

# One Voice

Your weekly  
prayer resource

The logo for Tearfund, featuring the word "tearfund" in white lowercase letters on a blue rectangular background. The background of the entire header is yellow with a faint world map and a white wavy line.

## Agent of change

**Many of us have spent Lent reflecting on Jesus and on God's love for us (John 3:16). But this isn't something we need to put to one side now that Easter is over – for the story continues. The next act is in play, and it includes you.**

We can honour the sacrifice Jesus made at the cross by living out the two commandments he calls us to follow: to love God and love others (Matthew 22:36-40). Darwin, a youth pastor from Honduras, offers an encouragement in how we can be a light to others.

Darwin attended a training course run by Tearfund that equips young people to understand how God wants to use them to be an agent of change in their community. 'We see ourselves not only as affected people, but as people who can also bless others,' says Darwin.

### What the church is called to be

When two deadly hurricanes hit Honduras in just two weeks, Darwin put his training into action. The impact of the hurricanes were devastating to communities who were already living in poverty. Waters of up to three metres high tore through homes.

'The first thing we set up was a community dining room for people in shelters... The church served three meals a day,' shares Darwin. Money was raised to buy boots, so people would not hurt themselves walking in the streets barefoot, and tools to support the cleaning and rebuilding.

'The church became what is always expected it to be: a refuge for all in need.

'The role of churches should be to guide people, not just in prayer, but in action. The church should be a means by which people can have hope. Not only the hope that God is going to help us, but also a means through which we can organise ourselves so that together we can help each other.'

### Please pray

Reflect on what it means to love God and to love others:

- Begin in worship. Praise God for how he's using his people to make a difference.
- Ask God how you and your church can be a blessing to your community. Wait for God's response and write down anything he shares with you.
- Share with your church leader or small group how God has been speaking to you.

## A note from...

‘The people of Honduras are still recovering from the effects of last year’s devastating hurricanes. Without the help of the local church, the impact would have been so much worse. Seeing people, like Darwin and his church, come together to help those in need is inspiring. May all of us be encouraged to put our faith into action and help those around us.’

**Alexis Pacheco, Central American Team**

## Why South Sudan is reaching breaking point

**To share how you can pray and join in with the work God is doing in South Sudan at this critical time, our News Editor, Andrew Horton, spoke with Anthony Rama, who leads Tearfund’s work in the region.**

South Sudan has faced many challenges since it was formed in 2011. Today, the world’s youngest nation is dealing with ongoing conflict, widespread hunger, flooding and the coronavirus pandemic.

### ‘Wading through mud’

Andrew began by asking about the flooding in Jonglei State which began in mid-2020 and has been the worst seen there for 60 years. Tearfund runs feeding centres in the area for young children, new mothers and pregnant women, but the floods have meant these centres have been forced to close for many months.

‘In Twic East, Jonglei State, we have eight feeding centres. By December last year, [our team] could reach none of those feeding centres. Since December, we have only been able to access two,’ shares Anthony

‘The waters have receded, but they have not receded to the point that you can drive. The team has to walk on foot, wade their way through mud and water to make sure that they can reach these feeding centres and so that we can start thinking about renovating them.’

The floods in Jonglei state have forced 25,000 people to flee their homes and find refuge in camps in nearby Mangalla. ‘People told us the last time flooding of that scale happened was in 1961,’ says Anthony.

### Dirty water

‘The other challenge is that all the water points have been contaminated. So now we are trying to repair and rehabilitate these water points, and treat them so that the communities can again be able to access clean water.’

The effects of the flooding are a further burden on the South Sudanese people, many of whom are already struggling with hunger. 'About half of the population, basically, is in very dire need of food assistance,' Anthony tells us.

Right now, 6.6 million people in South Sudan don't have enough food and are relying on support from organisations such as Tearfund.

'Our prayer is that we would find the resources to be able to provide life-saving food assistance to the people who need this most.

'This would mean providing supplementary feeding at the nutrition centres that we are responsible for. We would also want to be able to repair water points that have been destroyed because of the flooding.'

### **Hoping for peace**

Getting all of this support to people who need it, is being made even harder by the ongoing conflict, which began in 2013. There are signs of hope after a unity government was formed in February 2020, but fighting continues between some communities.

'The people of South Sudan are tired, they are really, really tired,' says Anthony. 'People are asking for peace. The South Sudanese people are not asking to be given handouts.

'They are really asking for that space that they can settle down. They say: "If I am a farmer, I plant, and I should harvest my produce. I should not be worried about the journey from my house to the market point to sell my produce. That should be safe." Those are the things that worry the people in South Sudan.'

### **Locked down**

When coronavirus was declared a pandemic in March last year, the South Sudanese government enforced protective lockdown measures. It meant non-essential businesses were asked to close, places of public gathering were shut, and markets were largely closed.

'Businesses, small as they were, were lost. Even the movement of cargo was difficult. And what happened was that food prices went up by about 180 per cent. And yet, salaries and incomes didn't change.'

These multiple crises are pushing parts of South Sudan to the brink of famine.

### **Never give up**

Tearfund's priorities continue to be saving lives, building peace and restoring hope in the country and churches are crucial in these efforts.

'Even as we do the most life-saving assistance, we continue to work with the local church to ensure that [they] are at the forefront in mobilising local communities on reconciliation.

‘The church remains important because it understands the challenges in these communities, and is the best partner to work with in terms of guiding the right solutions to the problems in those areas.’

Anthony told us he has been inspired and encouraged by the people of this struggling nation. ‘The spirit of the South Sudanese people reminds us never to give up. They are resilient people who are looking forward to a future where their families and their children can be raised in peace and stability. I think that is the wish of anybody in any part of the world.’

‘Let’s support the South Sudanese people at this moment. I am hopeful that a time is coming – and probably not in the very distant future – that the people of South Sudan can take a positive turn from this history of difficulties.’

### Please pray

- Lift up the people of South Sudan, particularly young children, new mothers and pregnant women who became more vulnerable as feeding centres closed due to the flooding.
- Ask God to help Tearfund staff as they start renovating the feeding centres and repair the water points.
- Pray for lasting peace and an end to the coronavirus pandemic – both desperately needed to help people restart their businesses and feed their families.

## Cause for celebration: how a community overcame hunger

**At 13 years old, Chanelle already knows what she wants to do when she grows up: ‘I want to be a doctor,’ she declares with a big smile. ‘Yes she can!’ affirms her mother, Diane. ‘She is a survivor, and I believe that God has great plans for her.’ They are celebrating that their village in Burundi is now free from hunger. Here’s how it happened...**

Nine years ago, Chanelle almost died of malnutrition. ‘She was very weak – we didn’t know what was wrong. At the hospital, she was diagnosed as being severely malnourished,’ explains Diane.

Diane, her husband and their six children live in Matana, in the south west of the country. Like 90 per cent of Burundians, they are smallholder farmers doing subsistence farming. This means they are growing crops and raising livestock just to feed their families – there is nothing left over to sell and earn an income from.

But with the effects of the climate crisis, such as changing weather patterns, made it harder to farm. This meant there was even less food to go round. Things began to get worse. In one year alone, more than 200 children in the community were sick – all due to malnutrition.

## Wake-up call

The Anglican Diocese of Matana, with the support of Tearfund, knew they had to try and turn things around. They set up a feeding and support centre in the community. Chanelle was one of the children who was treated for severe malnutrition. And, after two months of support, she made a complete recovery.

‘It was a scary time and a wake-up call for us and for the whole community. We decided to put our efforts together, work with the diocese, and make sure our children will never be sick of malnutrition again,’ says Diane.

The diocese ran training programmes with mothers in the community to help them keep their children safe. This included teaching them to make a special porridge that ensured the children got all the nutrients they needed. The porridge is made with local ingredients such as maize, soybean, peanuts, sugar and oil, to make it accessible for everyone. There was also training on the importance of good hygiene practices – such as handwashing.

And the support didn’t stop there. To help the community be free from poverty for the long-term, the diocese worked with families to help them make the best use of the land for farming. This included sharing new techniques so they could adapt to the changing weather patterns.

‘I have a kitchen garden in my home where I grow different kinds of vegetables,’ says Diane. ‘We have embraced the teachings we received, and in the last years, we have not had any cases of malnutrition in our community – instead our lives have positively changed!’

## The future is bright

Shared pain brings people together. The diocese helped parents who had sick children to form self-help groups so they could continue to support each other – as well as sharing advice and recipes.

But self-help groups are so much more than just emotional and practical support – they enable people to save money together and discuss business activities to help them to overcome poverty for good.

‘In our group of 17, so far, we have purchased four cows, and our aim is to buy a cow for every member, as a cow produces milk for the family and manure for the crops,’ says Diane. ‘We grow vegetables in the swamps during the dry season – something we never used to do.’

‘Our mentality and behaviour have changed – who could have thought that the people who didn’t have enough food for their children nine years ago could be doing so well today? We are grateful to God!’

Diane is now a leader in her community. She trains other mothers on how to prepare meals that will prevent malnutrition and gives advice on maintaining good hygiene. Her family is doing well. Chanelle is in the top of her class, and Diane is very proud, and believes that she will have a great future.

Bringing change and transformation into communities is never easy, but with the right support and the help of the local church, much can be done... and this small village in Matana is living proof.

### Please pray

Saviour God,  
Thank you that you are a light to the world.  
Thank you for how you mobilise your church for good.  
To you we give all the glory, amen.

Loving God,  
Thank you for how you helped this community overcome hunger.  
Thank you for the bright futures these children now have.  
To you we give all the glory, amen.

Sustaining God,  
We pray that you will continue to bless Chanelle, Diane and the community in Matana.  
We pray that you will help all Burundians overcome hunger and malnutrition.  
To you we give all the glory, amen.

## Pray for the world



Tropical Cyclone Seroja has caused flooding and landslides in East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. Bridges and roads have been damaged, and there is no electricity or network coverage in the area – making it hard to reach those in need. Pray that those who are missing will be found safe. Pray that the local government’s response will be swift in hard-to-reach places.



In Chad, tensions are high and there have been protests and violence ahead of the presidential election on Sunday (11 April). Pray for a peaceful election, that everyone will be able to vote without fear or intimidation. Ask God to grant wisdom to whoever wins the election and pray that they will lead fairly, and prioritise the needs of those living in poverty.



Violence on the Venezuelan and Colombian border between the Venezuelan military and Colombian armed groups is escalating. More than 5,000 people have recently fled into Colombia, where makeshift shelters have been set up to support them. Pray for people’s safety from violence and coronavirus – as social distancing isn’t an option in the shelters. And pray for peace.

### tearfund.org

100 Church Road, Teddington TW11 8QE

T 020 3906 3906 E info@tearfund.org

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