MAKE THIS CHRISTMAS COUNT

Service planner



Athok and her family were forced to flee their home in Sudan

Together, we can make this Christmas count for a mother doing everything to keep her child alive.

'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' (Matthew 25:40)

At Christmas, we celebrate the birth of Jesus. Born into uncertainty and forced with his family to flee danger, the child laid in the manger grew up to proclaim and demonstrate the good news of God's kingdom. He fed the hungry, healed the sick, and welcomed the stranger – showing us what it means to love God and love our neighbour.

As we worship Jesus, we are invited to follow where his love leads.

This Christmas, your church can help provide vital food, medicine and emergency shelter to families fleeing conflict, like Athok's in South Sudan.

Above: Athok's twins are now gaining weight



'At least now things are a bit better. My children are breastfeeding and they have gained weight, not like before. At least now we can eat three times a day.'

Athok

tearfund

Athok's story

Athok lived a stable life in Hegliq, Sudan, with her husband and young son. Her husband was a driver at a maize flour factory while she was a stay-at-home mum.



Athok and her twins

But last Christmas, Athok's family, along with many others, were torn apart by the Sudanese civil war. Gunfire erupted in the middle of the night, forcing people to flee their homes with nothing. Athok's life vanished in a single, terrifying moment. She was six months pregnant with twins.

'I ran until I lost my sandals, just so I could survive,' Athok says. 'The only thing that was on my mind was my safety and that of my children. I believed my husband would follow us, but he did not.'

Fearing for their lives, Athok and her son walked for three days to reach a settlement camp in South Sudan. 'We drank water from the streams along the way. There was no food, and the roads were poor.'

> **'As a pregnant woman, I faced many challenges. Back pain, fever and other complications. I endured all the pain until I gave birth because I did not have money for the hospital.'**
>
> **Athok**

Your church could help families who've lost everything

After fleeing, Athok and her son arrived at the settlement camp alone. She gave birth to twins in makeshift conditions, wrapping her babies in pieces of a torn bedsheet.

She has been receiving emergency food assistance from Tearfund, which means she is able to eat and produce breastmilk for her babies.'

'When we arrived here, Tearfund started providing us with basic needs. They gave us flour, wheat, charcoal, and other [essentials].'

tearfund



This Christmas, your church's support could help many more families like Athok's receive the urgent help they need.

Around the world, Tearfund's life-saving assistance provides urgent food, clean water, medicine and emergency shelters in disaster-affected areas. **This Christmas, your church's support could help many more families like Athok's receive the urgent help they need.**

This is love in action.

Through it all, Athok is holding onto her faith in Jesus. She meets with other Christians in the camp at a church started by Pastor William, who also fled the fighting. 'After we opened the church, we began to see good things as people continued to pray,' he says. 'Jesus Christ teaches us not to hate our brothers. That is the change I have seen God bring.'

Athok adds, **The only thing I ask God is to take care of my children. I am hopeful, even though they are still very young. God will help me raise them.'**

For mothers like Athok, food is just the first step to helping their families survive. Tearfund walks alongside families like hers for the long-term, not just to meet their urgent needs, but to help them find the strength to change their own lives.



Pastor William gathers people to pray and worship God under a tree with a cross carved into it.

Our prayer is that, through this resource, your church will be encouraged as you see how your practical acts of love can make a huge difference for our global neighbours.

How to plan and run your service

Thank you for choosing to use this Christmas resource in your church. This next section outlines everything you need to plan and run your service. We know every church is unique, so feel free to follow the outline exactly, or chop and change it to suit your needs.

We ask that, when you use it, you will prayerfully consider making a gift to Tearfund's work in whatever way works best for your church.



Athok has been receiving emergency food assistance from Tearfund

SOCIAL MEDIA

In the weeks leading up to your service, let your congregation know that, this Christmas, they'll be hearing about Athok from Sudan, and how they can show Jesus' love through their prayers and support.

WEB LINKS

You can put website links up on the screen for people to look up during the service or copy them down to take home and look up later.

WELCOME

To add to your usual warm welcome, you could mention that the theme this Christmas is around how we can practically express our faith by showing love to our global neighbours.

ICE-BREAKER GAME

An interactive, ice-breaker game can be a great way to start a service, especially with children in the congregation.

For this game, you will need:
A soft ball or an inflatable globe.

Throw the ball to someone in the congregation and ask them to shout out a way we can show love to someone in need, e.g. 'kind words,' 'pray for them,' 'give them food.' They then throw the ball to someone else, who shouts out a different idea, and throws it again.

After a few minutes of playing, explain that this game shows, how together, our acts of love can reach people in need around the world. Read the verse: 'Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.' (1 John 3:18)

APPEAL SLIDES

These slides will guide you through Athok's story, and explain how your church can support mothers like her through Tearfund's Christmas appeal. You can show these in your service and talk through them, or allow people to read through them in their own time.

VIDEO

We've created a family-friendly short film showing how emergency food assistance from Tearfund helped Athok and her children at their point of crisis. This can be shown at any point in the service.

READINGS

These additional readings can be used at any point during your service.

Together as a church, we can express our faith through acts of love for our global neighbours.

'Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.' (1 John 3:18)

This is what Jesus calls us to do, and this is where his love leads us – to people who are marginalised and made the most vulnerable.

'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' (Matthew 25:40)

We follow Jesus' example of proclaiming and demonstrating the kingdom through acts of love.

'The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. ' (Isaiah 61:1)

PRAYERS

Prayer is another way we can show Jesus' love to families like Athok's. At Tearfund, our work relies on the faithful prayers of churches like yours – and God is faithful to answer!

Within your Christmas pack, we've created a selection of prayers to help your church pray for Athok and for Tearfund's work around the world, helping people move beyond everyday survival to build a better future for themselves and their families.

tearfund



GIVE

Your church could help provide vital food, medicine and emergency shelter to families like Athok's.

If you'd like to donate to Tearfund, please visit **tearfund.org/churchgiving**

£168

could help four mothers start a small business so they can keep protecting their children from hunger.

£564

could help provide four months' emergency food assistance for three families like Athok's.

£896

could equip seven local churches to support mothers like Athok with trauma counselling or the training to earn an income.

Thank you

Thank you for using this resource to help your church show love to our global neighbours this Christmas. If you would like to know more about how your church can support Tearfund, please contact our friendly team on **churches@tearfund.org**



tearfund.org
Tearfund, 100 Church Road, Teddington, TW11 8QE, United Kingdom
+44 (0)20 3906 3906 info@tearfund.org /Tearfund

Registered with FUNDRAISING REGULATOR

tearfund
WHERE LOVE LEADS

Registered office: Tearfund, 100 Church Road, Teddington, TW11 8QE. Registered in England: 994339. A company limited by guarantee. Registered Charity No. 265464 (England & Wales) Registered Charity No. SC037624 (Scotland). Photos: Bebe Joel Hillary, Nelson Lou-Tearfund 01264-(1026)