Your address

Your MPs address

Dear

Happy Christmas.

I am writing to you as I help facilitate a Warm Space in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Methodist Church which was put in place to support vulnerable people during this energy crisis. We wanted to provide a space where people who are struggling to heat and light their homes this winter can come for a couple of hours to keep warm and receive warm refreshments. However, it is a disgrace that these kinds of spaces are needed in this country.

The Energy Price Guarantee announced on 8th September, whilst welcome, hasn’t gone far enough and the Autumn Budget statement by the Chancellor on the 17th November did very little to allay fears about how people are going to cope this winter. Recent research by Prof Donald Hirsch indicates that the average family of four receiving Universal Credit will still need an additional £1,391 over the next six months to stay warm and fed. Low income households need targeted financial support which takes into account family size and need, is distributed quickly and in amounts large enough to enable families to live decently this winter and beyond. The OBR have predicted a 7% drop in the standard of living in this country over the next two years which is a bigger drop than at any time in the last 70 years!

In the North East we are also aware that the increased demand for Foodbanks and increase in attendance at community pantries and larders is a sign that people are struggling despite some of the finance measures out in place by the Government. On 10th November the Trussell Trust reported that 1.3 million food parcels had been given out in the last 6 months alone, a third higher demand than the same period in 2021 and 50% higher than pre-pandemic levels. 1 in 5 of these people are from working households. The demand for Foodbanks is rising again with people so concerned about how they will pay their energy bills.

Most churches around the country will be lighting candles throughout advent and the first Sunday in Advent is often associated with the theme of Hope, however many people we are supporting through our Warm Space feel increasingly hope-less and may need to rely on candles this winter to light their homes, and in some cases use them to heat their home too. This is unacceptable. Whilst community organisations, including churches, will provide support in the coming weeks and months this is not a solution to a longer term problem. Therefore as one of your constituents I am asking you to continue to speak up on this issue so we can seek Hope for those wo are increasingly vulnerable in our communities due to rising energy and cost of living prices. In a time of political upheaval and rapid change, those who are most vulnerable in our communities need consistency and some certainty about what help they can expect to receive this winter.

So, please accept this candle as a symbol to assure you of my prayers for you in your work but also as a symbol of our Advent Hope that the most vulnerable in our communities will receive the help, they need to ensure they do not fall into deeper poverty or destitution now and in the future. If you wish to come and listen to some of those having to attend our Warm Space please contact our Minister \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Yours sincerely,

[Insert name]