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CHURCH LEADERS SPEAK OUT ON DEBT IN SOCIETY

At 1pm on Wednesday 25th February 2009, Church Leaders from across West Yorkshire will come together to make a public statement on debt in society. The statement, ***'Forgive us our debts and we also have forgiven our debtors'***, will be made from Oxford Place Methodist Centre, Oxford Place, Leeds, LS1 3AX. Members of the press are welcome to attend.

Many churches across the county are engaged in supporting the victims of unemployment, especially those who are struggling with debt.

Emphasising the Christian responsibility for generosity, the Church Leaders focus on three issues:

- **The Christian tradition of compassion and justice for people in need**
 - *vulnerable people need protection from loan sharks and others who would exploit them; the work of Credit Unions is commended and encouraged*
- **Local churches, working in partnership, can be centres of support for people in debt**
 - *Local churches are encouraged to work alongside other agencies to become centres of financial advice and practical care..*
- **The need for policies that promote a sustainable future in government, banking, business and individuals**
 - *We must adjust to a sustainable rate of consumption, both for our economic survival and for the sake of the planet*

The full text of the statement is attached, also a paper of supporting information. The statement is available for immediate use.

For further details, contact the above address, phone **0113 261 8053**, or email clivebarrett@wyec.co.uk *[Continued]*

In her introduction to the Leeds event, Pastor Gloria Hanley, Chair of WYEC, will say:

Two thousand years ago, Jesus spoke of finding freedom from debt. Today, with rising unemployment, many people in our communities have financial worries. The Churches are concerned for all people in need, and especially for people in debt. We support the expansion of Credit Unions, and call on Christian churches across West Yorkshire to explore practical ways of showing compassion and support to people in need. As Jesus said, 'Whatever you did for the least of one of these sisters and brothers of mine, you did for me'.

The statement is endorsed by

- the Anglican bishops of Wakefield, Bradford, and Ripon & Leeds,
- the Catholic Bishop of Leeds,
- the Chairs of the Leeds and West Yorkshire Methodist Districts,
- the Moderator of the Yorkshire Synod of the United Reformed Church,
- the Baptist Regional Minister,
- the Chair of the Yorkshire Moravian District,
- the Divisional Commander of the Salvation Army,
- the Bishop of the Lutheran Church in Great Britain,
- the Chair of the West Yorkshire African Caribbean Council of Churches,
- and a representative of the Society of Friends.

Most of the above will be present at the launch and will be available for photographs, interviews, quotes.

For further details of the launch, how to get to Oxford Place Methodist Centre, the statement, the supporting material, and to arrange interviews with church leaders at or outside of the launch,

please **telephone 0113 2618053**

or **email clivebarrett@wyec.co.uk**



West Yorkshire Church Leaders issuing a public statement.

West Yorkshire Ecumenical Council is a registered charity, no. 1108691.