



MAKING A DIFFERENCE

10 years of Acts 435



INTRODUCTION

from our Executive Director



I hope you enjoy this booklet celebrating ten of our partners, and ten stories of lives helped through the work of Acts 435. For me it has been an absolute privilege to be involved in a charity that over the past decade has made a difference in the lives of over 20,000 people whilst providing hundreds of donors with the opportunity to give directly to meet a need. We have been able to resource over 350 local churches and charities in the incredible work they do and hope many more will get involved as a result of reading the stories featured here.

Jenny Herrera

ACTS
435

anyone who ha

WELCOME



Congratulations Acts 435 on reaching your 10th anniversary! Acts 435 is an incredibly simple way to make a difference in the lives of people in poverty in the UK. I am delighted that churches have partnered with the charity. We have all seen what a difference direct giving to a person in need has made for some of the most vulnerable people in our society. I remember in the early days of the charity the story of a grandmother, featured in this booklet, not using the heating in her flat in winter so she could afford to visit her grandchildren at Christmas. A small gift from Acts 435 made a big difference

I hope that this booklet of amazing and moving stories will inspire more people to become Advocates and donors; stepping into situations where there seems to be no hope and shining the love of Jesus Christ into the darkness. May Acts 435 go from strength to strength.

+ Sentamu Ebor

HOW IT WORKS



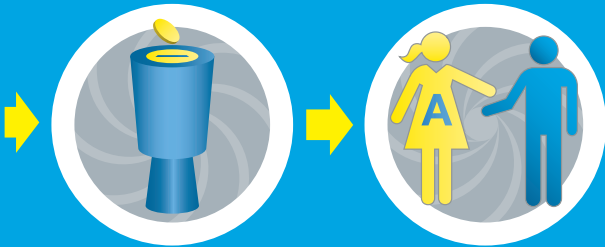
A local church or charity appoints a representative called “The Advocate”.



The Advocate posts requests for help on the Acts 435 website on behalf of local people in need.



Acts 435 is a website that directly links those wanting to give with those needing their help.



Acts 435 donors read the applicants' stories and give through the website.

The Advocate contacts the applicant to give them the item so desperately needed.

100% of what is donated via Acts 435 goes directly to those in need.

“

Photo: Jaconelli Gerardo



I saw the donor demand in charity-giving for direct efficient ways to help people, and the ready-made branch network of churches, and felt they could be easily connected by a website.

The vision was to run it on a shoestring and see it become fully self-sustaining on Gift Aid.

Convincing someone to embrace my idea and make it a reality was not so easy. I wanted the church to take the credit and am grateful that become possible when John and Margaret Sentamu came to tea and said 'Yes'.

Julian Richer, founder

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10 STORIES



Acts 435 has helped over 20,000 individuals, couples and families with essential items that help them make a fresh start, lift the burden of debt or pull them back from a crisis situation, all making such a difference to their wellbeing.

Acts 435 Advocates are able to send thank you messages from individual beneficiaries to the donors who supported that request. This is key to direct giving.

Here we profile ten stories of how a small gift has made a big difference.

MAKING THE END BEARABLE

Chris, in his early 70s, was diagnosed with cancer and started undergoing chemotherapy. His wife was continuing to work but life was understandably very stressful for them both. When the gas cooker broke, it was the final straw.

Acts 435 stepped in to cover the cost of delivering and fitting a new cooker that had been sourced from another charity. The family were so relieved in such a difficult time.

A few months later the local Advocate learned that the hospital had stopped the chemotherapy with the sad news that the cancer was terminal. His daughter was very concerned that Chris would spend his last few months battling depression and isolation because he was no longer able to drive. She knew a mobility scooter would make a big difference but they simply could not afford such a luxury. Acts 435 was able to help with a special Larger Gift of £400.

Sadly Chris has now passed away, but not before he was able to make the most of the scooter visiting friends and getting around town.



"I cannot thank you all enough for this very kind donation so I could get a mobility scooter. Now I have some independence and can get out and about and it will make life so much different for me - it's wonderful."

POTENTIAL LIFE-SAVER

Eileen had fled a violent marriage and had ended up in a financial situation where she was barely able to meet essential expenses.



She suffered a series of strokes and was left disabled with serious memory impairment. She had grandchildren in Bradford but was unable to afford the travel to see them or buy gifts for them at Christmas, which she was desperate to do while she was still able to. Acts 435 donors stepped in to help.

When the Advocate went to give her the money, she found her shivering in a freezing cold house. In order to save money to try and visit her grandchildren, she had turned off her heating. Acts 435 funds meant that she could warm her freezing flat, so crucial for her health, and go and visit her family. In such conditions, just £85 may have saved a hospital visit or even her life because she looked terribly ill and cold when the church Advocate saw her.

TANDEM BIKE BRINGS FREEDOM

A lady registered deafblind was desperate to resume riding a bike but needed help to make that possible. She had a guide dog, Lottie, but loved the freedom of going out on a bike.



She had two cyclists ready to lead her but no funds to purchase a second hand tandem, or have two bikes modified to meet her need. When Acts 435 donors supplied the money needed, she had this to say:

"I am registered deafblind and have a guide dog, and a guide runner.

But I am dependent on them in many ways, so to have some freedom like biking, it's truly amazing!

I am free when we bike, my 'pilot' is amazing and I feel as if I have broken free from my cane and my dog. Thank you, there aren't any words to explain the feeling of being back on a bike."

LADY IN A VAN

When C came to Selby Foodbank she was homeless and living in a van. She had previously shared a rented house but the owner wanted it back for their family.



Through Acts 435 the Foodbank asked for donations that would purchase basic camping equipment - a gas stove, a cool box, a water carrier, cooking and eating utensils and an inverter for her van so she could use a plug-in kettle. It was at this exact point that C started to take control of her life again.

She was receiving a very minimal amount from the Job Centre, literally a few pounds a week. She started to apply for full-time jobs. One Thursday she received a call for an interview on the Friday for a stable yard manager job, the perfect job for her, complete with housing - and got the job!

There would normally have been so many things stopping this lady from getting out of her situation. For once, things converged in C's favour.

HOLIDAY MAGIC

Early in August 2015 a couple gave the full £100 to meet a request for travel for a lady to take her two granddaughters camping. They then contacted Acts 435 to offer a holiday cottage they owned in Scotland for the family to go to from the 15th August (they had had a cancellation).



Stock library image

That same day contact was made with the lady and the extremely generous offer accepted. They made the journey up to Scotland and had the most amazing time, including pony-trekking. As the youngest granddaughter phrased it (5 years old and her first ever holiday):

“Nana, I had an awesomely fantastical time!”

The girls' mother had recurring alcohol and drug dependency problems and the grandmother was seeking custody. The girls were in desperate need of a carefree break and this was an incredible gift at a very tough time.

THE 8 MILE WALK

Robbie was supported by West Auckland Vineyard Church and the Advocates were invited by Acts 435 to speak to a group of donors about how Acts 435 makes a difference. Robbie was determined to get a thank you letter to the Advocates in time:



"A week ago I was offered help through Acts 435 towards my path of regaining employment. This is a simple message to say thank you for making something possible which all government and private agencies and schemes have failed to be able to assist with.

In order to significantly increase my employment prospects I need to pass the UK driving tests, theory and practical. But the cost of taking these tests is beyond my means while I am unemployed.

Today I will walk 4 miles to deliver this letter to Ann, which I want to do so she has it by Monday. Then I will walk the same distance back. I cannot afford the bus fare. Yet this is a journey made from the heart to say thank you to you all for making a difference. God bless you."

STRANGERS COMING TOGETHER

In February 2019 the Acts 435 team received an urgent request which they promoted on Facebook and Twitter which read:

S is a 29-year-old woman who is attempting to flee a situation of domestic violence. She is pregnant and still living in her ex-partner's house although, due to police involvement, he is not supposed to be alone with her in the house. S is desperate to move out and move closer to family but, because of her circumstances, she cannot afford to do so. She needs to make a fresh start and make a safe home for herself and her baby.



This urgent request to help a young mum move away from a domestic violence situation was met by eight different people. The beauty of eight complete strangers coming together to help someone they've never met, all within a matter of hours, was so heart-warming for the Acts 435 team to witness. It was also a wonderful demonstration of how effective and quick Acts 435 can be.

WHEN DISASTER STRIKES

On Boxing Day 2015 Yorkshire was hit by huge amounts of rain resulting in flooding in York, where Acts 435 is based, and across the region. Particularly badly hit were Hebden Bridge and neighbouring towns in Calderdale.



Andrew, Acts 435 Advocate at Halifax charity Noah's Ark, headed down to the affected areas and the hubs set up to support victims, to help in any way he could. Once there, seeing the need, he suddenly realised that this was an excellent fit for Acts 435. Whilst generic funds had been made available for all

victims, however poor or wealthy they were, some of the most vulnerable needed additional support.

Take 92 year old Barbara, in a sheltered housing complex in the village of Mytholmroyd. All the ground floor flats of the complex were flooded. She was found in a state of shock sitting in her armchair with water in the property already over 6" deep.

Acts 435 helped 150 people affected by the flooding, mostly to replace white goods.



Donors responded to an opportunity to bless a vulnerable man who got his first home for 40 years. They raised the funds for art materials to enable him to flourish after all those years of being homeless. This is one of his paintings.

RESOURCEFUL AND RESILIENT

Mark, a bricklayer in his 50s, found himself homeless after tennis elbow prevented him working for 3 months and he was given notice on his flat. Thanks to the local Acts 435 Advocate, funds were raised to equip him with a tent, gas camping stove and a bike.

Mark survived in his tent for nearly a year. It had given him some flexibility and at one point he moved to a project in Hampshire, found somewhere to pitch his tent, near the local swimming pool where he could get some exercise, get a shower, and then go and do his bricklaying.



Eventually Mark was sorted with a flat. The council helped with the deposit but all his spare money had gone on admin fees, rent up front and a mattress to sleep on. Mark had some basic furniture in storage, and Acts 435 came to the rescue again by providing the funds to release it.

Acts 435 was a crucial hand-up alongside Mark's own determination to survive against the odds. Mark said "the support had been essential in turning life round for me".

ACTS IN ACTION

One church-member sat in church and listened to a sermon on Acts 3:1-10, about the crippled man who received much more than he asked for - he asked for money but was healed. In their own words:



"I had a similar experience when I sought help through Acts 435. I approached the Advocates for help following the failure of my fridge freezer. I could not afford the full cost of a replacement myself, but without it I was really struggling to look after my large family.

The money I needed was quickly raised through Acts 435. However, owing to a carrier error, there was a delay with the delivery of my new fridge freezer. During the delay my kitchen developed a serious leak which necessitated the fitment of a new kitchen. My housing association promptly arranged this, so not only was I blessed with a new fridge freezer, but also with a new kitchen as well - and the carrier firm gave me a complementary drinks cooler too!

I feel I have been miraculously blessed with much more than I expected. Just like the story in Acts 3 in fact."



10



PARTNERS

Acts 435 partners are local churches and charities who provide a physical, face-to-face meeting point to connect with those in need and post their needs on the Acts 435 website.

Each church or charity appoints an Advocate to do this work. Here we profile how ten of our partners are using Acts 435 in their context.

WEST AUCKLAND VINEYARD CHURCH

This church in County Durham, North-East England, was well aware of the needs in the local community, where the rate of unemployment is much higher than the national average.

The team of Advocates witnessed how something unexpected could so easily tip people into crisis. They opened a community coffee shop in 2012, believing the project was God's vision for their village and surrounding area. God led them to start a food bank and as they got alongside people they soon realised there were other basic needs that could be met. Hearing about Acts 435 from a church in a neighbouring town they spent some time learning how it worked and got involved in 2013. In 6 years they have helped over 200 people, including Robbie, featured on page 16.



“Acts 435 makes a real difference to the lives of many and we are always amazed by how quickly grants come through and the generosity of the donors.”

Acts 435 Advocates Sara Evans,
Hazel Charlton and Ann Brown

HOLY TRINITY AND ST. MATTHIAS CHURCH, TULSE HILL

When parishioner Irene Rothwell renewed contact with her former vicar, Revd John Sentamu, on becoming her church's Christians Against Poverty centre manager, she was invited to consider getting involved in Acts 435.

Whilst Acts 435 is a great resource for CAP clients struggling financially as they try and repay their debts, Irene felt it was clear from the beginning that it would not just be for CAP clients. The church was already working closely with a local charity that was supporting victims of domestic abuse, and Acts 435 enabled them to do more for women who had fled difficult situations and were left with nothing. Food, furniture, even some cutlery to eat with, have been common requests.



“During just three years as an Advocate in a London church, I posted 373 requests for help and our church received a staggering £36,725 to bless people in our community, making such a difference.”

Acts 435 Advocate Irene Rothwell

CLECKHEATON CHURCHES TOGETHER

'Where there's a will, there's a way' would sum up Advocate Alan Littlewood's determination to set up Acts 435 in the small town of Cleckheaton in West Yorkshire.

He signed up as an Advocate in 2014, found a team and set to work sending information about Acts 435 to local schools, doctor's surgeries and even setting up a dedicated phone line ...but it never rang. During three seemingly fruitless years Alan conversed with many people in support services and in October 2017 a debt advisor from Kirklees Council got in touch looking for help for someone who had been without a cooker for two years. The need was met and word started to spread. In 2018 alone they helped 142 people, making a real difference in Cleckheaton and surrounding towns.



"We have been astonished to see the level of need hiding behind doors in our community and it is a privilege to be able to step in and meet some of these needs."

Acts 435 Advocate Alan Littlewood

ALL SAINTS HIGHERTOWN, TRURO

When Reverend Jeremy Putnam came to Truro in Cornwall his wife observed the abundant need in the city, found Acts 435, and effectively catapulted All Saints into being a huge resource for people in need throughout the county.

The team of Advocates work alongside the foodbank at the church, as well as through an organisation called Inclusion Cornwall, which acts as a point of contact for many agencies all over Cornwall. All Saints even secured funding from the Church Urban Fund to pay an administrator to support the burgeoning work. All Saints could never have funded such outreach themselves.



“We are so uplifted by people’s responses when we fulfil their requests. Acts 435 is easy to do and not time consuming and enables us to effectively help those in need.”

Acts 435 Advocates Jean Cooke and Avril Bond

REACH COMMUNITY PROJECTS, HAVERHILL

Reach Community Projects is a charity providing a variety of services including a foodbank, money and debt advice service and drop-in. They are based on an estate in Haverhill, Suffolk, where there is high poverty and unemployment.

Reach was one of the first non-Yorkshire partners to get involved with Acts 435 after hearing about it through Christians Against Poverty. Without needing a visit they understood the principles, signed up and started blessing people in their community through it. This led to them being the obvious choice to be filmed for Songs of Praise when Acts 435 was featured in 2012.



“Whether it’s chef whites for a man starting a much-needed job, a bed for a gentleman with severe complicated medical conditions or even a sensory shed for a girl with autism, Acts 435 has shown people that someone cared enough to help them.”

Acts 435 Advocate Ann Allen

VINEYARD COMPASSION CHURCH, COLERAINE

Vineyard Compassion is a charity, birthed out of Causeway Coast Vineyard church, that brings together an established range of community based projects that offer a holistic approach to tackling poverty and its underlying root causes.

All of their projects may be accessed via the Open Door, a welcoming drop-in environment which is the gateway to all the support that Vineyard Compassion offers. Their relaxed café style environment helps put people at ease as they tell their story, identify their need and access a range of support projects. Within these sessions people can receive emergency food, clothing or essential household items. Over a cup of coffee with a befriender, they can receive support that is tailored to their unique needs. This has been an excellent place to utilise Acts 435.



“Hope is being restored to people through a simple act and at times a life changing solution.”

Acts 435 Advocate Jayne McAfee

CHRIST CHURCH UPPER ARMLEY

Advocate Joanne Brophy heard about Acts 435 through her Parochial Church Council, who had been invited to run a Diocese of Leeds pilot. She was approached by her church to take on the role.

The church is in a deprived part of Leeds. Involved in 'messy church', the toddler group and doing a lot of the social media for the parish, Jo already had an excellent platform to begin her role as an Advocate. She began utilising Acts 435 through the ministries that she was involved in but also approached her local school as well as receiving enquiries from organisations as diverse as the Restorative Justice system and Engage Leeds, working with local housing officers.



“When you give someone the item or money they can be overwhelmed – it’s not the amount of money, it’s the fact someone else would do this for them. The small amounts of money are life-changing for them.”

Acts 435 Advocate Jo Brophy

EAST CLEVELAND BAPTIST CHURCH

Ruth Fox stepped up to do something about the poverty and isolation she saw in her community of Redcar, setting up a charity called Footprints in the Community.

Her church, East Cleveland Baptist Church, got involved in Acts 435 through its work with Christians Against Poverty and when the CAP Advocate stepped down, Ruth stepped up. She saw the potential not just through her church, but through her charity which runs a foodbank, a community café, a dementia support group, Street Angels and much more. Ruth is in a great position to be the point of contact for Acts 435 requests across her local area.



“I love being able to play a small part in helping fund specific items for people in need. It gives so many opportunities to share God’s love!”

Acts 435 Advocate Ruth Fox

OPEN DOOR CHURCH, PETERBOROUGH

Open Door, with a congregation of 55 people, many from very deprived backgrounds, is a prime example of a church that does not have extra cash to help individuals with their specific need. Cue Acts 435!

This is a church that makes extraordinarily good use of its drop-in café/community shop. A café in the morning on Tuesdays, it swiftly turns into a food distribution centre after lunch. They await weekly delivery from the central warehouse which is then ingeniously packed into a tiny cupboard ready to distribute later in the week. It is a buzzing hive of activity, through which they have helped over 300 people, with a cooker, car tax, gas, electricity and much more.



“Acts 435 helped me build a deeper relationship with one applicant living in squalor and darkness until Acts 435 provided the cash to turn his gas and electricity back on. We could show how much we cared.”

Acts 435 Advocates Dave Key, Maggie Parkes and Ken Pullen.

IVY CHURCH, MANCHESTER

Ivy Church runs a Christians Against Poverty debt centre and their Acts 435 ministry sits with debt centre manager Gail Jackson who connects with people in poverty in South Manchester.

She most frequently posts requests for the £90 debt relief order fee which lifts the heavy burden of debt from her grateful clients. She has appreciated the variety of situations where she has been able to help people through Acts 435 including arranging contact visits for a CAP client on a very tight budget who was struggling to afford to see her daughter.



“£90 doesn’t sound like much but for people on a very tight budget it could take months or even years to save it. It is wonderful to see people go ‘debt free’ and have a fresh start due to the generosity of others.”

Acts 435 Advocate Gail Jackson

10 MILESTONES

1

10/2009

Website and pilot launched in York Diocese



2

07/2010

Formal launch of Acts 435 nationally

3

08/2012

100 Advocates partnering with Acts 435

4

06/2015

Expanding the team as the charity's operations increased



5

09/2016
Fully self-sustaining

6

06/2017
£1,000,000 given
directly to people
in UK poverty

7

03/2018
Stewardship's #40acts campaign
£18,190 received in a single day

8

11/2018
Award for Best
Replicable Project
at Christian Funders'
Forum Awards



9

10/2019
20,000th request

10

04/2020
10 year Anniversary



GET INVOLVED

Giving

www.acts435.org.uk/give

Advocacy

www.acts435.org.uk/join

Spreading the word

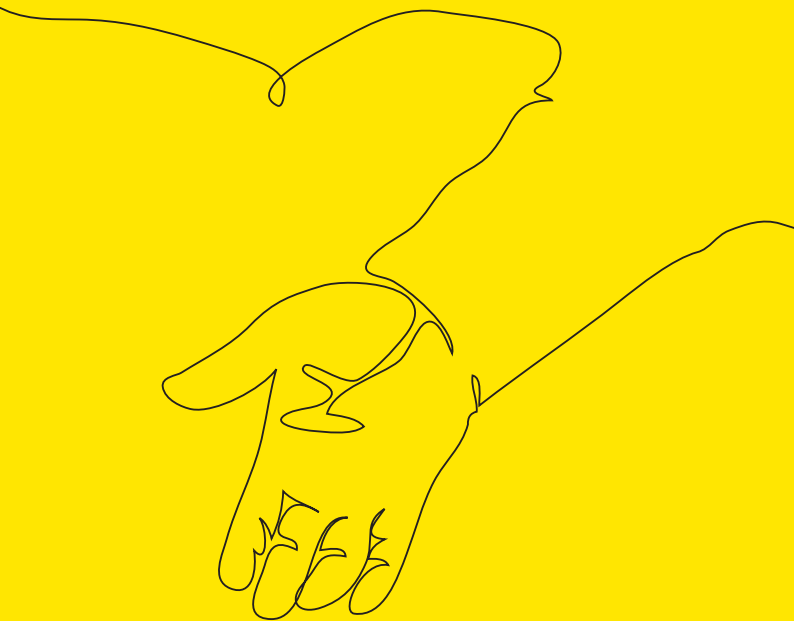
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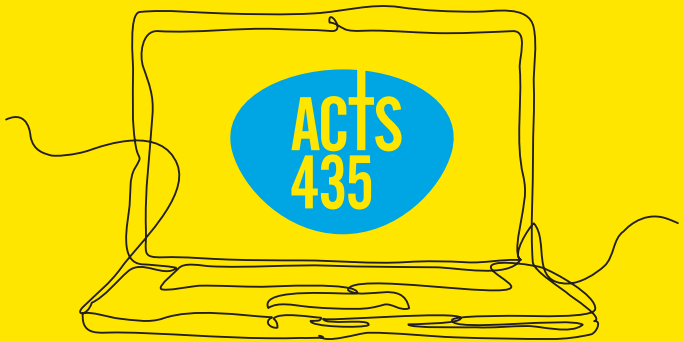
Praying

Email admin@acts435.org.uk to receive our monthly prayer bulletin

Acts 435 wishes to thank Bluemantle Creative for designing the booklet and Persula Foundation for generously funding it.



**A small gift can make
a big difference**



acts435.org.uk