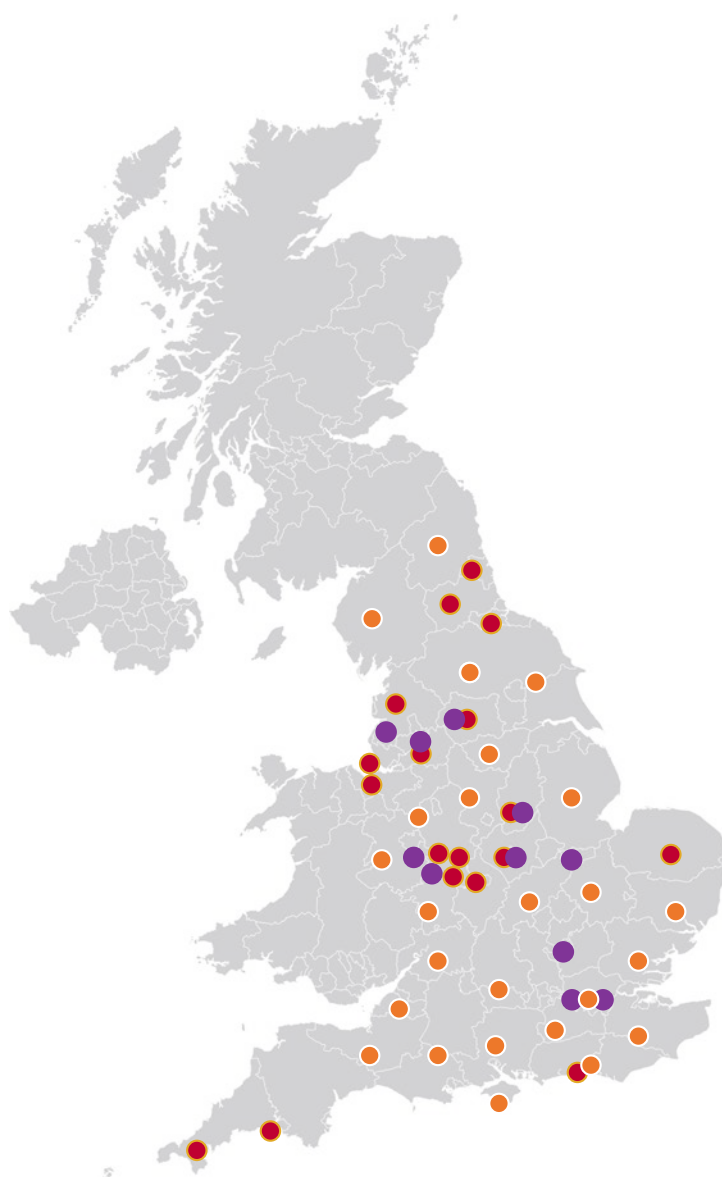
What we will do

After 18 months of listening to people across the country and learning from what they have shared, CUF is on a mission to become a national social action mobiliser. We will empower 15,000 people of all ages, backgrounds and beliefs to serve, lead and speak by December 2024. These people will, in turn, engage 100,000 others.

We are driven by three aims, to:

- ✓ **SERVE: Build and mobilise a national movement of faith-based partners** seeking to serve their communities. Our focus will be on significantly growing membership of the Together Network, Near Neighbours and Places of Welcome, a national movement of hospitality.
- ✓ **LEAD: Equip people to make a bigger difference** in their community through high impact, relational programmes – designed by locals and delivered by locals – tackling issues of loneliness, social cohesion, food poverty and, through our subsidiary, the Just Finance Foundation, financial exclusion.
- ✓ **SPEAK: Amplify grassroots voices** and, with an emphasis on storytelling, we will influence policy and decision makers. In parallel, we will establish a What Works Centre that crafts a new narrative about what faith-based social action is and how it contributes.

- Together Network partners
- Near Neighbours hubs
- Organisations we are connected to



We are ready to step confidently into our new role thanks to CUF's resolute commitment to delivering a holistic mission, our unique convening power that brings people together who may not otherwise engage, our ability to connect with the so-called 'hard-to-reach' and strong track record of unlocking funding on behalf of the communities we exist to serve.

VISION

To see communities of **hope** acting together to serve and strengthen society

MISSION

To become a **national** social action mobiliser on behalf of the Church of England

PURPOSE

To **empower** people of all ages, backgrounds and beliefs to serve, lead and speak

GOAL

To empower **15,000** people to Speak, Serve and Lead by December 2024 to reach **100,000 others**

SOCIAL NEED

- **Inequality is growing** as the impact of the pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing levels of poverty in all forms.
- **Web of poverty** – poverty is multi-dimensional: resources, relationships, identity.
- People are **disconnected** from themselves and each other. But the pandemic has also drawn attention to the **value of relationships** and community.
- Faith groups, their leaders and volunteers, are being **expected to do more with less**. We have the capacity to listen and respond.

FAITH IN SOCIETY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Take a **locally driven** approach to faith-based social action – which also takes the lived experience of people into the wider world.
- Develop a clearer focus on the **development of leadership** at all levels and across generations.
- Develop a **refreshed narrative** about what faith-based social action is, and how it contributes.

SPEAK

Amplify grassroots voices and the distinctive value of faith-based social action

Build
national
faith
service

WHY CUF?

- Convening power: local/central
- Engagement with 'hard-to-reach'
- Commitment to a holistic mission
- A tangible offer to our partners
- Access to transformational funding

IMPACT

Confident,
connected, hopeful
and flourishing communities:
Releasing the potential of 'faith in society'

Build and mobilise a
national movement of
church-based partners
serving their communities

SERVE

**CHURCH
URBAN
FUND** ⊕

LEAD

Equip people to
make a bigger
difference
in their local
community

THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES

- We are **drawn** by the vision of a world as God intends it to be.
- We are **driven** by the biblical cry for righteousness, justice and peace.
- We are **directed** by Christ's example to prioritise those experiencing injustice, poverty and inequality.

A WEALTH OF RESOURCES

- **Diversity of partner relationships** – CofE, ecumenical, interfaith, government, commercial.
- **Locally rooted networks** anchored into the parish structure with diverse, broad reach and taking an asset-based approach to community development.
- A suite of integrated direct delivery and partner delivered **thematic programmes** and resources informed by **personal insight**.
- **A diverse team** of staff, partners and volunteers.

Eve and Archie's story

Eve started a Place of Welcome at the Baptist Church she attends in Newcastle working closely with the local Anglican church. Within the congregation there were a few people who wanted to cook and share homemade food with others. She chose to set up a Place of Welcome as all the tools and resources were already available, making it easy to get started.

Their Place of Welcome happens every Thursday lunchtime. It attracts all sorts including new mums and asylum seekers – anyone wanting food and friendship. During Covid they delivered “lunch in a bag” and made phone calls to maintain connections.

Eve says: “Archie turned up to the church on Wednesday and was looking for something – he wasn't sure what. He was in a bad state. We told him about our Place of Welcome but thought we'd never see him again. But he came the next day and he's never left us since then. I don't know what else we could have invited him to – you know, that says 'just come as you are'. He came every week and would stay for a long time afterwards, helping out and talking loads. It's my favourite part of the week, sitting at those tables. Not doing things for people but sitting as equals. It's exactly where we need to be. It's where Jesus would be.”



Places of Welcome is a movement of hospitality supported by the Together Network and Near Neighbours. Local community groups host Places of Welcome providing their neighbourhoods with places where all people feel safe to connect, belong and contribute. There are over 400 across England and over the next few years we will be ready to support many more.



Over 50,000 people have benefited from receiving training through Covid Cash Recovery since the pandemic began.

Samuel's story

Soon after Covid-19 arrived, our team created Covid Cash Recovery – a free online course designed to upskill community leaders and volunteers to help people in their networks recover from money issues that have arisen due to the pandemic.

Samuel's church community was hit hard by Covid-19, with the majority having experienced a financial shock from being in vulnerable, low paid work.

"Money was a huge problem. People would come to me but I didn't know how to help them." Samuel knew that he had to do something to stop his community's financial challenges becoming a crisis.

"When I first attended Covid Cash Recovery, I realised how useful it was for my own circumstances, I realised that my family was now eligible for free school meals and, after claiming for them, things have been easier. After attending I remember immediately thinking 'I can't wait to share it with our church community.'"

Samuel explains how important it is that the courses are delivered by trusted community leaders:

"It was difficult for our community to separate out what was actually true. It was very important that our church family could trust where people were being signposted to. After the training, people left feeling supported about their options and their money over the next few months. Our families are doing better now."



We are developing a second community finance course to help people post-Covid which will cover budgeting, spending, and signposting to deliver across the country.

Averil's story

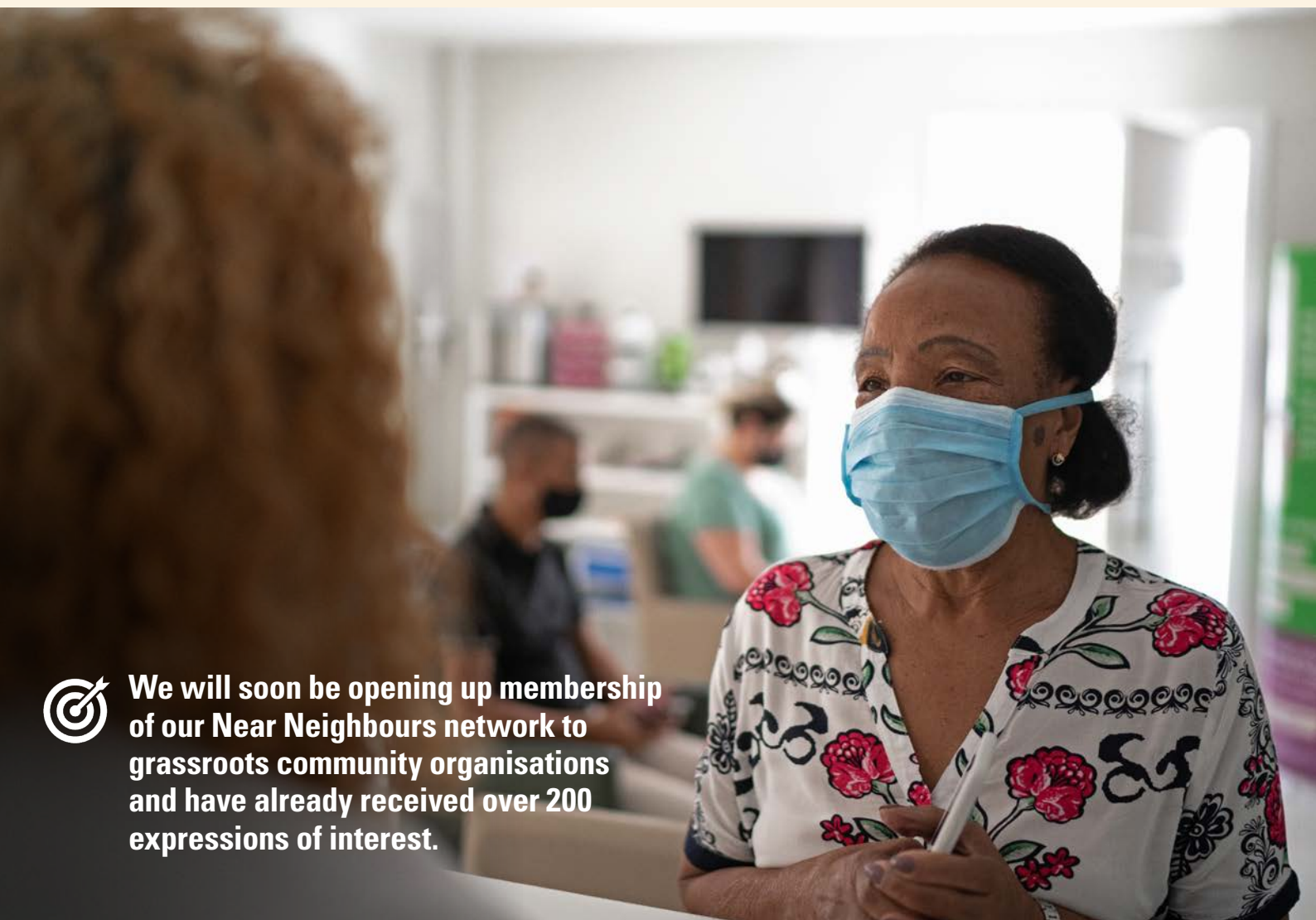
Averil Pooten from St. Barnabas's Church co-chaired a Q&A event with Sufia Alam from the East London Mosque. This was intended to provide a safe space for people who were vaccine hesitant to ask questions and get answers.

Following the event, Averil was approached by NHS Barts Trust excel vaccination team and Waltham Forest Council to set up a pop-up vaccine clinic at Leytonstone Library. Thanks to the ripple effect associated with the initial Q&A event, trusted conversations with local faith leaders and the pop-up clinic, nearly 140 people got vaccinated. Of those who came, many were undocumented migrants who had not seen a GP for 20 years for fear of being deported.

Through the government's Community Champions programme designed to support communities disproportionately affected by the pandemic we mobilised 459 new volunteers who engaged with 763 community organisations, held 46 events engaging over 4,000 participants, awarded 162 Covid grants and reached over 70,000 people via social media.



We will soon be opening up membership of our Near Neighbours network to grassroots community organisations and have already received over 200 expressions of interest.





Over the next three years we aim to recruit hundreds more volunteers to walk alongside people who are moving from the streets, into accommodation and reintegrating back into the community.

Sam and Jo's story

Sam volunteered as a Positive Pathways befriender for two years. Over that time, Sam worked closely with one client that was really struggling to engage with the support services available. Jo was in his fifties, from abroad and found it very difficult to engage with any formal process or paperwork. He would get flustered easily, could be quite argumentative and, if he didn't want to engage, would just speak in his mother tongue.

"I was an in-betweenener" said Sam, "And that made him feel like he was part of the gang". He spent time with Jo on a one-on-one basis, which made him feel much more comfortable, and helped him understand his situation and what he needed to do. Over time, Jo began to open up a bit more to Sam and to start talking and sharing his life story.

After two years, Jo is now back on his feet. He has his own place to live, his immigration status has been settled and he is claiming his full benefit entitlement.

Looking back, Sam reflected, "It's been a long journey, but to see the end result is amazing. Most organisations would have walked away, but we never gave up on him. And to have that person in between the client and the organisation really helped provide stability. It meant he didn't have to engage with a new key worker each time and could come to trust me. I didn't have to do a lot, just be a friendly and familiar face and share information – that kind of thing. Having a personal friend makes a difference and a bit of kindness goes a long way."

Positive Pathways is a relational befriending programme developed by the Together Network, designed to break the cycle of homelessness and reintegrate clients into the community. It has helped over 900 people.

Chernise's story

The Proof Bakery in Coventry, founded two years ago with a grant from Church Urban Fund, is sending hundreds of loaves a week to Coventry Food Bank, paid for by regular customers – and increasingly from donors.

The bakery which meets in St Catherine's Church in Stoke Aldermoor, Coventry specialises in sourdough and also teaches a range of baking skills. So far 11 refugee women have graduated from the school with three currently employed at the bakery. Two of its bakers are refugees from Syria.

"After lockdown a lot of our customers decided that they didn't want to come in to collect their bread but they wanted to keep supporting us," Chernise said. "They could see that food poverty was a problem so they decided that they would like to help in this way by paying for loaves to go to Coventry Food Bank. What surprised us was not so much that our existing customers switched their orders to go to food banks but a lot of new people came along and chose to take part, even people who don't live in Coventry."



Every year, CUF secures grant funding on behalf of its partners to tackle specific issues across the country like food poverty. This works well for the funder as they are able to fund multiple, locally led projects through one organisation and it works for the local organisation who may not have the fundraising skills necessary to get their project going.





Heather and her team incorporated the Presence session from CUF's Growing Good Toolkit into their Stepping Up lay-leadership training programme. The current cohort has participants from 9 parishes in Hull and Middlesbrough, all of which are in the top 20% most deprived parishes.

Heather's story

Heather Black leads the Mustard Seed programme in York Diocese.

The Growing Good Toolkit is a free six-session course for churches that was developed by CUF in 2021 following a research project led by CUF and Theos. This research identified a series of characteristics shared amongst churches that are growing numerically, flourishing through their engagement in social action, and helping people deepen and grow in their faith. These include a persistent presence, hospitality and generosity, adaptability and participation.

Heather said that the 'Presence' session fitted perfectly with the theme of the term: "Being with". "The beauty of this material is that it can be used in-house and delivered locally. It's a really relevant theme as people are coming out of lockdown. Right now a lot of churches are thinking: 'How are we going to be present in our communities moving forward? Are we going to go back to business as usual, or re-evaluate?'" ... "The Growing Good Toolkit provides a resource and a framework to help churches with their thinking and planning."



Over the next two years, we are aiming to partner with over 1,000 churches to help them reflect and act on the call to 'love God and love your neighbour' through engaging with the Growing Good Toolkit.

Where do we hope to be in 10 years?

The idealist might hope we'd be out of business. The realist might hope to see poverty at an all-time low and social confidence at an all-time high thanks, in part, to CUF being networked across every diocese, every parish and every local authority.

But, to realise the potential of faith in society, we need you!

There is no better time to get involved and help catalyse the kind of social action that can change hearts, minds, community and society.

- ✓ **Contribute** to the Living Theology Forum – a meeting place for the mutual exchange of shared theological ideas about Christian social action curated by our Bishop-in-Residence, Adrian Newman.

🌐 www.livingtheology.cuf.org.uk

- ✓ **Read** Dame Julia Unwin's inquiry into the future of Faith in Society. Julia reflects on what has changed as a result of the pandemic and what the shape of contemporary social action for the next decade could look like, with a vocabulary that has resonance.

🌐 www.cuf.org.uk/uploads/resources/Faith-in-Society-report.pdf

- ✓ **Share** the Growing Good Toolkit with your church: a free six session course that helps churches reflect and act on the call to 'love God and love your neighbour'.

🌐 www.growing-good.org.uk

- ✓ **Sign up** to receive our prayer diary and hold the vital work being done across the country in your prayers.

✉ Please email hello@cuf.org.uk to sign up

- ✓ **Download** Milo's Money, a resource developed by our team that engages children whilst learning about the concept of money. Share it with a young person that you're connected to!

🌐 www.milosmoney.co.uk/book

- ✓ **Join** the Together Network or Near Neighbours movement, if you are a part of a faith-based group seeking to connect with like-minded others and receive practical resources to help catalyse your social action.

✉ Please contact hello@cuf.org.uk to express your interest

- ✓ **Donate** to help CUF enable many more people to serve, lead and speak through a financial gift, your volunteer time or by leaving a lasting legacy in your will.

🌐 www.cuf.org.uk/donate



“

Financial education should not only teach children how to spend and save, but how to approach the use of money with wisdom, generosity, justice and thankfulness. Milo's Money is a wonderful resource because it does just that. I hope as many children as possible have the chance to read and learn from it.”

*The Archbishop of
Canterbury, Justin Welby
President of Church
Urban Fund*

We are so grateful to all our funders for their generous support including:



Department for Levelling Up,
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Names included in the stories may sometimes have been changed to protect people's privacy