

Creative prayer ideas

How to use the prayer guide

This guide has been designed to work in a variety of church settings.

You will find sessions on

- Praying for world leaders
- HIV and AIDS
- Water and sanitation
- Trade Justice
- Climate change
- Inclusive education

Each session contains a case study, prayer points, creative ideas and statistics. You can use these guides in any way you choose. You may want to read prayers from the front, set up prayer stations around the church or give the congregation prayer points to take away with them.

If you develop any of your own prayer ideas, do let us know at campaigning@tearfund.org

*All statistics correct in June 2007

World leaders

Every year, world leaders gather for the G8 summit. The issue poverty is often high on the agenda. Please pray that the following world leaders will take bold actions and will make decisions that have a positive impact on poor communities around the world.

G8 leaders*

Canada - Prime Minister Stephen Harper

France - President Nicolas Sarkozy

Germany - Chancellor Angela Merkel

Italy - Prime Minister Romano Prodi

Japan - Prime Minister Shinzo Abe

Russia - President Vladimir Putin

United Kingdom - Prime Minister Gordon Brown

United States - President George W. Bush

Prayer action

If possible, get hold of a few whistles.

Organise a two minute silence for your congregation, punctuated only by a member of the church reading the name of one of the G8 leaders every 15 seconds.

Encourage people to use the time between names to pray for that leader.

Then blow your whistles!

HIV and AIDS

Statistics

- There are 40.3 million people worldwide living with HIV and AIDS
- More than 25 million people have now died because of AIDS
- Some 95 per cent of those infected with HIV live in poor countries
- Today, 1600 babies, one every minute, will be born with HIV
- More than 75 per cent of all adults, and 90 per cent of children are not receiving the treatment they urgently need

Case study

Ethiopian Shewaye Hailu, 35, is from Ethiopia. When she was nearly nine months pregnant, she discovered she had HIV.

Shewave was given medication by Tearfund partner the Kale Heywet Church. As a result, her daughter Lydia was not born with HIV.

'I am very happy – I have a healthy child,' she says. 'If Lydia had been infected, I would have been in agony and very worried. But thanks to the medical treatment I can raise my daughter, I can work and I'm in good health. Now I'm being trained in tailoring and knitting, which enables me to buy wheat and oil. I am optimistic about the future. Hope has returned.'

Prayer points

- Pray that the fear and ignorance surrounding HIV-testing would be broken down so mothers can access medicines to protect their babies
- Pray that mothers and fathers with HIV would get treatment and live long enough to see their sons and daughters grow up
- Pray that the local church, here and across the world, would realise its full potential for stopping the spread of HIV
- Pray that governments would honour the promise they made in 2005: to provide universal access to AIDS treatment by 2010

Reflection

You will need some flour and water.

Esther lives with her ten-year-old daughter Alinafe in Malawi, southern Africa. Esther is living with HIV. Esther and Alinafe's staple diet is a substance called nsima – a starchy paste made from maize flour and water. It's filling but not nutritious – and Esther needs a healthy diet to work with her HIV medication, so she can live long enough to see her daughter grow up.

Mix a paste of flour and water. Touch and taste it. Think about the strength of glue and the limitations of flour to give your body strength if this is all you eat every day. Reflect on what holds your own life together. What sustains you? Is it enough to help you when trouble hits? What enriches your life? How can you enrich other people's lives?.

Water and sanitation

Statistics

- Around 30,000 children have died today from preventable diseases, dirty water and poor sanitation
- Some 1.1 billion people lack access to clean water
- 2.6 billion people lack access to basic sanitation
- In Africa, an estimated 5 per cent of GDP is lost to illnesses and deaths caused by dirty water and the absence of sanitation
- More than 300 million people in Africa drink dirty water every day

Case study

It is mid-afternoon and Chinapadaguda village in India wears a deserted look. A lone woman sits vigil on a raised wooden platform, near a trail that leads to the community. Her duty for that day is to watch over the grain crop so that birds don't eat it up.

Lakshmi Markami hardly understands her state language Oriya. The tribal village she lives in speaks the local Koya dialect. But attempting Telugu, the language of neighbouring state Andhra Pradesh, she exclaims 'Neellu Theeyaga undhi' – the water is sweet – pointing to the well nearby. On the well's platform is the the inscription 'a gift of love'.

The well was drilled by Tearfund partner Eficor, who are being helped by your gifts to strengthen villages across India in their ongoing fight against poverty.

Chinapadaguda's transformation dates back to a visit from Eficor's survey team to the village in Orissa, east India. A meeting took place with the help of a translator. The people were vocal about their need for a safe source of drinking water close to their homes. Soon their excitement became tangible. An unspoken question hovered in the air, 'Can it really be true that one day we will have a well of our own?'

Today, a sense of appreciation is equally tangible.

'Life was difficult,' Dulki Markami remembers the past, when he drank from the river Sabari, a tributary of the Godavari River. The muddy water was filtered by digging a small pit by hand on the river bank. The water was made clear but was still polluted. Drinking it caused diarrhoea, dysentery and skin disease.

Now, thanks to Eficor's practical demonstration of God's love, life is much better.

'We don't have to walk long distances, spend an hour filtering the water and come back with a pot full,' says Rangami, one of the villagers who now have enough water to clean their houses and even take a bath. 'The best thing that has ever happened is that we have water to drink throughout the year.'

Prayer points

- Pray for that churches around the world would speak up on the issue
- Pray for the lobbying and research work that is being done by Tearfund and others, to encourage governments to respond to the crisis
- Pray that communities be given basic rights of having adequate water and sanitation

Reflection

You will need glasses of clean water and glasses of water containing soil.

Look into the glass of clean water. Consider how clear and pure it is and imagine taking a long drink on a hot summer day. Then look into the dirty glass, and imagine that you've just walked for five hours to collect it. Now you have to give it to your children. The water may be disease ridden, but you have no choice.

Climate change

Statistics

- 150,000 people already die every year from the effects of climate change
- The area of the world stricken by drought has doubled between 1970 and the early 2000s
- 100 million more people will be flooded by end of century
- By the end of the century, rising sea levels and crop failures could create 150 million refugees

Case study: Mr Mengesha Beyene, 82, Abay Atir Village, Ethiopia

Mr Mengesha recalls that his harvest used to be a good one. Sorghum (a type of cereal) used to be plentiful and it took his family three to four days to bring in the harvest into the granaries. He explained that grain used to be stored in pits dug in the ground, each holding approximately 5,000 kg. In those days, the harvest would last for at least two years. He says that now, the harvest does not last more than seven months. People tend to borrow money from money lenders and rely more and more on buying food at the market. Mr Mengesha's biggest sadness is that there are very few households now who even own granaries. The small harvest is placed in sacks and kept inside a hut until it runs out.

Prayer points

- Pray that the UK government will commit to drastically reducing carbon emissions
- Pray that poor communities will be able to adapt to the changing climate
- Pray that Christians will take a lead in changing their own lifestyles to have a positive impact on people and planet
- Pray that all governments will play their part in finding the resources to help developing countries adapt to cope with the threat of climate change

Reflection

You will need some leaves.

Take a minute to examine a leaf closely. Reflect on how intricate it is, thanking God for the beauty of his creation.

Now focus on your own breathing, thinking about the natural balance God has established. You breathe in oxygen and breathe out carbon dioxide. This carbon dioxide is absorbed by plants, creating a life-sustaining cycle.

But this balance is being upset by excess emissions of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide. In the West we have all contributed to this, from excess air travel, to leaving lights on, to keeping our appliances on standby.

The resultant climate change is devastating poor communities around the world. Take a moment to say sorry to God for your own contribution.

Trade Justice

Statistics

- Unjust trade rules rob poor countries of £1.3 billion every single day
- Poor countries only account for 0.4 per cent of this trade. Since 1980 their share has halved.
- The three richest people in the world control more wealth than all 600 million people living in the world's poorest countries

Case study

Halidou is married with six children. As a cotton farmer in Burkina Faso, he depends on the income he receives from his crop to provide for his family's needs, but he is struggling to survive on the low price he receives.

He's been told the price will decrease even further. 'I was sad to hear such news,' explains Halidou. 'Even when the price is higher we have problems because we cannot afford our hospital bills and prescriptions and we cannot buy school items for our children. Everything we buy comes from our cotton money ... I feel that poverty is coming. We are in poverty now, but a greater one is coming.'

Rich countries give large subsidies to their cotton farmers, allowing them to sell their cotton cheaply and still make a big profit. The subsidies force the international price of cotton down. West Africa's 10 million cotton farmers remain locked in poverty.

Prayer points

- Pray that farmers in poor countries will see steady demand and fair prices for their produce, so that they can provide for their families
- Pray that churches will take a lead in the use and promotion of fairly traded products
- Pray that poor countries will be able to choose their own trade policies – policies that protect the environment and the poorest in their communities

Reflection

You will need some cherry tomatoes.

Imagine that you are a tomato farmer in West Africa. This year's crop has been meagre because unexpected changes in the climate have led to a shorter growing season. Your crop has now been harvested and you are off to the market to sell it. Upon arriving you are surprised to discover imported tomatoes from the EU being sold. Not only that – they are being sold at half the price of the lowest price you could possibly charge. The tomato growers from the EU have been given government support in the form of subsidies, meaning they can charge far less than you. Your only option is to sell at a lower price. As you walk home, you know that there isn't nearly enough money in your pocket to feed your family until the next crop.

Take and eat a tomato. Pray for poor farmers struggling to make ends meet and pray that the unfair trade rules keeping them in poverty will be reversed.

Inclusive education

Statistics

- The World Health Organisation estimates that just 2 per cent of all disabled children in the developing world receive an education
- The World Bank estimates that 40 million of the 115 million children who are not in school are disabled.

Case study

Most children in the Indian villages of Otango and Nuagaon went to primary school. In Nuagaon, after the girls graduated from primary school, few were allowed by their parents to attend the nearby high school. The parents felt that girls are born to work in the kitchen and not to go out. In Otango, boys had to float on logs to cross a river in order to get to the local high school. But the girls were not allowed to cross the river in this way.

When the Konark Community Development Project provided Otango with two wooden boats to cross the river, most of the girls started going to nearby high schools. In addition, the project started literacy programs in both villages and provided tutoring for the students, as well as text books, notebooks, and other educational materials.

These days, 90 percent of the girls in Otango villages and 70 percent of girls in Nuagaon are studying in the high schools. Also, five girls from Nuagaon and four from Otango are now studying in college. Ten girls from Kotango village are studying in the colleges.

Prayer points

- Pray that the UK Government would ensure that education plans are inclusive before funding them
- Give thanks for teachers who do not discriminate against disabled children or exclude them from learning
- Pray for teachers who are positive role models, because they are responsible for forming children's attitudes to each other

Reflection

You will need some books and magazines.

Pick up a book or magazine. Close your eyes. Imagine, if you can, being excited about learning something new. Now imagine that without this learning you are likely to spend the remainder of your days in desolate poverty. Keep your eyes closed. You are blind. You are one of the 40 million disabled children who are unable to access education. Pray for these children, that they will know their value and that governments around the world would make inclusive education a priority.