

Challenge Poverty Week 2020: Statement from Scotland's Faith Leaders

The response to the coronavirus pandemic highlighted much of what is best in our society. At its outset, we saw an outpouring of compassion and care for one another. Communities, neighbours, and families worked together to try and ensure that those most in need have not been left behind. All levels of government recognised the economic and social effects the pandemic would have, and quickly put in place measures to cushion some of its worst impacts.

During Challenge Poverty Week we are reminded that there is still much to do to help all those who are living with the constant pressure of poverty, and that despite the care and support that has been shown over the last six months we know that further action is needed to loosen the grip of poverty on people's lives.

We are calling on both the UK Government and Scottish Government to take action that would reflect the care, compassion and support shown by people across the country into changes that would make a real difference to families and individuals living in the grip of poverty.

By ending the Benefit Cap and the two child limit the UK Government will boost the incomes of families most in need. They should also retain the increase in the Universal Credit basic allowance, maintaining the financial support that will still be needed for many as our economy recovers.

The Scottish Government can play its role by increasing the Carers Allowance Supplement. This would recognise that carers are often locked into poverty, and in response to the additional financial pressures placed on them by the pandemic.

By boosting the incomes of people struggling to stay afloat, our Governments can relieve the pressure and stress that so many are now experiencing. We encourage those in power to listen to people who are affected by poverty now and take the steps we need to begin to redesign our social security to provide the support that everyone one needs.

Signed by:

The Right Rev Dr Martin Fair, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland

Imam Razawi, Chief Imam and Director General, Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society

The Right Rev William Nolan, Bishop of Galloway

Sensei Karl Kaliski, Cloud Water Zen Centre (Buddhist community)

The Most Revd Mark Strange, Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church

Ravinder Kaur Nijjar, Sikhs in Scotland, Member of Scottish Religious Leaders Forum

The Revd Mark Slaney, Chair Scotland District & Shetland District, Methodist Church in Scotland

Revd Paul Whittle, Moderator-Elect of the National Synod of Scotland of the United Reformed Church