

Resource for encouraging church engagement with Credit Unions

Introduction

Consider Justin Welby's challenge and other thoughts

Via www.churchofengland.org/creditunions,

www.cuf.org.uk/credit-unions, and www.theology-centre.org.uk

Context

Share information about your/a local credit union (e.g.

www.wfccu.org) (and for clergy et al the emerging Churches'

Mutual Credit Union - www.cmcu.org.uk)

Bible reflection

In groups of three or four:

1) READ THE TEXT TOGETHER OUT LOUD

(one person taking one verse at a time)

Nehemiah Chapter 5:1-10

⁵ Now the men and their wives raised a great outcry against their fellow Jews. ² Some were saying, "We and our sons and daughters are numerous; in order for us to eat and stay alive, we must get grain."

³ Others were saying, "We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards and our homes to get grain during the famine."

⁴ Still others were saying, "We have had to borrow money to pay the king's tax on our fields and vineyards. ⁵ Although we are of the same flesh and blood as our fellow Jews and though our children are as good as theirs, yet we have to subject our sons and daughters to slavery. Some of our daughters have already been enslaved, but we are powerless, because our fields and our vineyards belong to others."

⁶ When I heard their outcry and these charges, I was very angry. ⁷ I pondered them in my mind and then accused the nobles and officials. I told them, "You are charging your own

people interest!” So I called together a large meeting to deal with them ⁸ and said: “As far as possible, we have bought back our fellow Jews who were sold to the Gentiles. Now you are selling your own people, only for them to be sold back to us!” They kept quiet, because they could find nothing to say.

⁹ So I continued, “What you are doing is not right. Shouldn’t you walk in the fear of our God to avoid the reproach of our Gentile enemies? ¹⁰ I and my brothers and my men are also lending the people money and grain. But let us stop charging interest! ¹¹ Give back to them immediately their fields, vineyards, olive groves and houses, and also the interest you are charging them—one percent of the money, grain, new wine and olive oil.”

¹² “We will give it back,” they said. “And we will not demand anything more from them. We will do as you say.”

Then I summoned the priests and made the nobles and officials take an oath to do what they had promised. ¹³ I also shook out the folds of my robe and said, “In this way may God shake out of their house and possessions anyone who does not keep this promise. So may such a person be shaken out and emptied!”

At this the whole assembly said, “Amen,” and praised the LORD. And the people did as they had promised.

2) Questions for discussion

- 1) Nehemiah’s first action is to listen to the people. Elsewhere in the book of Nehemiah (e.g. Chapter 1) we see the importance of prayer in Nehemiah’s attempts to rebuild the City. How can we ensure that any action we might want to take today is rooted in deep listening to God and to our neighbours?
- 2) Do the complaints of the people in Nehemiah’s time have any resonances today in relation to credit unions?
- 3) How does Nehemiah respond to the needs that he hears? How might this be a model for us today?

Learning

Capture key points from bringing your awareness of credit unions into conversation with the Bible reflection

Action

What next?

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