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To churchgoers in the West Midlands:

1. When we worked together on a Manifesto for the General Election in 2015 it became clear that many in the churches want to engage with public and political issues (including `Immigration` for example). What follows is meant to help and encourage you to go a step further in order to hold our MPs and Government to account (and engage with major issues facing us all today.)

2. We suggest that we begin by taking three of the issues you raised:

- CLIMATE CHANGE
- POVERTY
- IMMIGRATION

All three are closely linked to one another: Climate Change for example not only threatens all our lives but will hit poorer countries and people, with little to defend themselves, the hardest; and poverty along with conflict is one of the biggest reasons why people migrate in search of a better life.

3. We would like you to tell us stories about some of your recent encounters with any or all of these issues, either directly or through people you know – personal experiences of what you know has been happening. Telling these stories might well start you thinking about why these things happen and what you would like to do about them. If so, we would like to hear about that as well.

4. Though we know of many who have found storytelling valuable and revealing, it might be a new – even a strange - idea to some of you. We do encourage you to have a go but if you are really not sure then help may be available. Speak to Revd Rachel Wood (rachelwsdistrict@aol.com)



5.

Climate Change
brings to mind stories about the weather, wind farms, solar panels, waste, recycling, species, sustainability, drought, increasing poverty, migrants, climate justice, the Greens, conservation, etc

Poverty
brings to mind stories about the cost of living, inequality, food banks, people on benefits, migrants and the search for a better life, the living wage, low wages, charity shops, tax avoidance, etc

Immigration
brings to mind stories about foreign and migrant works, borders, resentment, hospitality, NHS, housing, refugees, asylum seekers, conflict, economic migrants, racism, multiculturalism, schools, jobs, wages, overseas aid, etc

6. You may like:

- to send us your stories personally and individually
- to use church or house meetings you were going to hold in any case and make storytelling about these issues the main agenda
- to arrange special meetings for storytelling in a house or at church or in a cafe or pub over a drink or mug of tea.

We all have stories to tell.

7. You can send us your stories:

- by writing and posting them to The District Office, Beckminster Methodist Church, Birches Barn Road, Wolverhampton, WV3 7BQ.
- by email wmjpit@wsmethodist.org.uk
- by posting them on our story telling Facebook page – www.facebook.com/WMJPIIT

Please let us have them by the end of January 2016.

8. What will happen next?

When we've received your stories, and we hope there will be a lot of them, we shall of course read them (!) and get some help with sorting them out to see what they are telling us. We will then come back to you with the findings, above all about what they suggest we should do next as churchgoers.

In all of this we are working with you to foster the kind of society that is a little more like the Kingdom Jesus proclaimed, worked and died for, marked by the qualities of compassion, caring, fairness, justice, honest, equality, respect and tolerance you highlighted in the Manifesto.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "John Howard". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Revd John Howard
On Behalf of West Midlands Joint Public Issues Team.

October 2015