

ECONOMY & EMPLOYMENT

INTRODUCTION

The **"Spiritual Stronghold"** for **April 2014** is **"Economy & Employment"** and we invite Churches throughout Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin to make this a focus for **corporate prayer** during services on **Sunday 6th April 2014**.

Below you will also find some **"Points to Ponder"** with additional information and topics for which to pray plus details of **resources** that you may wish to research.

Over the past few years our country has been going through an unprecedented period of austerity. We've experienced the banking crash; financial instability; the impacts of global recession - all of which have contributed to company failures, small business and individual bankruptcies, redundancies, lowering standards of living, small or even nil wage increases whilst prices rise, house repossessions and greater pressures on families with low - or no - incomes. The cumulative effect for many has been devastating for many.

This month we want to pray for our local economy and for employment throughout the county.

Somewhere in the UK has to have the lowest unemployment rates and the best economic conditions - why not here in Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin?

CORPORATE PRAYER

"Heavenly Father

We thank you that we see some glimmers of hope in our economic and employment situation; however as a nation we remain in serious debt. There is a cost of living crisis caused by a succession of benefits and tax credits cuts which have left many people struggling to make ends meet and finding employment is still a major issue within the UK especially amongst the young.

We pray:

- ***That those serving in Government are wise in their planning with our finances and compassionate and generous to those in need***
- ***That cuts being made will be tempered with humanity and care***
- ***That the culture of Corporate greed within the banking sector will be broken and replaced by a system that will safeguard all***
- ***For ethical money lending agencies such as the Credit Unions and organizations such as Christians Against Poverty who advise and help those in debt***
- ***For those who are desperate and looking for work, that You will guide them into the right job***
- ***For the young people in Shropshire and the potential they hold to contribute towards positive change in the future***
- ***That Shropshire will become a centre for investment and stability and return one of the strongest regional economies with one of the lowest unemployment figures in the UK .***

We pray that you give the Churches wisdom and guidance in ways to help and support those affected by the current economic situation and ask that the outreach of the Christian community will be seen as inspirational and that many lives will be touched and changed positively by the kindness of God in action as a result.

We ask all this in Jesus' name and for His glory , Amen."

COLOSSIANS 3:23-24 (NEW LIVING TRANSLATION)

"Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and that the Master you are serving is Christ."

SHROPSHIRE

Shropshire Hope 2014

POINTS TO PONDER

The General Economy (Sources: Bank of England, Wikipedia, and HM Treasury)

- ◆ At the end of the December 2013, public sector net debt in the UK was £1,254.3 billion or 75.7% of GDP.
- ◆ The annual cost of servicing the public debt amounts to around £43bn, or roughly 3% of GDP. This is roughly the same size as the British defence budget. It is forecast to rise to 96% of total GDP in 2013, further rising to 99% of GDP in 2014.
- ◆ Due to the Government's significant budget deficit, the national debt is increasing by approximately £121 billion per annum, or around £2.3 billion each week.
- ◆ Government borrowing in 2014/15 is expected to be £96bn - 38% higher than what was forecast in 2010.
- ◆ On 23 February 2013 Moody's downgraded UK credit rating from AAA to Aa1.
- ◆ UK household debt has never been higher and individuals now owe a total of £1.4 Trillion. This means on average each adult owes £28,489 including any home loans.
- ◆ The Chancellor has announced proposals for a further £25 billion in Public spending cuts in 2014; 1.3 million jobs could be affected.

Employment

- ◆ Whilst UK unemployment, at 2.39 million, is falling to the lowest level since the start of the current recession in 2008 (the deepest since the war) the figures for young people are worrying with 440,000 young people facing long term unemployment. (Source: BBC News)
- ◆ As many as three quarters of a million young people in the UK feel they have nothing to live for. (Source: Prince's Trust)
- ◆ Shropshire recorded 3,672 people who were unemployed at the end of 2013. (Source: Office for National Statistics)

Organisation	Overview	Website
Credit Unions	Credit Unions help by providing their members with savings and borrowing facilities. Please check out the websites opposite for local assistance in Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin	www.justcreditunion.org www.fairshare.uk.com
Church Urban Fund	The Church of England's poverty charity works through local diocesan partnerships of churches and the Together Network to tackle poverty at local community level.	www.cuf.org.uk
Christians Against Poverty (CAP)	CAP is passionate about lifting people out of debt and poverty and offer a variety of facilities and resources to help including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAP Debt Centres • CAP Money Course • CAP Job Clubs 	www.capuk.org www.capmoney.org CAP Job Clubs
Community Money Advice	CMA is a Christian charity based in Shrewsbury with a network of over 100 affiliated advice centres across the country helping people in debt	www.communitymoneyadvice.com

If you are aware of other organisations that you feel could be included above please email us:

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This Prayer Bulletin was prepared by **Mervyn Smith**, a local businessman and a member of the Shropshire Hope Organising Team.

