



Notes to help you plan your resolutions and the one or two priorities that will become part of your Way of Living.

- ◇ Your response to the most needy at home and abroad
- ◇ Could you engage in campaigning for change?



CHRISTMAS

God with us, meeting human need, giving hope

The traditional image of the crib, on our Christmas cards and in our carols, is a genuine communication of Christian faith.

The Virgin Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, the Magi, and the joy of the angels at the birth of the Christ child are an intrinsic part of Christmas.

But the 21st century has a new image to add; the lifeless body of Aylan Kurdi, a Syrian toddler and a refugee, washed up on a Turkish beach in 2015.

This image reminds us of the extent of fragility and pain that Jesus Christ shares in being God and man. It reminds us of people for whom there is still no room at the Inn.

Your Christian Rule of Life cannot encompass the whole of the misery of the Middle East and the refugee crisis, even though it has spread to northern Europe, and we have done less than some others to respond.

But you are not alone. You are part of the Church, the extension of the body of Jesus Christ on earth, in time and place. (Col 1.18). And your *Way of Living* can include a commitment to respond to one of the many ways in which human need shows itself to us today.

One of the important characteristics of the Christian faith is that it is a very materialistic religion. God is at once both the unknowable source of all life, and the child of Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit.

As St John puts it, “Something that has existed since the beginning...the Word of life—that is our theme. That life was made visible” (1 John 1.1).

Jesus asks us to meet the human (material) need of the poorest: when you do it for them, “you do it for me”, he says (Matt. 25.40). His good news is not the promise of a hand-out; it is the certainty of a handle on hope and transformation.

Christians, and other people of goodwill, are engaged across the world in meeting human need and giving hope. Your contribution can be significant, in person, by email or letter, giving time, money, or encouragement.

Your *Way of Living* should include a commitment, in some way that is appropriate to your circumstances, to meeting human need and giving hope.

Do not be burdened by the sum of all the pain in the world: that is part of God’s redemptive work. But do be certain that you can make a difference.

1. *What are the areas of material need in your local community? What opportunity is there for volunteers to help meet those needs?*

Many churches are already connected with food banks. There is also the diocesan network of FSW that has over a century of experience of supporting vulnerable families. The Mothers Union is a national and international organisation that supports families and young people, as does The Children’s Society.

2. *How do you respond to people who are sleeping on the street and who ask you for money?*

There are different ways of dealing with this but above all it is important for our response to register that every human being is made in the image of God and bears the likeness of Jesus Christ.

Giving money is not always showing kindness. Supporting those who provide expert material, emotional and practical help for the homeless is also a good response to this need. Stonepillow, Worthing Churches Homeless Project, YMCA, Snowflake Nightshelter, are all local projects that Christians are committed to.

3. *How do you respond to the needs of the poor and dispossessed across the world?*

We have diocesan links with parts of the world where there is severe poverty: our diocesan link with the Province of West Africa, and with Northern Kenya; our links with the Church in Syria; pilgrimage links with Christians in Palestinian territories.

There are also international charities that bring aid and resources and are explicitly Christian: Tear Fund, Christian Aid, Church Missionary Society (CMS), and United Society Partners in the Gospel (USPG).

NB Details of these and other organisations are available from the Diocesan website.