

Hungry New Year

Aim: this assembly marks World Religion Day (20 January) and addresses issues relating to food and hunger.

Materials/preparation:

- you may wish to use the *Hungry New Year* assembly, available to download from christianaid.org.uk/learn

Assembly presentation

Slide 1. Welcome the pupils and wish them a Happy New Year!

Slide 2. We are used to saying 'Happy New Year' in January, but did you know that we could actually wish many people a Happy New Year at other times of the year? That is because many world religions have a different beginning to their religious calendar. These are just some of the New Year dates that some of the world religions will celebrate in 2013:

- Christian New Year begins at the start of Advent, the waiting for the coming of Christ at the beginning of December.
- Islamic New Year is on 4 and 5 November
- Hindu New Year is on 3 November
- Jewish New Year is on 5 September
- Sikh New Year is on 13 April.

And on 20 January, we mark World Religion Day, which is an opportunity to learn about other religions across the world and find out about what they have in common.

Slide 3. Very often, we begin the New Year by thinking about how we can improve ourselves and we set resolutions to try to improve the way that we live. Ask if any pupils have made New Year's resolutions. For many of the world religions, this is an ongoing question, not just something for the start of the New Year; and many followers of different faiths try to look at every day as a new and fresh beginning and a chance to lead a better life.

Slide 4. Sometimes, to help them live out their good intentions, people of different religions fast from food. Check if pupils know what 'fasting' means. Explain that it means reducing or not eating for a certain time. For example, many Christians reduce what they eat for Lent,

the period before Easter, and during this time they might cut out a certain type of food, such as chocolate. Many Muslims fast for a whole month during Ramadan, and eat nothing at all between sunrise and sunset during this time. And in the Jewish faith, two main fast days are observed: Yom Kippur and Tisha B'Av.

For many followers of religion, fasting is an opportunity to focus on what is important and to think about how they would like to live in the world, with God's help. Many people combine their fasting with prayer, hoping that the fast will help them to remain devoted to their faith and focus their minds on how to live their faith out in the world around them.

Ask pupils if they can think of reasons why fasting might help people concentrate on their religion.

Slide 5. Of course, this kind of fasting is done in a very controlled way – and often when the fast is over, people will celebrate together with a big feast!

Slide 6. Hunger that is not controlled and has no end is completely different. Ask pupils how they might feel if they were really hungry, for a very long time, with no end in sight.

That kind of hunger can completely change your life. People who are hungry all the time find that their health suffers, that they can't concentrate on anything important and that they have no energy to enjoy life. It is terrible to think that one in eight people around the world is hungry in this way.

Slide 7. And what is really shocking is that they don't need to be hungry, because there is plenty of food in the world to feed everyone.

So then why are people going hungry?

In order to have enough to eat, you have to be able to buy or grow food. But many people struggle to afford to **buy** enough food or to **grow** enough to feed their families.

Slide 8. All sorts of things can affect people's ability to **buy** food – prices might go up, or people might struggle to make enough money to afford to buy the food they need.

Slide 9. And things can go wrong for people who depend on **growing** food, too. If the weather is not right – too hot, too dry or too wet – then it can be very difficult to grow food. And it's not just the weather that can make life tricky for people growing food; people need to have land on which to grow crops, and they need to be able to get a good price for their food when they sell it. People also need to be able to plan for times of the year when they won't be able to grow food, and need to have options to buy food when their own food runs out.

Christian Aid is an organisation that works to help people of all faiths and none, not just Christians but anyone who is living in need across the world. And this year, Christian Aid is working with lots of other charities to try to stop hunger in the world and ensure that everyone has enough to eat.

Slide 10. This is Tekalech, she is five years old and she lives in a country called Ethiopia, in East Africa. It is a dry country with only a few months when it rains each year. Tekalech's family have to try to grow enough food to last them all year round, even when it is very dry, and sometimes this is very difficult.

Last year, when the crops failed, Tekalech's family did not have enough food to see them through the dry months of the year. Christian Aid responded by helping Tekalech's family and many other families where she lives.

They were able to provide food packages so they could survive the dry, hungry months.

Slide 11. But Christian Aid understands that people want to do more than survive – they

want to be able to live full, healthy, active lives. And to do this, people need to be well-fed, and they need to be confident that they will not go hungry.

Christian Aid believes that things can be different and that we just need to make sure that everyone can get their fair share of food.

Slide 12. So this year Christian Aid will be working with other charities to ask the governments of the world to make important changes to help people get hold of their fair share of food.

Changes like making sure that land on which people depend for growing food is not sold for other purposes.

Changes like making sure that money is used in ways that help the poorest people.

And changes like making sure that companies that earn lots of money pay enough tax to governments, who can then use that money to help feed their poorest people.

At a time of the year when many people are feeling the effects of over-indulgence during the festive season, and making New Year resolutions to try to improve their lives, Christian Aid will be focussing its efforts on stopping hunger.

Ask pupils if they have made a New Year's resolution – and you might like to share your own resolution with pupils. Perhaps this year, we should think about whether we could make any resolutions that might help others around the world.

Prayer

Dear God,

Thank you for new beginnings, for new understanding, and for renewed hope. We pray that people of all faiths and none can work together for a better world. We pray that what is held in common can be shared by all. We pray that everyone, every day, will have their daily bread. That all will eat and have enough. Amen.

Action

- For more information on the campaign to end hunger, visit christianaid.org.uk (from late January)
- For more teaching resources on food and hunger, visit christianaid.org/learn