

# Christian Aid Week 2024

## All-age service

### Introduction for the service leader

This Christian Aid Week all-age service has activities and questions designed to get your congregation thinking, reflecting and talking together. If you think your congregation might find this approach unusual, you may want to prepare them by telling them in advance that this service will be asking questions and inviting conversations.

We hope this service will be inclusive and engaging. With this in mind, we invite you to use accessible language whenever possible so everyone can fully participate in the conversations and learning. If you can, you may also want to consider how to make talking in groups easy and comfortable within the physical space you have available.

The big questions at the heart of this service are:

- What does it look like to put love into action?
- How can we be a community rooted in love?

### Welcome

Welcome your congregation in its entirety. Remind the congregation that everyone is welcome before God. Whether they're young or old. Whether they're full of imagination or full of wisdom. Whether they have a small quiet voice or a loud booming one. Whether they feel shy or are brimming with confidence. Whether they've come alone or with family. Whether it's their first time or their hundredth! Everyone is welcome.

Remind your congregation that this week's service may feel a little different to what they're used to as there'll be questions to reflect on and opportunities to talk and listen to one another. It's also an all-age service, so contributions from everyone will be encouraged and welcomed. All of us will have ideas and reflections worth sharing.

Highlight that this week's service is part of your celebration of Christian Aid Week. You may want to ask how many people have heard of Christian Aid, and whether they know what Christian Aid does.

Christian Aid is a charity that works around the world with communities who don't have the basic things they need to live full lives, free from poverty. Such



as communities who don't have safe homes or reliable supplies of food or water. Communities where the climate crisis has destroyed crops, or where families can't afford to send their children to school. Christian Aid works in partnership with local communities who are living in extreme poverty to support them as they work to overcome daily challenges and build better futures.

Christian Aid does this because of the core values of LOVE, DIGNITY, EQUALITY, and JUSTICE that are part of their Christian foundations.

## Song

### [Global Neighbours – Fischy Music & Christian Aid](#)

Open this link to find a video of our song about being global neighbours. The video has the words along the bottom and there are some simple actions on the screen. It's a very easy song to learn as you go along (you may find it useful to play the first verse and chorus and then go back to the start to familiarise people). The videos can also be found on the Christian Aid Schools and Youth website and YouTube.

## Story

Let everyone know that you'll be reading them a story, but to not get too comfortable because there'll be asked to pause and reflect together in groups at certain points.

Today we're privileged to share Aline [pronounced AHH-leen] Nibogora's story. While this story can help us to understand Aline's experiences and the challenges she's faced, we must remember that Aline and her wider community are bigger than this story. We could never hope to retell the full complexity of anyone's life, nor should we, but by sharing Aline's story today, we can gain an insight into the work and impact of Christian Aid and their partners.

*Slide 1 – [Photo of Aline].* We'll be hearing and reflecting on Aline's story so we can learn a little bit more about the work of Christian Aid.

*Slide 2 – [Unmarked satellite view over central Africa].* Aline is from Burundi. Does anyone know roughly where Burundi is?

*Slide 3 – [Marked satellite view over central Africa].* Highlight where Burundi is on the map now you can see it clearly labelled. Burundi is in central Africa. It's a very mountainous country. Burundi is one of the poorest countries in the world. Many people live in poverty, and most rely on farming to provide food to both eat and sell. Christian Aid has three local partners in Burundi that have vital local knowledge, understanding of the community, and specialist



knowledge. Christian Aid supports and invests in local partners who are then able to deliver even more life changing support.

*Slide 4 – [Photo of Aline farming].* Families in Burundi grow fruit and vegetables such as bananas, sweet potatoes and beans, plus sugarcane, tea and coffee. Farming is hard work, but it's being made even harder because Burundi, like many places, is being affected by the climate crisis, which is increasing global temperatures and changing weather patterns across the world. Many farmers see their crops failing due to extreme weather events such as droughts and floods.

Families face many other challenges as well. Just like in the UK, the cost of everyday essential items is going up. In Burundi, most families don't have a water supply to their home, so they must collect water from rivers or shared water points. Healthcare is very expensive, and you often have to travel a long way to see a doctor or nurse.

The challenges that communities like Aline's face are made even harder as the climate crisis get worse. It's a heart-breaking reality that the crisis is having the most severe impact in places like Burundi where life was already challenging enough. Furthermore, the people of Burundi are among those who've done the least to cause the climate crisis in the first place.

*Slide 5*

### **Questions for Group Reflection**

- How do you think people in Burundi, like Aline, feel when despite their hard work, the crops that they're growing to make a living and feed their families fail?
- What emotions would you feel in their place?
- What does it mean to have a full life?

Give the groups two minutes to share their thoughts – ask for one or two volunteers to share their group's responses.

*Slide 6 – [Photo of Aline loading produce onto her bike from her home].* Life in Burundi is tough, but Aline had an especially difficult life as a young person and for many years after. At one time she didn't even have a place to live. Alone, hungry and with nowhere safe to go, she was very vulnerable. Aline lost so much, but she didn't lose hope.

Determined and resilient, Aline found support through Christian Aid's partners in her community. Aline received training that meant she had the skills and knowledge to set up a small business and form a Village Savings and Loans Association with other local people. Aline and her neighbours contributed money to a shared pot that became available as loans for members, as and



when they needed them. Aline took a small loan to set up her own business selling peanuts and avocados.

Through her business, Aline has been able to buy a bike, build her own home, get better access to healthcare, and educate her family.

*Slide 7 – [Photo of Aline holding a brick].* Aline hasn't stopped there though. She's now the chairperson of a Village Savings and Loans Association that she's founded. Aline's using her experience to help transform the lives of other families who want to do the same and build a brighter future together. Now, when crops fail, storms damage homes, and people fall ill, this community is in a position to work together to overcome these challenges.

*Slide 8 – [Aline quote].* Aline told us: 'The training helped me to get started, and today I still have it in my heart and mind. I intend to pass it on to my children and other groups like ours. It's important that we give back and train those who didn't have this opportunity, for the development of our community and our country.'

'The members thank me for the training and the positive impact it has had on their daily lives. People come to me as they trust me. Here in Burundi, a neighbour is considered a member of the family.'

*Slide 9*

### Questions for Reflection

- What can we learn from Aline about love in action?
- How has Aline's story given you hope?
- What are some of the ways we can respond to Aline's story?

Invite members of the congregation to share what they have learnt through Aline's story.

### Song

[Let Justice Roll – Fischy Music and Christian Aid](#)

Introduce the next song which is about climate justice.

### Reflection Activity

Instead of a traditional sermon or talk, explain that today you'll generate the key learning together as a whole community. The congregation will be in groups and each group will be given a Bible verse to reflect on. There are two questions that they'll be considering, and they'll need some post-it notes and pens. The two questions are:



- What does it look like to put love into action?
- How can we be a community rooted in love?

Remind your groups to make space for everyone to contribute if they'd like to. They will be reflecting on love. What it looks like, how it behaves, what it does, and how as a church we are called to show God's love to the world.

Before everyone breaks into their groups, it will be useful to frame the conversation, highlighting the significance of love within the Christian tradition. Love is vital to our understanding of God and our communal relationship with God.

As Christians, we are called to reflect God's love into the world. It's one of Christian Aid's core values and a vital part of their identity as a faith-based organisation.

The main Bible verse for Christian Aid Week this year is:

**1 Corinthians 13:13 (NRSV):** And now faith, hope, and love remain, these three, and the greatest of these is love.

It's been selected as it speaks to the importance of love as a core part of the Christian character, and because Aline's story shows us love in action. Ask the groups to take a moment to share something that this Bible verse says to them about the two questions above. They should feel free to make links to other passages and theological themes.

Next provide your groups with some more Bible passages about love. Our suggestions are:

**Mathew 5:43-48: 43-47 (NRSV):** 43 'You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy." 44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax-collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? 48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

**Mark 12: 30-31 (NRSV):** 30 you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." 31 The second is this, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." There is no other commandment greater than these.'

**Colossians 3: 12-17 (NRSV):** 12 As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. 13 Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 Above all, clothe



yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

**1 John 4: 7-10 (MSG):** My beloved friends, let us continue to love each other since love comes from God. Everyone who loves is born of God and experiences a relationship with God. The person who refuses to love doesn't know the first thing about God, because God is love—so you can't know him if you don't love. This is how God showed his love for us: God sent his only Son into the world so we might live through him. This is the kind of love we are talking about—not that we once upon a time loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to clear away our sins and the damage they've done to our relationship with God. 11-12 My dear, dear friends, if God loved us like this, we certainly ought to love each other. No one has seen God, ever. But if we love one another, God dwells deeply within us, and his love becomes complete in us—perfect love!

These four additional passages are only our suggestions, and there may be others that you want to select for the congregation to look at. You may like to give more than one group the same passage, as they'll likely have different insights and reflections to share.

### Prayer Activity

In Aline's story, we saw how she's been building a home for her family, and building a stronger community through her hard work, dedication and love. She's been putting love into action. In response to the exploration of love in action, we invite you to build a 'prayer wall'.

Using scrap paper (landscape), invite your congregation to write prayers that respond to Aline's story and the conversations they've just had. At the end of the service, pin the collection on a wall or display board like bricks.

It may be helpful to re-read the main verse from the service:

**1 Corinthians 13:13 (NRSV):** And now faith, hope, and love remain, these three, and the greatest of these is love.

People may want to reflect on:

- what love looks like in action
- how they can put love into action locally
- how they can put love into action for their global neighbours.



## Optional Activity

This activity could be done in the service, or at another time.

As part of Christian Aid Week, we're highlighting the valuable opportunity that this general election year presents to influence our political leaders. We're inviting church communities to join in by creating 'Let's end poverty' banners that can be hung prominently on church buildings. Banners are a sign of your church's commitment to putting love into action and joining God's mission to create a fair and just world for everyone. To find out more, take a look at the *DIY Banner Making* resource on the Christian Aid Website.

## Optional Activity

Watch this short film '7 Days, so many ways' to find out how to get involved in Christian Aid Week and why it's a great cause.

## Closing Song

[Stand Up – Fischy Music and Christian Aid](#)

As you bring the service to a close as you normally would, it may be a pertinent and powerful moment to invite members of the community to read their written prayers about how we as whole church can be a community that reflects God's love to the wider world.

The Grace is also a wonderful prayer that reflects our shared commitment as a community of Christian's to live out our faith so that others may see and experience love and fellowship. The Grace is a fitting way to bring this all-age and community focused service to a close.

