



Christmas 2023 Prayer and Worship



Kakoli Khatun, 21, with members of her e-commerce group.

Time to Shine: Christmas with Christian Aid

Every girl has talents she'd love to pursue – if she just gets the chance. But poverty is pushing some girls into early marriage and often (if they survive childbirth) into very young motherhood. When they are able to get jobs, this can mean unsafe work outside the home, where sexual violence is a fact of life.

The good news is that girls and women themselves hold the power to change this. With support they can learn the skills to run a business from home online. They gain safety, independence and the power to transform the future, not just for themselves, but for their families and communities.

This Christmas, Christian Aid is shining a light on a group of gifted young women in one of the poorest, most disaster-prone areas of Bangladesh. They're working together to run internet businesses and open up a world of choices for themselves and others.

We are asking you and your church to pray with us and share the stories of these remarkable young women.

Join us as we celebrate the arrival of the Light of the World and help us to ensure women and girls living in poverty get their time to shine.

Gathering Prayer

As we gather in hopeful expectation;
Light of the world, make us ready.

As we seek your transforming presence;
Dayspring from on high, renew us.

As we bring to you our griefs and fears;
God of all comfort, lighten our darkness.



Suggested hymns and songs

- Advent Candles Tell Their Story (Mark Earey)
- Christ Be Our Light (Bernadette Farrell)
- Christ is the World's Light (Fred Pratt Green)
- Light a Candle (Clare Stainsby)
- Jesus, the Light of the World (George D. Elderkin)
- O Holy Night! (Placide Cappeau)

Christian Aid's Christmas Carol: When Out of Poverty is Born (Kathy Galloway)

Find more resources to help your church sing carols for Christian Aid on our website.

As we offer you our prayers and praise;
Bright morning star, fill us with your glory.

Amen.

Christian Aid's Prayer for Advent and Christmas 2023

Dear Jesus, you are the light that shines in the darkness, and the darkness has no power to overcome it.

Today, we lift to you women and girls in Bangladesh with incredible talent, determination, and potential.

Economic barriers hinder their access to education. Injustice holds them back from pursuing their goals.

We pray for the women and girls of Bangladesh. We pray for their emotional and mental well-being.

May they be surrounded with a support system that encourages and uplifts them. May they have mentors and role models who will inspire and guide them.

We pray that the wounds caused by discrimination and inequality would be healed.
Fill the hearts of those who face exclusion with confidence and self-belief.

Let their lights shine brightly, inspiring others and igniting movements for change.

In Jesus' name, we pray.
Amen.

(Written by the Reverend Suchitra Behera, Church of Bangladesh)



Kakoli Khatun, 21, is studying arts and has a keen interest in the traditional craft of Nakshi kantha.

Kakoli's Story

Kakoli Khatun is 21 years old and lives in Kurigram in Bangladesh. In her local area, most people are dependent on farming, which can be heavily affected by annual floods. As Kakoli told Christian Aid: 'Flooding destroys our croplands; we suffer a huge loss.' There is little scope for women and girls to stay in education where Kakoli lives, with most girls married under the age of 18.

Building on training and support from Christian Aid's partners, Kakoli set up a Nakshi kantha-making business with other young women. Nakshi kantha is a type of embroidered quilt, and a centuries-old Bengali art tradition. Kakoli is passionate about preserving and reinvigorating this traditional craft. She is also studying for an arts degree.

Kakoli told us: "Girls in my locality need education. If they get married at an early age they don't understand the value of education. ... I didn't have any dreams a few years ago. I didn't have any money to do anything. To do something I had to ask for money from my brothers and father ... I started the Nakshi Kantha business with 10 members this year, and I want to make this successful. ... I have a dream to make this business bigger, and more people could support their families through this. I wish to support my parents, that's my dream. I want to thank those who supported us. Without their support, we couldn't do this."

Prayers for Ourselves and Our World

Let us pray to the Lord.

We say together as we pray:
It is you who light my lamp;
the Lord, my God, lights up my darkness.

We pray for our church community.
May we be ready to answer your call, Lord.
Help us to share the light of your love
And proclaim your message of justice, mercy and peace.

It is you who light my lamp;
the Lord, my God, lights up my darkness.

We pray for those who hold power that they may act with wisdom and compassion.
We pray for the voices of the marginalised to be heard and acted upon.
Help us to nurture leaders and decision-makers who seek peace and recognise the dignity of every person.

It is you who light my lamp;
the Lord, my God, lights up my darkness.

We pray for all the people of Bangladesh. We pray for all places where women and girls face inequality.
Inspire us to action that together we may tear down barriers created by poverty and injustice.

It is you who light my lamp;
the Lord, my God, lights up my darkness.

We pray for our local community, that here too we will find ways to end poverty.
We pray for all those struggling to see any light during dark and difficult times.
Help us to welcome and care for all our neighbours in need.

It is you who light my lamp;
the Lord, my God, lights up my darkness.

We pray for those who are grieving, lost, or suffering.
We pray for those who can see no way ahead. We ask that you light their path, Lord, and bring them comfort.

It is you who light my lamp;
the Lord, my God, lights up my darkness.

Loving God, hear our prayers, through your son, the Light of the World, Jesus Christ, Amen.





Kakoli Khatun with friends and colleagues who are developing their own online businesses.

Morsheda's Story

Morsheda is 21 years old and lives in a remote village in the region of Kurigram in Bangladesh. Her mother was unable to afford to keep Morsheda in education and she had to marry young. Now her husband works away and is only able to visit every six months.

Morsheda was determined to return to her studies. With support from Christian Aid's partner Aid Comilla, Morsheda is now studying and runs an online clothing business, with nine other women.

The women buy cloth to create 1, 2, or 3 piece kameez or lungi and sell them on their ecommerce platform.

Morsheda spoke to Christian Aid about her experiences: "Young girls are married. Some are 13, 14

or 15 years old. It's happening like that. It harms girls a lot, when they are married young. ... Aid Comilla gave us support and we took it with courage.

In the future, I will develop this business and expand it. If I make it big, I can do many things. I can help my parents and husband also.

Those who made it possible for us to do business in this remote area, I want to thank them. To continue with our business, I hope they will stay beside us. Thank you so much!"



Morsheda Khatun, 21, studies and runs a clothing business, leading a group of women.



Closing Prayer

God, you sent your Son, the Light of the World, to shine through darkness.

You call each one of us to shine brightly, filled with the flame of your love.

As we leave this place, may the spark of your Spirit ignite in us energy and passion to serve you and build your just kingdom on earth.

Amen.

You can find more resources for Advent and Christmas on our website.

Go to caid.org.uk for slide shows, all-age resources, materials for schools and young people, our digital advent wreath, craft ideas, and information on how to sing carols for Christian Aid.

