

POVERTY



DECEMBER 2009-MARCH 2010

PRAYER DIARY

Please pray for the work of Christian Aid and its partner organisations throughout the world.

In the Prayer Diary you will find:

- daily requests to pray or to thank God
- a weekly prayer that could be used in church intercessions
- a reference to a Bible passage for reflection

DECEMBER

Tuesday 1st- Saturday 5th December

This week marks World AIDS Day. Please pray for people living with HIV, more than 95 per cent of them in developing countries. World AIDS Day offers us all an opportunity to reflect on the ways HIV affects us, and how we can respond to the global pandemic.

Jeremiah 33:14-16

God of justice, as we wait for light into the world's darkness, joy into its suffering, meaning into its confusion, inspire us by your promises of righteousness and justice, and inspire us to live so that your Kingdom can come in us and through us.

During the week
please pray for:

- all groups of people marginalised by the risk of HIV infection and its impact
- communities that protect and promote the rights of people living with HIV
- researchers who continue to seek a vaccine against HIV
- Christ's renewing love to wash away all guilt and shame from those who suffer stigma
- new ways of commitment and leadership for people living with HIV
- churches' creativity, as they commit to strengthening and encouraging people living with HIV.

Sunday 6th- Saturday 12th December

The UN climate summit in Copenhagen takes place this week and will shape the way the world combats climate change. It is vital to achieve an effective deal for the sake of the planet and the millions in the poorest countries already suffering the effects of climate change. Please pray for a fair deal for the world's poor.

Luke 3:1-6

Lord, as we hear of a voice crying in the wilderness, let us make straight a path and prepare the way for the Lord. Give us the determination to straighten out the structures that deny people their humanity and the strength to build a road where you can come into the world again.

During the week
please pray for:

- consensus among world leaders for radical change
- commitment among rich countries to support poorer ones in adapting to climate change
- technology to be made available to poorer countries to help cut their emissions
- rich countries to commit to cutting carbon emissions by 80 per cent by 2050
- Christian Aid partners around the world helping local people to press their own governments into urgent action
- poor communities around the world whose lives, homes and livelihoods are threatened by the changing climate.

DECEMBER

Sunday 13th- Saturday 19th December

As we wait this Advent for the coming of the Christ child, we wait in solidarity with all communities around the world living in poverty who are also waiting for hope. We ask for strength to change our ways so that we are empowered to share our resources with those who have none.

Luke 3:7-18

God of the poor in spirit, we give thanks for John the Baptist and for his call to turn around so that we can walk in your way. Make us faithful in waiting, and open to the uncompromising message we hear, that for Christ to come, things must change.

Sunday 20th- Saturday 26th December

Christian Aid's Christmas appeal focuses on Bethlehem. Many Israeli and Palestinian children caught up in the conflict have lived a childhood of pain and fear. Please pray for the broken areas of the world this Christmas, and that we can play our part in the long journey back to hope.

John 1:1-14

As the ancient words are told again, the suffering world rejoices. The story tells us that those on the edge of society are the first witnesses to the Christ child. Help us to stand with all who are poor and marginalised, and that we may rejoice as we witness your fragile love.

During the week,
please pray for:

- courage to wait this Advent with those in the most broken places of the world
- those who wait for wars to stop, for violence to cease
- those who are forced to wait, at checkpoints, at borders, for jobs, for food
- all who feel they wait in vain because their lives are crushed under the systems of injustice
- those whose lives are changing beyond their control as a result of conflict or natural disaster
- the faith we need to change this Advent so we can wait for the coming of God's Kingdom.

During the week,
please pray for:

- all young people traumatised and/or injured in the conflict in the Holy Land
- all Christian Aid partners working with Israelis and Palestinians to alleviate suffering and promote peace
- counsellors at Christian Aid partner the YMCA helping all affected by injury and trauma
- governments to have wisdom and commitment to a sustainable solution to the conflict
- children and adults around the world living in poverty as a result of conflict
- ourselves and our churches, to be strengthened in hope to work on behalf of poor communities this Christmas.

REFLECTION

A Christmas prayer for Afghanistan

We might ask how love and peace can come to the people of Afghanistan, in the context of a widespread lack of rule-of-law, conflict, corruption, and poverty that translates into hunger; parents not knowing about the existence of vaccinations; or blind children being abused because of attitudes to disability.

The joy and hope which we celebrate at Christmas is found in the support shown by our partners. And in Afghanistan, these partners are restoring dignity and human rights to all, regardless of their faith. Christian Aid has worked directly with poor communities in Afghanistan for three decades, delivering hope to desperately vulnerable people.

Billions of pounds have been channelled into Afghan relief projects, and yet nearly 40 percent has returned to donor countries in corporate profits and consultants' fees. Because Christian Aid works directly with local partners, it plays a vital role in meeting development needs.

One such partner is the Skills Training and Rehabilitation Society (STARS). They provide support to vulnerable groups in Afghan society, and particularly to women. Thanks to STARS, Maynour Sultani (45) has a kitchen garden which provides fresh vegetables for her family. She even has some left over to give to others in the community. She tells us that in the past she had tried to grow produce, but could not afford the seeds. Now she says: 'I have onions, carrots, lettuce, tomatoes, radishes, aubergines, and green peppers. My children never ate these things regularly before.'

In the original story, the liberating love of Christ at Christmas comes into the heart of poverty and oppression in Bethlehem. In the poorest and most marginalised areas of the world today, hope can be found through the people and organisations on the ground, who know the context of extreme poverty.

The Christmas story finishes with the Magi, who arrive with gifts. Their journey has been long, and at the end of it they do not find the Christ child where they expect. But in the context of poverty and danger, they find life and hope. Are we prepared to take our gifts where we do not necessarily want to go? To seek out those who are lying in the manger and give what we have?

Thanks to Christian Aid partner STARS, Maynour Sultani, pictured right, now has a kitchen garden that provides fresh vegetables for her family of eight, and even has some left over to give to others in the community



DECEMBER/JANUARY

Sunday 27th December- Saturday 2nd January

Please pray this week for the families in Zimbabwe running out of food as the hunger season starts. Those forced to eat the seeds they planted last October, at the start of the rains, will not harvest the food they need this March. Christian Aid's Zimbabwe appeal has enabled thousands of families to plant seeds and see a successful harvest.

Luke 2:41-52

God incarnate, Prince of Peace, help us to carry with us the greatest gift of yourself, and when we lose the belief in the power of love to change the world, give us faith.

During the week
please pray for:

- the Zimbabwean people, who are affected by the collapse of their currency and with no access to the US dollar or South African rand now in use to trade
- Christian Aid's Zimbabwean partners giving communities seeds, fertiliser and training in how to improve crop yields
- all Zimbabwean people at risk of further cholera outbreaks
- the Zimbabwean people forced to work on the black market, trading hard currencies and basic goods
- all Zimbabwean people forced to flee to South Africa where they are often living in desperate conditions.

Sunday 3rd- Saturday 9th January

This week marks the start of the final year of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which ended 20 years of civil war in Sudan. On 9 January 2011 the south of Sudan will vote on whether to secede the north of the country. It is imperative that this peace process continues or the country may once again descend into civil war.

Matthew 2:1-12

Radiant God, by the guidance of a star, you led the Magi to worship the Christ child. By the light of faith, lead us to worship you in peace and love, and guide us in your way.

During the week
please pray for:

- all the 'lost generation' who lost their families, homes and a chance of education during the conflict
- the people of Malakal, many of whom had to flee from fighting
- all who were recruited as child soldiers during the conflict and are now trying to rebuild their lives
- all those displaced as they flee from violence in Darfur
- all internally displaced people having to live in squatter camps, often without basic services, such as health clinics, water, latrines and jobs.

JANUARY

Sunday 10th- Saturday 16th January

This week, please pray for the people of Malawi, where the rainy season has just finished. Most of Malawi is very susceptible to droughts and heavy rains, leading to floods. Christian Aid is funding a new project in flood-prone districts that is helping communities to be better prepared.

Luke 3:21-22

Compassionate God, may we hear your voice that tells us we are loved, and that we are to love one another.

During the week
please pray for:

- farmers whose crops are destroyed by flooding
- communities whose water facilities are contaminated by heavy rains
- families whose homes are made of mud and grass thatch that are easily destroyed by flood waters
- businesses that are losing an entire generation of workers to the HIV pandemic
- families where elderly grandparents are caring for children orphaned by HIV
- all people affected by the food scarcity caused by droughts, and the impact of HIV on the available agricultural labour.

Sunday 17th- Saturday 23rd January

One of Christian Aid's Indian partners Safai Karmachari Andolan (SKA) is campaigning to eradicate manual scavenging by the end of 2010. This is the hideous job of collecting toilet waste by hand, and is usually done by dalit women.

Psalms 36:5-10

God of justice, deliver us from our indifference to the cries of the hungry and the homeless. Inspire us with the promise of a new heaven and a new earth, the wholeness of your justice and the power of your peace.

During the week
please pray for:

- Christian Aid partners working to tackle the social exclusion and injustice that keep people trapped in poverty and in inhuman jobs
- dalit women, at the lowest level of the caste hierarchy, with the lowest wages and living in utter poverty
- the hundreds of thousands of women trapped in manual scavenging, that they can find other sources of income
- these women will be empowered to access the government resources aimed at rehabilitating them to find alternative livelihoods
- our partner SKA, as it seeks justice and liberation for these women by the end of 2010.

JANUARY/FEBRUARY

Sunday 24th- Saturday 30th January

Wednesday is Holocaust Memorial Day. Please hold in your prayers this week the memory of all who suffered and died in the atrocities of the Holocaust 70 years ago, as well as all who suffer as a result of war crimes and genocide today.

Luke 4:14-21

Lord Jesus Christ, you proclaimed liberty to the captives, freedom to the oppressed. We pray for all those damaged by torture. We pray for those responsible for torture. Keep before us a vision of a world without torture and give us the grace to work for its coming.

During the week
please pray for:

- the people of Zimbabwe, recovering from a brutal campaign against political opponents
- the people of Congo, who, despite numerous peace talks are still subject to violence, killings, looting and rape
- the people of Congo to see the benefits of the country's vast mineral wealth
- the people of Afghanistan, where thousands of Afghans have died since the 2001 US-led invasion
- the safety of aid agencies working in Afghanistan, where attacks on aid convoys are making it even more difficult to get supplies to vulnerable people.

Sunday 31st January- Saturday 6th February

Friday is Sri Lanka's Independence Day. This country was torn apart for nearly three decades by ethnic conflict, a civil war that claimed the lives of nearly 70,000 and shattered the lives of many more. Please pray that the ceasefire will continue to hold and that all are able to return home and begin to rebuild a lasting peace.

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

God of love, you have no hands but our hands, no lips but our lips, no love but our love to share with the imprisoned, the silenced, the persecuted, the marginalised.

During the week
please pray for:

- all the people still in overcrowded transit camps, where conditions are cramped and facilities stretched
- Christian Aid partners providing access to water, sanitation, food and clothing for those in the camps, and helping people to return home
- families returning home to rebuild their lives, homes and communities
- long-lasting peace between Sinhalese and Tamil communities
- the amazing work carried out by Christian Aid partners after the tsunami, including providing nearly 5,000 permanent homes and delivering skills training to more than 80,000 people.

FEBRUARY

Sunday 7th- Saturday 13th February

This week, please pray for the people of Nicaragua, where 90 per cent of rural businesses are linked to small, family-run farms. One of the biggest challenges for small producers is reaching a market to sell their products. With limited access to transport and no marketing expertise, many struggle to earn a living.

Isaiah 6:8

Loving God, as we are called to preach the good news of God's Kingdom, come into our lives, and lead us the way you want us to go, so that we are empowered to be your disciples in the world.

During the week
please pray for:

- Christian Aid partner Nochari, whose cooperatives help local farmers share processing and transport costs
- the members of Nochari's hibiscus cooperative who can now grow and sell eight times as much as they used to
- Christian Aid partner Soppexcca, a collective of 18 coffee-farming cooperatives, helping farmers improve coffee quality and develop processing techniques
- Soppexcca's work in commercialising cocoa as the climate changes and it becomes too hot to grow coffee
- small-scale farmers whose livelihoods are threatened by increasingly unpredictable weather patterns.

Sunday 14th- Saturday 20th February

Sunday is Valentine's Day. As we give thanks for our loved ones, please pray this week for families who are separated because of the conditions of poverty they live in.

Luke 9:28-36

God of glory, as you revealed your splendour in the face of your Son Jesus Christ, let us see the life-changing power of your love today, and be transfigured by it.

During the week
please pray for:

- families with men forced to migrate in search of work
- Christian Aid partner CBCA, in the Congo, which is tracing families and reuniting children with their parents where the conflict has torn families apart
- HIV-orphaned teenage children robbed of their childhood and thrust into the role of sole carer for their siblings
- the people of the occupied Palestinian territories, where many families are separated by disputed borders and walls
- the people of Mali, where migrants are being driven from their homes in search of food and work.

FEBRUARY/MARCH

Sunday 21st- Saturday 27th February

Monday is World Water Day. Please pray today for people around the world who do not have access to clean water, and whose water sources are threatened as the climate changes.

Luke 4:1-13

Jesus, who went into the wilderness to face its dangers and confront its fear, we pray for all who bear the wilderness of shattered lives and ruined dreams of peace. As in the wilderness where you made your choices, rejecting cunning, greed and abuses of power, give courage to the powerful and strong, to live God's way of love.

Sunday 28th February- Saturday 6th March

Please pray for the people of Mali this week. The climate is changing fast, and as water sources dry out and food becomes increasingly scarce, many families are forced to leave their homes. Many families now live in the southern forests, creating tension with communities there and putting extra pressure on dwindling resources.

Psalms 27:14

Loving God, pour out on us the water of life that we may quench our thirst and draw our strength from you. Help us to stand alongside those who struggle for clean water so that all may be refreshed and renewed by your love.

During the week
please pray for:

- women and girls who often have to spend hours a day collecting water. This often denies them an education and puts them at risk of rape and abduction
- the highland communities of Peru, where melting glaciers are destroying their water reserves
- Christian Aid partners Fundación Solón in Bolivia, which has encouraged local people to campaign so they can afford running water
- Christian Aid partner OCDIH in Honduras, helping families build their own latrine, creating dignity and safe drinking water for the villagers.

During the week
please pray for:

- the Mali Folkecenter, with whom Christian Aid will soon be funding a peace-building project, in response to community tensions
- the Folkecenter's work setting up a climate change network, encouraging local campaigning
- families forced to move on from the forests because of the Malian government's 'zero tolerance' policy
- Christian Aid partner Action pour la Promotion Humaine, supporting families to grow food
- women, often left as sole carers when men are forced to travel for work.

MARCH

Sunday 7th- Saturday 13th March

Monday is the United Nations Day for Women's Rights and International Peace. Please pray for girls and women around the world, and for a change to all the structures and systems that disempower them.

Luke 13:6-9

Life-giving God, you have called us to bear fruit. We give thanks that through the cross and resurrection of Jesus there is always another chance to allow him to break open the arid ground of our lives. As we are brought to new life, help us to bring new life to others.

During the week
please pray for:

- Christian Aid partners working on women's literacy and education, offering them a way out of poverty
- Christian Aid partner Gham Khori in Tajikistan, educating women about their rights
- Christian Aid partners in Afghanistan, working for improved health and education access for women
- the Karen Women's Organisation in Thailand, working to reduce domestic violence in the refugee camps along the Thailand-Burma border
- Christian Aid partner the Deccan Development Society in India, working with dalit women to produce a women's community radio giving voice to one of the marginalised groups of Indian society.

Sunday 14th- Saturday 20th March

The FIFA World Cup takes place in Durban, South Africa, in 2010. Our partners report that across South Africa, poor families are being evicted from their shacks, often at gunpoint, perhaps to make the country appear 'poor-free'. Please pray for these communities, and for Christian Aid partner the Church Land Programme helping them stand up for their rights.

Psalms 32:10-11

Loving God, strengthen us to resist the false attraction of easy answers, abuses of power, and the delusion that there is any way apart from justice in which your will be done.

During the week
please pray for:

- Abahlali baseMjondolo, a democratically elected body of shack dwellers, supported by the Church Land Programme
- the Church Land Programme's work with shack dwellers, helping them to stand up for their rights to stay on the land that is theirs
- all families living in fear of violent slum clearances
- all those in South Africa's townships, who are extremely vulnerable to fire, rape and disease
- the 5.5 million HIV-positive South Africans. This accounts for one-fifth of all cases globally.

MARCH

Sunday 21st- Saturday 27th March

Christian Aid's tax campaign gains momentum and has managed to persuade the UK government to counter tax dodging. Please give thanks for the government listening to our campaigns, and pray that it will lead in championing the interests of poor countries.

John 12:1-8

Christ our Redeemer, bind us together in your extravagant act of sacrificial love poured out for rich and for poor, for bound and for free, for oppressed and for oppressor. Be with us as we walk the way of the cross, to a sacrificial and generously extravagant life of love.

During the week
please pray for:

- a successful campaign in G20 leaders setting new rules that force tax havens to reveal businesses and individuals holding funds off-shore
- poor communities to benefit from the mineral and natural wealth of their countries
- the cloak of silence, under which many corporations operate, to be lifted
- the world's biggest auditing firms to help change the accounting rules by which companies must abide
- public acknowledgement of the abusive nature of a global tax system that is widely accepted.

Sunday 28th- Wednesday 31st March

Zambian Vestina featured in our Christmas appeal in 2007. At that time, Vestina and her sister were living with their grandfather after their mother's death from an HIV-related illness. Vestina is herself HIV-positive and her grandparents didn't know what care she needed. After visiting Vestina again in 2009, we saw that with our partner the Archdiocese of Lusaka (ADL)'s support, Vestina is now getting the right drugs and is leading a healthy and active life.

Luke 19:28-40

Lord, you entered Jerusalem to cheers of 'Hosanna' and left to cries of 'Crucify'. We remember the times we have misunderstood the way of the cross. Give us the strength to journey with you and the grace to discern your way.

During the week
please pray for:

- the caregivers from Christian Aid's partner ADL, who helped Vestina's grandfather understand her needs as an HIV-positive child
- ADL's micro-credit schemes, giving grandparents and older siblings caring for orphans a way to save and borrow money
- farmers such as Vestina's grandfather: ADL is helping them to grow the nutrient-rich plants that ensure ARV drugs work
- universal access to lifesaving antiretroviral drugs.

Further information about the subjects of many of these prayers can be found in the autumn edition of *Christian Aid News*.

You can find further resources – including policy papers, reports and worship materials – at www.christianaid.org.uk/resources

An online version of this prayer diary can be found at www.christianaid.org.uk/prayer

Christian Aid is a Christian organisation that insists the world can and must be swiftly changed to one where everyone can live a full life, free from poverty.

We work globally for profound change that eradicates the causes of poverty, striving to achieve equality, dignity and freedom for all, regardless of faith or nationality. We are part of a wider movement for social justice.

We provide urgent, practical and effective assistance where need is great, tackling the effects of poverty as well as its roots.

Front cover picture: tankers supply water to communities in drought-stricken Kenya. The Gurah community, pictured here, had not received water for four days

Front cover photo: Christian Aid/Mike Goldwater

London: PO Box 100, SE1 7RT **Belfast:** PO Box 150, BT9 6AE
Cardiff: PO Box 6055, CF15 5AA **Edinburgh:** PO Box 11, EH1 0BR
Dublin: 17 Clanwilliam Terrace, Dublin 2
Websites: www.christianaid.org.uk www.christianaid.ie

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