

## How are the Churches responding?

Research carried out in Manchester in 2002 revealed that many church employees were not paid an adequate salary. Since then churches have carefully considered their employment practices, realising that this is an area where Christians can make a difference and set an example. The Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church have all made commitments to the living wage campaign. They have passed resolutions in support of paying their employees at least the recommended Living Wage of £7 an hour. To read all the resolutions visit:

### Baptist Union of Great Britain

[www.baptistassembly.org.uk/information.asp?id=1382](http://www.baptistassembly.org.uk/information.asp?id=1382)



### Methodist Church

[www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/conf07\\_30\\_Lay\\_workers\\_pc.doc](http://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/conf07_30_Lay_workers_pc.doc)

### United Reformed Church

[www.urc.org.uk/assembly/assembled/2008/minimum\\_wage.htm](http://www.urc.org.uk/assembly/assembled/2008/minimum_wage.htm)

Picture on left- Voting for the Living Wage at the URC assembly

## What can you do?

If you work for the church, you can keep your employer accountable by referring to the commitments the churches have made to pay a living wage.

You can also join the Get Fair campaign that calls for an end to poverty in the UK. Promoting Living wage is an integral part

of tackling poverty and it is one of the topics covered by the campaign.

[www.getfair.org.uk](http://www.getfair.org.uk)



## Keep informed

[www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/livingwage](http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/livingwage)

Minimum Income Standard  
Joseph Rowntree Foundation

[www.minimumincomestandard.org](http://www.minimumincomestandard.org)

Church Action on Poverty  
Living Wage Campaign

[www.church-poverty.org.uk/campaigns/livingwage](http://www.church-poverty.org.uk/campaigns/livingwage)

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The **Methodist Church**

# Low wage or living wage

## A battle for survival

**Give me neither poverty nor riches! Give me just enough to satisfy my needs.** Proverbs 30:8-9

Work is traditionally considered to be the best route to prosperity. However, it is increasingly evident that even if people work, they and their children are not necessarily free of poverty.

I work five nights a week but I still have to share a two- bedroom flat with five others and sleep on the floor. We're so scared of the bailiff coming in and taking away what little we have that we can't even open the door."  
A London Underground cleaner

**Find out more about the campaign for a Living Wage, one way to help working people out of poverty...**

It is astonishing that in a wealthy society like the UK, people who work full-time can still live close to the margin of subsistence.

This is called **in-work poverty**: people earn less than they need to ensure a decent standard of living. A significant contribution to this problem is low pay. To address the issue, campaigners and churches are calling for the Government and employers to provide a *living wage*.

### Why is a Minimum Wage not enough?

2009 marks the tenth anniversary of The **National Minimum Wage (NMW)**. NMW guarantees that all employers pay their employees a minimum rate set by the Government. Since 1 October 2008 this minimum rate has been **£5.73 an hour** for everyone over 22. NMW remains one of the Government's proudest achievements and it has improved the circumstances for many workers.

Despite this, individuals and families earning the minimum wage struggle to make ends meet. Some have re-labelled the Minimum Wage as the 'Poverty Wage' because it is not high enough for individuals to support themselves or their families. 57 % of children in poverty live in a household where someone works. Because of low wages people are forced to make impossible choices.



In an effort to reduce in-work poverty the Government has recently increased the minimum wage from £5.52 to £5.73. Critics point out that whilst the increase of 3.08% is welcome, it is still lower than inflation at 4.7%.

This means that workers on a minimum wage will actually see their **real incomes** falling. Therefore, despite an increase in salary, paying for the rising prices of food, energy, water, transport and travel will continue to be a struggle. The NMW protects workers from exploitative wages but fails to keep them out of poverty. It helps people to survive, but **life should be more than a constant battle for survival.**

Food and shelter keeps you alive, it doesn't make you live.  
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation Report -

### What is a Living Wage?

The idea of a living wage is based on a simple principle:

**Anyone working full-time should have an income they can live off.**

It is defined as the minimum level of pay and conditions that enable workers to have an adequate standard of living.

Calculations have shown that these standards cannot be met with the current minimum wage.

### How is Living Wage calculated?

Currently the Government defines the line between an acceptable and unacceptable

standard of living in terms of having an income less than 60 per cent of median income. Those who fall below this income level are considered to be poor. Measuring poverty in this way has been criticised for being arbitrary and for failing to convey any sense of what it means to live below the line, or whether living just above the line guarantees you a good quality life.

Recent research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation calculated the amount of money required for a '**socially acceptable standard of living**'. This is known as the **Minimum Income Standard (MIS)**. The report defines MIS in the following way:

**A minimum standard of living in Britain today includes, but is more than just, food, clothes and shelter. It is about having what you need in order to have the opportunities and choices necessary to participate in society.**

According to the report, all households should be able to afford food, clothes, accommodation, utilities, fuel, household goods, personal goods and services, transport and social and cultural activities.

To afford these a couple with children should earn at least **£370/week** and a pensioner **£201/week**. A single person working full time would need to earn at least £6.88 an hour. This is £1.15 more than the minimum wage.

Some people on the minimum wage have to choose whether to put food on the table or pay their bills.  
- United Reformed Church debate on living wage -

