

Catholic Church endorses the Living Wage ahead of crucial Church of England debate

Today, the Catholic bishops of England and Wales committed Catholic institutions to implementing the Living Wage. This comes ahead of a debate by the Church of England's General Synod on Wednesday (21 November) on whether to endorse the principle.

The meeting in Leeds today of the Catholic bishops took advice from their Diocesan Finance Secretaries to recognise "that fair wages are essential to the common good of our society". The Bishop of Brentwood, Thomas McMahon, has been a long-standing supporter, along with previous bishops of Wrexham and Newcastle. Given the extent of employment by Catholic organisations and charities, it is likely that thousands of people could be affected and lifted out of 'in-work poverty'. As such, it will be one of the largest institutions to support the Living Wage.

Next Wednesday (21 November), the Church of England's General Synod will debate a motion that 'strongly encourages all Church of England institutions to pay at least the Living Wage'. The Archbishop of York, John Sentamu, will speak after his role last week unveiling the new UK figure of £7.45. Not to be outdone, the Archbishop of Canterbury elect, Justin Welby, also came out last week as a supporter of the Living Wage. After pointing out that his current Diocese of Durham pays staff the Living Wage, Bishop Welby declared: "[It's] an area in which the church has really made a useful social contribution, a really useful one... it's something we should be shouting about."

Alan Thornton, Church Action on Poverty's Campaigns Officer, said: "Virtually every Christian denomination in the land is now committed to the principle of the Living Wage. It is a great encouragement to the Living Wage campaign and General Synod deliberations that the Catholic Bishops have emphatically backed the Living Wage. Since 2002 we have been working with churches to take a clear stand against poverty by adopting the Living Wage. Our work is almost done."

Politicians as diverse as Boris Johnson, Ed Miliband and Alex Salmond have all endorsed the Living Wage in the last year. As well as 35 councils, 12 universities, and four hospitals in the public sector, a range of private sector companies are already accredited Living Wage employers: Barclays, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Lloyds of London, KPMG and Lush.

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Further information

See www.church-poverty.org.uk/livingwage or contact Alan Thornton on 0161 236 9321 or 07736 673 246.

Notes

- Catholic Bishops' press statement: www.catholic-ew.org.uk/Home/News-Releases/Living-Wage
- The General Synod debate takes place at 11am on Wednesday 21 November at Church House, in London. The supporting paper is at www.churchofengland.org/media/1571687/gs%201882a%20-%20living%20wage%20pmm.pdf
- Comment by Niall Cooper, Church Action on Poverty's National Coordinator: <http://niallcooper.wordpress.com>
- The Living Wage rates for the UK and London are £7.45 and £8.55 respectively, as announced by the Living Wage Foundation and Mayor of London on 5 November 2012. Previously it was £7.20

and £8.30 respectively. This is more than the statutory national minimum wage, which is currently £6.19 (for workers aged 21) and substantially less for young people. This takes into account top-up benefits and credits, which are often not enough to keep people out of poverty.

- The method for calculating the Living Wage was amended in May 2011 by the Living Wage Foundation to ensure compatibility with London. Previously the UK figure was £7.60. Because of this, Church Action on Poverty has continued to campaign for churches and other employers to pay a Living Wage of £7.60 until the new method produces a higher figure. See www.church-poverty.org.uk/livingwage/livingwagebriefing2012
- Since 2010 all Methodist churches, districts, circuits and projects are required to pay the Living Wage. Similarly the Church of Scotland General Assembly requires congregations and agencies to pay it and urges them to make it a criterion in awarding goods and services over the value of £100,000. Past assemblies of the United Reformed Church, Presbyterian Church of Wales and the Baptist Union of Great Britain have supported the principle of the Living Wage.
- Church Action on Poverty is a national ecumenical Christian social justice charity, committed to tackling poverty in the UK. We work in partnership with churches and with people in poverty themselves to find solutions to poverty, locally, nationally and globally. Since 2022 we have been campaigning for churches to set an example to other employers by paying the Living Wage. We are an accredited Living Wage employer.