

# One Voice

Your weekly  
prayer resource

tearfund

## What does God want to say to you about COP26?

In November, leaders from around the world will be meeting in Glasgow for COP26 – the United Nations climate talks. As the climate crisis worsens, it is causing more severe and frequent extreme weather events that are pushing the world's poorest people even further into poverty. This summit could be a make-or-break moment to address climate change. But what should our response as Christians be?

First, let us look at what God's word says about our role here on Earth. The Bible is clear that we should be protecting God's creation (Genesis 2:15) and caring for the poorest people in society (Isaiah 58).

The climate crisis illustrates how many people have either neglected these commands or not understood their importance. We are at a crucial turning point – if action is not taken now by world leaders to address climate change, then millions more lives will be put at risk. So, what can we do?

### Seek God

Being in consistent conversation with God through regular prayer can help us in the following ways:

- It can keep our hearts and actions aligned with God's purpose for us.
- It can renew our strength and our hope. The climate crisis is a huge burden that isn't going away anytime soon. It will require persistence in prayer – but we do not have to face it alone.
- God can show us the steps we need to take to fulfil our role.

Contemplative prayers can help us to learn how to listen to God – enabling us to sit in God's presence and not only talk and present prayer requests to God, but to wait for a response.

### Pray with us

Take a few moments to be still. God's presence is always with you. Open yourself to it now.

As you breathe in, say 'God you are here'. As you breathe out, say 'And I am with you.'

Do this until you feel undistracted by your surroundings and feel the presence of God enveloping you.

And then ask God about the climate crisis and COP26. Ask him to highlight to you how you can pray and act.

Listen to God as he responds. You may want to write down any words, scripture or pictures he has for you.

End by thanking God for being with you and working in you and commit to the steps he has asked you to take.

### A note from...

'Prayer is vital if we are to seek a breakthrough with the climate crisis. As COP26 draws closer, let us draw nearer to God to see how we can seek his will and ask him to inspire us to act for his glory. Each week in One Voice in the run-up to COP26, we will be sharing a different way you can pray for the climate crisis. Do keep an eye out for this and thank you for joining with us at this crucial time.'

**Jane Boswell, UK Campaigns Team**

## Pray for the world



October is Black History Month in the UK: an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of Black people, many of whom are often overlooked or marginalised. Through our work we see how racism destroys relationships, and broken relationships cause poverty and suffering. Ask God to restore these broken relationships. And pray for God to remove barriers that stop Black people from living the fullness of life as God intended.



Nageshwari Upazila, a district in the north-east of Bangladesh, is experiencing more deadly and frequent flooding due to the climate crisis. Our local partner, LAMB, has just trained 88 farmers to help them be able to feed their families in these new weather conditions. Praise God as all of them have had successful harvests. Ask God to bless them in this next season.



Keep praying for northern Mozambique. While the city of Palma, in Cabo Delgado, has been reclaimed from the armed group Al-Shabaab, the group is still carrying out attacks. There is also a lot of trauma – particularly faced by women who have experienced abuse and children who were forced to fight. Pray for peace and healing across Mozambique and for an end to the violence.

# HIV, Ebola and coronavirus: the church leaders saving lives by tackling stigma

**Stigma and misinformation around diseases such as coronavirus, Ebola and HIV can cause a huge amount of harm. But church leaders can play an important role in changing the narrative – while helping to save lives. Read on to see how.**

Tearfund works with more than 15,000 churches across 50 countries, reaching around 7.5 million people every year. We have seen faith leaders and communities make remarkable contributions in response to epidemics such as HIV and the 2014-2016 Ebola outbreak in West Africa. And now, with coronavirus.

## False beliefs

During the Ebola outbreak, strict control measures were put in place to try to reduce the spread of the disease.

However, some of these measures, such as rules around isolation and burial, were difficult for people to accept. ‘The [government] response team did not understand how we live here,’ says Sikuli, a church leader in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). ‘They arrived in villages in biohazard suits, looking like members of armed groups and frightening the population.

‘The team did not build a dialogue, taking into account local cultural values. In Butembo, the rumours were that the Ebola response teams were the origin of the outbreak, rather than the solution. [Church leaders] worked hard to change this false belief.’

## Game-changer

Tearfund worked with a network of evangelical churches to bring together people from different parts of the community in a workshop. This provided them with the opportunity to discuss why there was resistance to the measures being put in place. They were then encouraged to propose actions to reduce stigma and help prevent the spread of the disease.

Today, important messages about how to prevent, identify and respond to Ebola are being shared much more widely, using clear language that everyone can understand.

A UN staff member said, ‘There was a lot of Ebola denial and it was difficult to get health staff into the area to assist... Because people trust [religious leaders], when they started participating in the revised burial practices, resistance ended. The participation of religious leaders was a game-changer.’

## Sharing the truth

The lessons learned from Ebola have been vital in tackling some of the stigma surrounding the Covid-19 vaccines.

Early in 2021, the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia, our local partner, was concerned about misinformation that was circulating on the Covid-19 vaccines. They discussed how the church could use its influence when the country eventually received supplies of approved vaccines.

With Tearfund's support, the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia organised a gathering of denomination leaders together with a theologian and a Christian medical scientist experienced in vaccines. The scientist set out facts on the vaccines and, together with the theologian, helped the church leaders to understand that the common myths about the vaccine were untrue.

Following this, the church agreed to a public statement on the Covid-19 vaccines, aiming to reach senior church leaders in the provinces to address common vaccine myths at a local level. They also facilitated conversations between church leaders and the Zambian Minister of Health to enable the church to influence the government's vaccination plans. This can help ensure that governments enact fair and just policies that adequately take into account the most vulnerable communities.

### Finding welcome

Vaccines are just one part of the fight against disease. Survivors and those suffering with diseases face stigma, discrimination and rejection.

'Stigmatisation is a very serious social problem when it comes to the Ebola virus, as used to be the case with HIV,' said one Christian leader in the DRC. 'We have challenged HIV stigma and are now doing the same with Ebola... Our ministers are preaching that people should accept their brothers and sisters, while still observing health guidelines.'

Gloire, from North Kivu in the DRC, tested positive for Ebola in 2019. She says, 'After I left the treatment centre I was rejected by my neighbours and my husband. My husband didn't want me anymore and finally decided to leave me. To be known as someone who was at the Ebola treatment centre was painful... We were being treated as if we were no longer human.'

Gloire received support at the Bethesda counselling centre in Beni. The centre is run by our local partner, a Christian university. 'I was welcomed at the Bethesda centre in a way I had never experienced since my recovery,' Gloire says. 'This is where I realised that I am still human and I am determined to go on with my life.'

Church leaders around the world are playing a crucial role in eliminating stigma and shame around infectious diseases. Let us continue to lift them up in prayer.

### Pray with us

Holy God,

Thank you for your church. Thank you for its leaders, and for the service they give to communities. We pray that more and more churches will take the lead in spreading truth and tackling stigma around diseases. And we pray that governments will prioritise and protect the most vulnerable communities in the face of diseases such as Covid-19, HIV and Ebola.

In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

# Praying deeper: a week of prayer for Myanmar

Prayer can easily get squeezed out of our busy days. One way of being more intentional about making time for prayer in our daily lives is by committing to praying for a specific issue every day for a week. This can help you pray about a topic on a deeper level and spend more time connecting with God.

## How to start your week of prayer

- **Choose your topic:** You can pray about anything you like, but it could be a good opportunity to find out more about an issue that you don't know a lot about but would like to start praying for.
- **Pick a time and place:** Scheduling time each day to pray can help you get into a routine. Choose a comfortable place to pray, preferably somewhere you won't be distracted.
- **Commit with others:** Letting others know about your week of prayer can motivate you. You could also invite others to join in with your week of prayer and encourage each other by sharing your daily prayers.

## An example week: praying for Myanmar

Hundreds of people have been killed in Myanmar since a military coup overthrew the government in February.

Protests against the military rule have been crushed with force, and thousands of people have fled and sought refuge in neighbouring countries. Meanwhile, those still in Myanmar face an escalating humanitarian crisis with food shortages, limited access to healthcare during the coronavirus pandemic, and the constant threat of violence.

Tearfund and our local partners are helping those who have fled Myanmar, and those who remain.

## Pray with us

### Day one

Since February, more than 25,000 people have fled their homes to escape violence. Ask God to provide them with a safe refuge. Pray for strength and wisdom for Tearfund's staff and our local partners as they support those affected by the crisis.

### Day two

'Seeing terrified children, the killing of innocent protestors, the grief of those who have lost their family members, and the news about the arrests of our close friends continues to raise anger, fear, and hopelessness in all of us,' says a Tearfund staff member from Myanmar, who cannot be named for security reasons. Lament with our brothers and sisters in Myanmar for the traumas they are going through. Pray for God's comfort and healing.

### Day three

The National Unity Government in Myanmar – made up of previously elected legislators – has recently called for a ‘people’s defensive war’ against the military. This has resulted in an increased military presence on the streets and could lead to even more violence and conflict. Ask for protection and safety for all people living in Myanmar.

### Day four

Tearfund and our local partners have already been able to support more than 3,000 people. Thank God that he has placed people and organisations in the region to serve the people of Myanmar during this crisis.

### Day five

The World Bank has warned that poverty may double in Myanmar as a result of the coup and the coronavirus pandemic. Pray that people in positions of leadership will take action to protect the most vulnerable and lift the country out of economic crisis.

### Day six

The military commander-in-chief has named himself the prime minister of Myanmar and said his ‘emergency rule’ may extend until 2023. Pray that there will be an end to conflict in the country and that God will make a way for a peaceful return to democratic rule.

### Day seven

‘We are grateful that we have people who are constantly praying for us. I can confidently say that these prayers work powerfully in our lives so we can still have hope and joy,’ says a Tearfund staff member from Myanmar. Reflect on what you have prayed for this week for Myanmar and lift them again to God.

Thank you for spending your week of prayer praying for Myanmar – your prayers are making a difference and bringing hope to those in the midst of the crisis.

**tearfund.org**

100 Church Road, Teddington TW11 8QE

T 020 3906 3906 E [info@tearfund.org](mailto:info@tearfund.org)

Registered office as above. Registered in England: 994339. A company limited by guarantee.  
Registered Charity No. 265464 (England & Wales) Registered Charity No. SC037624 (Scotland)

**tearfund**