

Press Release – immediate release

EVEN THE PASTOR'S IN DEBT! – NEW SERVICE LAUNCHED TO HELP CHURCH LEADERS

IT'S hard enough asking for help with matters of personal finance but when you're supposed to be a leading example, it can be near impossible.

Sadly, many church leaders who suffer with personal finance problems, do so in silence. That is why two leading Christian charities have joined forces to launch a specialised service aimed at church leaders to encourage those experiencing spiralling personal debts to address the issues they are facing.

Christians Against Poverty and Stewardship have worked together to set up 'CAP Money Ministers'; a free, non-judgemental and - crucially - confidential telephone service for senior church leaders to find a way forward.

CAP's Chief Executive Matt Barlow explained:

"We know there is a problem because we already have church leaders coming to us as clients. They are often paid very little or their pay can fluctuate. **Often there are unfair expectations placed upon our church leaders and admitting any vulnerability can be so hard.**

Ideally, struggling church leaders would attend a CAP Money course at their local church or visit one of our debt help centres. However, we know the reality is they would most likely feel very exposed if they could get there at all with the number of midweek meetings expected of them."

This new initiative weaves the two key strands of Christians Against Poverty's award winning work into one, discreet, easy to access, phone-based service. This blend of materials from their money education course "CAP Money" alongside the practical support of their debt counselling, currently offered through 190 church-based centres around the UK, is already releasing hundreds of people each year from debt.

CAP and Stewardship's ambition for CAP Money Ministers is to see senior church leaders encouraged to follow suit; sharing their anxieties, however bad, with a dedicated member of CAP's debt counselling team.

One church pastor got in touch after a series of unexpected expenses gave him a growing level of debt which left him taking out more credit to pay for essentials. He said: "Being in debt is a massive taboo subject especially for a church leader – who can you confide in? You worry that your ministry will be affected if people in your church learn of your struggle.

The great thing that CAP did for us was to give us hope: hope that we could sort out the debt, hope that it wouldn't last forever. We have also found that we are better equipped to help people in the church who have financial problems – we truly can say: 'We've been there – we know how you feel'.

Stewardship's Chief Executive, Michael O'Neill, said it was conversations with ministers that had prompted the organisation to take action. He said:

“We are passionate about seeing the UK Church generously resourced. However, we often hear from church leaders who lack confidence in their own finances and in their ability to speak confidently about money with others. That’s why we are so thrilled to be partnering with CAP to launch CAP Money Ministers; a service which we hope will **release hundreds of church leaders from financial worry and, in doing so, free them to do the same for their congregations.**”

- ✦ Pastors, Ministers and other Senior Church leaders wanting to access CAP Money Ministers should call 01274 760780 or find out more at www.capmoney.org/ministers
- ✦ Everyone else should visit www.capdebthelp.org or call 0800 328 0006 for more information.

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Notes for journalists:

About Christians Against Poverty

Christians Against Poverty is a home-grown debt counselling charity which is determined to reduce poverty in the UK caused by debt. It partners its financial expertise with the care of the local church to offer free debt help and a solution to people through 190 centres. The fast-growing charity intends to have a debt-counselling CAP centre in 500 towns and cities across the UK by around 2015. For more about CAP see www.capuk.org

About Stewardship

Stewardship is the leading Christian provider of tax-effective giving services and exists to support a generous community of Christians giving over £50m each year. By providing practical tools and inspirational resources Stewardship strives to encourage individuals in their pursuit of generous living and Godly giving. For more about Stewardship see www.stewardship.org.uk

Contacts

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