

# POVERTY



DECEMBER 2011-MARCH 2012

# 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
- weekly references to the Bible for reflection.

# DECEMBER

## Thursday 1 December- Saturday 3 December

The first day of December is World AIDS Day. Like Advent, this week's focus on HIV provides a time to look forward – to anticipate, and work for, the day when there is no more stigma. It is also a time to celebrate the light that has already come through Christian Aid's partners reaching out to individuals and communities facing HIV.

*Isaiah 64:1-9*

Advent God, as we watch and wait and pray for the coming of light into the world, we long for the day when all the things of darkness shall be no more.

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## Sunday 4 December- Saturday 10 December

This month, representatives of 90 nations and organisations are meeting in Bonn to discuss Afghanistan's future, as the international community withdraws from the country. Christian Aid partner AWEC is concerned that peace does not come at any cost. Afghan MP Shinkai Kharokail says, 'I worry other countries may compromise to achieve a very superficial peace; they may make a mistake and ignore Afghan women.'

*Psalms 85:1-2, 8-13*

Prince of Peace, and God of perfect justice, we lift Afghanistan's future to you. We long for peace – but not at the cost of justice, and freedom, for its women.

During the week,  
please pray for:

- universal access to life-prolonging anti-retroviral drugs
- strength for people with HIV facing stigma or discrimination, and for people who are too afraid to be tested
- partners such as ADS, whose Rural Transport Network, supported by Christian Aid and Virgin Unite in Kenya, sends out people such as volunteer community health worker Rogers to provide advice and healthcare, and to help tackle stigma in remote communities
- Patricia and Celestine, who now have access to treatment, and the courage to overcome stigma, thanks to the work of Rogers.

During the week,  
please pray for:

- peace, but as the psalmist prays, one which is founded in righteousness (or justice)
- the rights of the Afghan people to be protected, and the voices of women, and other vulnerable groups, to be heard
- wisdom for the leaders involved in the talks, and creative solutions to be found
- the international community to lay aside its own interests and pursue a fair and lasting peace
- Christian Aid partner AWEC as it continues to promote women's rights, and all other partners working to end poverty and secure justice in Afghanistan.

# REFLECTION

## Waiting for justice

Advent is a season of waiting for light to come into the darkness of our world. We try to imagine what it might have been like before that first Christmas, in order to experience joy at Jesus' birth more fully.

But we never forget that the light has already come and that our hope is a certain reality because of what Jesus has accomplished. During this time we are also looking beyond the Christmas story to the victory of Easter and the Resurrection, and the joyful anticipation of the day when there will be no more darkness – only light; and when there will be no more injustice or death.

All who hunger for justice – for themselves or for others – are similarly waiting. But the current darkness is not something we have to imagine. Statistics, images and life stories reveal the reality and painful consequences of injustice. Our hope for light can seem faint when we consider numbers such as 1.4 billion living in extreme poverty or 925 million with not enough to eat. Our wait feels unbearably long when we listen to another story of a child orphaned by HIV; a community denied access to their land; or a woman whose voice has been silenced.

But we know that there is hope for change – and that this can and must come now. We have seen it. Light, joy and love have all broken through in practical and life-changing ways through Christian Aid partners' committed work within poor communities, and the tireless generosity of those who support them.

We know that changing policies and practices of governments and businesses would be enough to bring transformation to many of the world's communities. We believe that God hears our prayers for change, and that part of the answer to them is the passion the Holy Spirit puts in us to bring about the kingdom now.

A season of waiting is always a season of action too.

In that first Advent, Mary and Joseph journeyed to Bethlehem and prepared their hearts, minds and lives for the birth of a son. They must have considered over and over again what was coming, and what their role would be in nurturing Jesus to fulfil his destiny.

The wise men journeyed even further to confirm the identity of a tiny baby who was also the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, and the champion of justice.

We too are on a journey that prepares the way for the kingdom's love and justice to flourish: fundraisers, activists and intercessors in Britain and Ireland; walkers marching for land rights in India; partner organisations helping to empower individuals to stand up for their rights; and community champions helping people to build better and more secure futures for themselves and their families.

This is how we wait. On our knees, with open hearts and hands; and on our feet, pouring out our strength and resources until the wait is over, and justice comes.

# DECEMBER

## **Sunday 11 December-Saturday 17 December**

International climate talks in Durban ended two days ago, and now leaders from represented nations are travelling home after nearly two weeks of debate. As we continue to wait for Christmas, so we remember those waiting for climate justice – particularly those worst affected in the world's poorest communities. Leaders must recognise their responsibility, and act on it, for tears to turn to laughter.

*Psalm 126*

Lord of creation, flood hardened hearts with a river of justice that can no longer be ignored; convict world leaders to secure climate justice; and turn tears to laughter.

## **Sunday 18 December-Saturday 24 December**

As we focus on the Holy Land, we are saddened by the continuing struggle. In a year that has seen Palestinians pursue statehood and legitimacy at the United Nations, hopes for peace and reconciliation should have run high. Yet the failure to restart peace talks; the expansion of illegal Israeli settlements; and continuing violence from all sides make retaining hope a challenge.

*Luke 1:46b-55*

Lord of all nations, as we prepare to celebrate your coming, we are saddened by the peace that still alludes the place where you walked. Lord Jesus please, in your mercy, bring peace.

During the week,  
please pray for:

- poor communities affected by climate change, having done little or nothing to cause it, and all those working to help them adapt
- countries to have the courage to do the right thing by agreeing to cut their carbon emissions to a level adequate for stopping catastrophic climate change; and by acting on these in their policies and enforcement
- countries to provide finance so poor communities can develop cleanly
- Christian Aid's campaigners to have renewed energy and determination, in the wake of these talks, to keep working for climate justice.

During the week,  
please pray for:

- an end to conflict in the region and for the establishment of a real and lasting peace
- security and the right to self-determination for both communities
- an end to occupation and a just solution for refugees
- all parties to be held accountable under international law
- Christian Aid's partners, who are working in both Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory, to promote peace and understanding; provide practical help to end poverty; and support and rehabilitate those who have been injured or traumatised by the conflict.

# DECEMBER/JANUARY

## **Sunday 25 December-Saturday 31 December**

Christian Aid's Christmas resources celebrate the joyful story of Shukuru and 128 other children in the Democratic Republic of Congo. They were separated from their families when they fled their villages during rebel attacks. Christian Aid partner the Central Africa Baptist Community provided sanctuary to them, and then used their community links to restore them to their homes within a year.

*Luke 2:1-14*

Father of all, as we celebrate the birth of the Christ-child, we praise you too for the joy of every child rescued and restored as a result of your people loving the orphaned.

During the week,  
please pray for:

- the families who were reunited with their children and experienced what one mother referred to as 'an indescribable joy', who are rebuilding their lives after the trauma they experienced
- the work of Christian Aid's partner the Central Africa Baptist Community whose programmes tackle poverty, including supporting green energy projects and providing legal support to victims of violence
- the Democratic Republic of Congo to have a peaceful future
- all children who are orphaned because of conflict or HIV, and for the work of those who seek to care for them.

## **Sunday 1 January-Saturday 7 January**

The beginning of this New Year will feel particularly significant for the world's newest nation, South Sudan. It was in early 2011 (7 January) that its people voted to become an independent nation, breaking away from Sudan itself, after decades of conflict. Now, a year on, they are living in the reality of this freedom.

*Revelation 21:1-6a*

Ever-creating God, we thank you for the birth of South Sudan. We pray that 2012 will bring joy, peace and growing stability – and that all the tears of her past will be wiped away.

During the week,  
please pray for:

- joy, peace, and stability for South Sudan as it establishes its government, infrastructure and systems
- good relationships with Sudan, and other neighbouring countries
- young people who have grown up knowing only conflict, to adjust to peaceful lives
- the work of Christian Aid's partners, particularly the Mundri Relief and Development Association, and Peter Bay, who leads their Kotobi Institute for Teacher Education and is passionate about seeing enrolment and retention rates increase across the new country by improving the quality of teaching available.

# JANUARY

## **Sunday 8 January- Saturday 14 January**

This week, many will be remembering Haiti, two years after a devastating earthquake hit on 12 January. Christian Aid partners GARR and Haiti Survie have already built 135 earthquake and hurricane-resistant houses for families affected, including for those internally displaced from the capital Port au Prince, on land donated by a town mayor. These houses provide a secure and hopeful future.

*Genesis 1:1-5*

Father God, who creates order out of chaos, we thank you for Christian Aid partners' reconstruction work. May they continue to be able to build safe, secure houses for the Haitian people.

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## **Sunday 15 January- Saturday 21 January**

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity runs from 18 to 25 January. This week, Christian Aid and many others celebrate the transformational power of the church when it works together. Constitutionally, Christian Aid is an agency of 41 sponsoring churches. Practically, the churches in Britain and Ireland provide the backbone of its support.

*John 1:43-51*

Lord Jesus, forgive us when we each secretly criticise other parts of your church – forgetting that on the night you were betrayed you prayed for us to be one; unite us to work for justice.

During the week,  
please pray for:

- Christian Aid partners GARR and Haiti Survie and their continuing work building houses that the Haitian people find safe enough to sleep in
- all Christian Aid's partners in Haiti, as they work to help rebuild the nation – including those who are providing start-up loans so that people can establish new skills and businesses
- the Haitian people, as they continue to mourn those who did not survive, and rebuild their country for the future
- the international community to continue its generous support towards reconstruction work in Haiti.

During the week,  
please pray for:

- unity between all churches across Britain and Ireland
- Christian Aid groups and other ecumenical networks coming together to pray, fundraise or campaign for poor communities
- an inspirational and challenging time for all those attending a Christian Aid volunteers' weekend being held for those from the West Midlands, East Midlands, and East of England between 20 and 22 January
- encouragement, energy and strength for church leaders in countries where Christian Aid works, particularly where they are opposed for their faith, and for their work, as in Zimbabwe.

# JANUARY/FEBRUARY

## **Sunday 22 January- Saturday 28 January**

January has been a month of anniversaries, and one more needs to be remembered: 2011 was a tumultuous time for Egypt, and it all began with the first protests against the then government last January. A year of political change followed, but for the 20 per cent living below the poverty line, more than 6 million people, the struggle for freedom continues.

*Psalms 62:5-12*

Everlasting God, though governments and nations rise and fall – you remain. In your mercy, help Egypt build a solid foundation for its people that safeguards the rights of poor communities.

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## **Sunday 29 January- Saturday 4 February**

Last summer, television reports were filled with images from east Africa, which has been facing the worst drought for more than 60 years. Thirteen million people have been facing starvation, and although the international community has responded, the need continues to be severe – especially now the cameras have moved on. Christian Aid's partners are still there, continuing to provide essentials.

*Deuteronomy 18:15-20*

Open our ears again, O Lord, to hear the cries of the hungry, and the voices of prophets who remind us not to turn away when we see any of your precious children in need.

During the week,  
please pray for:

Egypt's governance and political systems, including:

- fair and lasting reform to address the reality of poverty in Egypt, which is often masked by its large economy and popularity with tourists
- the work of Christian Aid's partners, including Better Life, which helps agricultural workers and fishermen form associations to voice their concerns to the state; Wadi el Nil, which unites workers in El Mina's limestone quarries to stand up for their rights; and the Coptic Orthodox Church BLESS, which works in rural areas to alleviate poverty and to eradicate female genital mutilation.

During the week,  
please pray for:

- the scale and urgency of the situation in the east and Horn regions of Africa not to be forgotten by the international community
- refugees, particularly those who have fled the conflict in Somalia, to receive adequate help – and for peace and stability for Somalia so they can return home
- the relief work of all organisations involved, especially Christian Aid and ACT Alliance partners across Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan and Ethiopia
- a resolution to rising food prices, and the effects these are having on this crisis.

# FEBRUARY

## **Sunday 5 February- Saturday 11 February**

During February, many Christian Aid local groups and supporting churches will begin preparing for Christian Aid Week in May. This year features mothers, such as Mary Samuels, who have received tools to grow a thriving future, and whose voices are being heard in their towns thanks to Christian Aid partner the Methodist Church of Sierra Leone.

*Psalm 147:1-11, 20c*

We thank you Lord for helping communities rebuild their lives after a decade of conflict, and for the Methodist Church of Sierra Leone. May they continue to redeem the past and build for the future.

During the week,  
please pray for:

- Sierra Leone and the work of Christian Aid's partners there, especially the Methodist Church of Sierra Leone
- the community of Gbap, where Mary Samuels lives, that it may continue to thrive
- preparations for Christian Aid Week happening all over Britain and Ireland in the coming months, and especially for local groups working to plan events and recruit collectors for the house-to-house collections
- supporter events this month and next in many different regions, organised by Christian Aid staff to brief and encourage volunteers and local groups in their plans.

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## **Sunday 12 February- Saturday 18 February**

Tuesday is Valentine's Day, and many people will receive chocolates. However, the resulting boom in sales doesn't always get passed on to cocoa growers. But in Bolivia, Abraham is celebrating – with Christian Aid partner CIPCA's help, he has secured a minimum price that is four times higher than before. Now he can diversify and make his family's future more secure.

*Mark 1:40-45*

God who is love, we praise you for every time that people recognise each other's worth. Help us to move beyond loving words into costly actions that cross boundaries and transform lives.

During the week,  
please pray for:

- the work of Christian Aid's partner CIPCA in Bolivia, as they help producers to earn a fair price for what they produce
- all those producers growing cocoa or flowers, or making items for western markets, that they will receive fair prices so they can build better lives for their children
- all staff, volunteers and partners of Christian Aid, who work so tirelessly to love others in practical and transformational ways
- yourself, that God would continue to strengthen you to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly.

# FEBRUARY/MARCH

## **Sunday 19 February- Saturday 25 February**

This week includes both Transfiguration Sunday and Ash Wednesday, which marks the start of Lent. Many are inspired by Jesus' time in the desert, to give things up. Some Christian Aid supporters also take part in 'Count Your Blessings', which helps them to focus on being thankful and giving to others who do not have much of what they take for granted.

*Mark 9:2-9*

Lord of light, lead us to celebrate all the good things that you have made and provided. Servant king, remind us that you call us to have open hands and a generous heart.

During the week,  
please pray for:

- a growing thankfulness that God has provided enough for everyone in the world today, and a repentance for the greed that results in some having too much – and 1.4 billion living in extreme poverty
- the rights of poor communities who do not have access to a free press; public green spaces; state-funded services; or opportunities to be heard by their government
- all those taking in part in 'Count Your Blessings' to be inspired and challenged, and for significant funds to be raised for Christian Aid's work in poor communities.

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## **Sunday 26 February- Saturday 3 March**

In 2012, Fairtrade Fortnight starts on 27 February. As well as celebrating the benefits of products which pay producers a living wage for their crops, this offers an opportunity to focus on trade in general. In Nicaragua, Christian Aid partners such as Nochari and Soppexcca are helping establish and support cooperatives, so local producers have more power, and more profit.

*Psalm 25:1-10*

Holy Spirit, we thank you for all people and all places where hearts and hands work hard together to build a future of peace, prosperity and security. Bless all who cooperate to establish justice.

During the week,  
please pray for:

- the continued success and increase of Fairtrade products available for consumers, and a growing awareness of the benefits to producers of buying them
- changes to international trade rules and unjust practices that make and keep people poor
- Nochari's hibiscus cooperative to continue to thrive, so that producers can keep benefiting from reduced transport costs, and more of their product being sold at a higher price
- the work of Soppexcca as they help coffee farmers to achieve growth and stability by working together in cooperatives.

# MARCH

## **Sunday 4 March- Saturday 10 March**

This week includes the United Nations' International Women's Day (Friday 8 March), which is part of their work to raise awareness that women are still poorer and less powerful than men in every country in the world (UN). Afghanistan is a country where women have suffered much injustice, but there is significant progress to celebrate too, thanks to Christian Aid's partners.

*Psalms 22:22-31*

Loving Father, thank you that you hear the cries of women who are exploited or denied opportunities to speak or act. Hear them, and help them rise up to be who you created them to be.

During the week,  
please pray for:

- women in Afghanistan where access to education, employment and political representation is limited, to rise up, and secure change
- Christian Aid partners running REFLECT circles to challenge inequalities by creating democratic spaces that strengthen women's abilities to speak out
- a REFLECT group in Faryab province, who managed to overturn a ruling that women could not participate in the local bazaar by lobbying the authorities
- Christian Aid partner the Afghan Women's Network, who have made outstanding progress in amending laws that discriminate against women, and continue to pursue change.

## **Sunday 11 March- Saturday 17 March**

This week marks the half-way point of an epic march for justice in India. On 2 October, the anniversary of Gandhi's birth, representatives from Christian Aid partner Ekta Parishad set off across 25 states to demand land and legal reforms. The march will climax with one of the largest non-violent protests in history as more than 100,000 landless people join its final 350km.

*1 Corinthians 1:18-25*

Only wise God, may the humble sound, made by the marching feet of those who humbly seek justice in India, ring through the corridors of power, and cause powerful people to repent and reform.

During the week,

please pray for:

- those marching to have strength, courage and perseverance
- positive and extensive awareness of the march in India and globally – and a favourable and lasting response from the Indian government
- the wider campaigning work of Ekta Parishad, and their grassroots network, as they campaign for land rights and forest management, which could lift 400 million people out of poverty
- Christian Aid supporter events such as sponsored walks and curry nights, being held to raise awareness about the Indian marchers, and to raise money for poor communities.

# MARCH

## **Sunday 18 March- Saturday 24 March**

Mothering Sunday provides an opportunity to focus on all who care for children. In sub-Saharan Africa, many other family members have stepped into a mother's role to try to fill the gap for orphans whose parents have died from AIDS-related illnesses. Older children parent younger ones; neighbours take in more; and elderly grandparents work hard to provide for the next generation.

*John 3:14-21*

God who so loved the world, you know what it means to watch a family member suffer and die. Comfort the bereaved; and give strength to all who seek to mother them in Jesus' precious name.

During the week,  
please pray for:

- all those caring for HIV orphans, particularly those who are children themselves
- Christian Aid partner the AIDS Consortium in South Africa, which helps hundreds of smaller organisations such as Thandanani, whose name means 'loving each other' in Zulu, to carry out vital work
- Thandanani, which gives support to grieving children through learning centres, and helps extended families take care of their new charges in practical ways
- all Christian Aid partners working to raise awareness, address stigma, and provide care for those affected, and those left behind.

## **Sunday 25 March- Saturday 31 March**

This week, many individuals and companies in Britain and Ireland will prepare to reach the end of their tax year. A global culture of financial secrecy allows some unscrupulous firms to dodge paying what they owe – leading to poor countries missing out on more than US\$160bn a year.

*Psalms 51:1-12*

Righteous Lord, have mercy on all who deprive poor countries of the tax they are owed, or who look the other way in backroom deals. Create instead clean hearts, right spirits, and fair dealings.

During the week,  
please pray for:

- national and international governments to reform financial rules to end the scandal of tax dodging
- for the money owed in taxes being dodged to instead be used to build schools, hospitals and better lives in the countries to which it is owed
- companies to understand that these practices are wrong, and to seek just and fair dealings with poor countries, as well as powerful ones
- strength, strategy and energy for all those campaigning for reform and justice in the systems that allow global injustices on this scale.

An online version of this prayer diary can be found at [christianaid.org.uk/churches](http://christianaid.org.uk/churches)

Christian Aid is inspired by the gospel message of hope and unites people from all denominations in prayer and service. You can find regularly updated Bible studies, prayers, reflections and theology papers in the churches area of our website.

You can find further resources – including policy papers and reports – at [christianaid.org.uk/resources](http://christianaid.org.uk/resources)

**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:** During the January 2010 Haiti earthquake, Dinei Fede's simple home collapsed. In 2011, his family was among those provided with a permanent earthquake and hurricane resistant house by Christian Aid partner GARR. He says GARR has been 'like a father', providing tools so that his family could grow their own food after the disaster. Here he displays some of the beans they have harvested and stored. Credit: Christian Aid/Susan Barry

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