

DRC

Emergency Appeal: ideas for your service

Local churches can help change the world. At Tearfund, we see this in the incredible ways churches lead life-changing community projects overseas, and through the support of amazing churches like yours who make this work possible.

Use the ideas on this sheet to help inspire and inform your congregation with how they can make a difference to the desperate situation in the DRC. Along with the film you can show, there is a sermon example, prayer points and a PowerPoint presentation. You can use one or all of these ideas.

1

Show our short film in a service

It shows how your church's gifts will make all the difference to people like Dheve * living in the Democratic Republic of Congo. You can find the film at tearfund.org/DRCappeal

2

Five minute sermon: The calling of the church

This short sermon uses biblical teaching to show why reaching out to vulnerable and oppressed people is at the heart of God's will for us. Feel free to edit this however you like to suit your own congregation.

The calling of the church

What is the church for? Not just this church, but the global church? Why did God call together this incredibly diverse, messy, beautiful group of people on the Earth?

The purposes of the church are varied and wonderful. As a place to gather together in prayer and worship; as a place for people to ask life's biggest questions; certainly, as a safe place for people who are struggling; and to spread the good news of the risen Christ.

But there is one 'why' for the church that the Bible seems to give particular weight to. In both the Old and New Testaments, there is an instruction from God that is the highest form of worship...

The people of God have a responsibility – a holy duty – to reach out in love to help the most vulnerable. To serve the lost, the marginalised and the oppressed.

Here is how the New Testament writer James puts it. Discussing the difference between merely hearing God's word and acting upon it, he says: 'Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.' (James 1:27)

True religion, the Bible says, must have looking after vulnerable people at its heart. 'Orphans and widows' is biblical shorthand for people who would be left with nothing without the church's intervention.

This was at the centre of Jesus' ministry. And of course Christ embraced the greatest need of all, opening his arms upon the cross in an act of extraordinary, breathtaking compassion.

And it's not just in the New Testament that we find this theme. The Old Testament prophets return again and again to this subject, often with surprising force – for example in this powerful passage from Amos, who is speaking God's word to his people:

'I hate, I despise your religious festivals; your assemblies are a stench to me. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!' (Amos 5:21-24)

It's extraordinary. Through Amos, God says here that he despises his people's religious ceremonies. He says he will ignore their offerings, and won't listen to their music. Why? Earlier in the passage, Amos tells of how Israel is 'fallen' because there are 'those who oppress the innocent... and deprive the poor of justice in the courts'. (Amos 5:2,12b)

Other prophets in the Old Testament, especially Isaiah, make similar statements. Unless God's people are looking after the vulnerable and oppressed, we are missing a key part of our purpose – for in God's kingdom there is no oppression; there is no injustice. To bring heaven to earth, we must reach out to people in need.

So where are the places of greatest need today?

There are many. We will all be aware of how many desperate situations there seem to be around the world. Yet one that we might not be aware of is in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

A vast and violent conflict has ravaged the DRC for decades. Outbreaks of disease, such as the devastating Ebola epidemic and, more recently, coronavirus are common. And as if that weren't enough, the country is also vulnerable to natural disasters, such as the recent volcanic eruption in Goma, which destroyed thousands of homes.

Today, more than 5 million people, including 3 million children, are having to live in temporary camps with little more than a sheet of tarpaulin for shelter.

The DRC faces not just one or two crises, but many. And it is a country that the world has largely turned its back on. But the church won't turn its back. Poverty is not God's plan – we are. Together, we must step forward into the gap. If we don't help, who will?

Organisations like Tearfund exist in order that the church here can join with the rest of the global church in showing compassion – to enable us to be Jesus' hands and feet even in places that our own hands and feet can't take us.

As [insert your church's name here], let us step into God's calling. Today, as a community, we will be reaching out to the people of the DRC. Please give what you can to Tearfund's appeal – every pound will make a lasting difference to someone facing a situation more desperate than we can imagine.

Prayer points

Prayer works. We're calling upon churches around the UK to cry out to God on behalf of the people of the DRC.

- Pray for those affected by the recent volcanic eruption near the city of Goma, in eastern DRC. Pray that everyone whose home was destroyed will be provided with somewhere to live long term. And pray for safety from natural disasters in the DRC.
- Pray that the end of the conflict will come quickly. Pray for lasting peace, and for wise and compassionate leaders who will be able to unite the country and prioritise the needs of those who have been suffering.
- Pray for comfort for people who have lost loved ones to violence, disease and disaster. Pray for healing for those who have been wounded – both physically and psychologically – by what they have experienced. And pray for provision for all those who have lost their homes.
- Pray for protection from disease, especially vulnerable families who are living in temporary camps. Thank God that the Ebola outbreaks have ended, and pray that the spread of Covid-19 will be limited – with easy access to vaccines for all.

Thank you for your church's support. It's only because of churches like yours that we are able to follow Jesus where the need is greatest.

Show our PowerPoint in a service

Download the presentation at tearfund.org/DRCappeal which includes Dheve's story, images and information about the DRC.

tearfund.org

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