

ONE VOICE

TOGETHER IN PRAYER FOR AN **END TO POVERTY**

JOSEPH, MARY AND 6,000 CHRISTMAS TURKEYS

Joseph and Mary live in Uganda with their three young children: Faith, Joy and Rachel. They run a successful farm (home to 6,000 turkeys), have a lot of happiness in their lives and are in a position to help people around them. But it wasn't always like this.

Joseph had an extremely difficult childhood. He was physically abused by his step-mother following the death of his father, and finally ran away to the city when she tried to kill him. He lived on the streets for a number of years, nearly died several times due to the dangers he faced and even attempted suicide. But he survived.

When he was a teenager, Joseph decided it would be safer to return to the countryside. After a lot of searching, Joseph found his birth mother, who he'd been separated from as a baby. They set up home together with his brothers and sisters, but struggled to grow enough food and earn money.

Joseph didn't give up and started to explore other ways of making a living, eventually finding a job as a driver with Tearfund's local church partner. Not only did Joseph start to earn more money to support his family, but his confidence was boosted. In fact, through his relationships with the staff and his involvement with their community development work, including Bible studies, his whole world view started to change.

The power of love

Joseph began to realise that he was loved by God, whereas before he'd believed that God only cared about other people. He also started to view his resources in a new way, seeing that his time, energy and even the grass outside his home could be useful tools to improve life for his family.

Newly inspired, Joseph, his mother and siblings all started to put more thought into how they farmed their small piece of land. First they started to grow more and save money, and then they branched out into breeding turkeys to sell at market. Soon, they were able to send the younger children to school for the first time.

It was during this time that Joseph met Mary. She too had gone through a lot of suffering, and had been on her way to drown herself in the river when she met Joseph. They eventually married, and are now flourishing with the love and support they give to one another.

Anyone for turkey?

The family have gone from strength to strength, and today Joseph and Mary have a whopping 6,000 turkeys, providing them with a solid income! They employ vulnerable young people on the farm, ensuring that the transformation they have experienced benefits others too. And they are saving up to build a new school for the village.

Despite this amazing turn around, Joseph hasn't forgotten his past. Every year at Christmas, he goes to the city with food and gifts for street children. It's Joseph's birthday on 24 December, and he sees these visits as the ideal way to mark it.

'I know how it feels to not know where you belong,' says Joseph. 'We share some lunch, share personal stories with them, pray with them, share the word of God with them. We help to reconcile them with those who have hurt them. Many end up going back to their homes.'

Joseph and Mary have now started another business too, employing people to make roof tiles to sell. Again, they are using the proceeds to help others and invest in their community, rather than build their own wealth. 'I want to die empty!' says Joseph.

The transformation doesn't stop there. Joseph came back into contact with his step-mother, who had treated him so badly as a child, and was able to draw the grace and strength from God to forgive and build a new relationship with her. She now lives with Joseph and the wider family.

PLEASE PRAY

- Praise God for this inspiring story, which shows the power of his love, reconciliation and hope, and his ability to restore lives through us his church.
- Pray for Joseph, Mary, their children and the rest of the family this Christmas. Pray for continued flourishing, so they can lead secure and fulfilled lives as well as keep on reaching out to help others.
- Lift up Tearfund's staff and partners in Uganda, asking God to guide them as they work to see lives changed and poverty overcome.

A NOTE FROM...

'At Christmas we remember how God sent his son to show us what the Father is like and to reconcile us to him. God is working in and through Joseph to help some of the most vulnerable people in his community to know what the Father is like and to help reconcile them to their families. Let's praise God for people like him this Christmas.'

Nadine Parkinson, Churches Team

SHE'S GOT THE POWER

Warning: this story contains references to domestic abuse.

'When you empower a man to escape poverty, it's a wonderful thing,' says Hebdavi Muhindo, Tearfund's Programme Director for the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). 'However, empowering a woman is twice as wonderful.' Hebdavi explains why...

As I sat in the meeting, I could tell there was something special about Masika*.

The meeting was being held in her village in the middle of rural DRC. The men and women here had lived in terrible poverty for many years. However, for some of them, their fortunes changed after they formed a self-help group.

The women (and a few men) had pooled their very modest resources and issued members with small loans. With this money, they were able to grow more and better food and to start new businesses.

The self-help group meeting was buzzing when I visited them. People were talking excitedly about how their lives were changing.

A tale to tell

Masika didn't actually say that much at the meeting. However, when she did speak, you could see her passion and commitment. I could sense that here was a woman with a story to tell and I was keen to hear it.

After the meeting we visited a nearby farm where the group were learning how to make compost and grow more food. I took the opportunity to introduce myself to her.

'I am excited to meet your group,' I told her. 'I think it's very good – what you are doing together.' With that single sentence, Masika started talking. Her enthusiasm was obvious.

'It's not just a good thing, it's a life-changing miracle,' she told me. 'It's God's answer to my prayers in a way I could never have imagined. It's a story I will tell my children and their children for as long as I live.' However, this wasn't just a story about growing more food or making more money...

A radio without batteries

Masika was a mother of four children. Her husband had been the main earner. It was a joyless marriage and he had shown her no respect, beating her and abusing her verbally.

'My husband told me I was useless without him; just like a radio without batteries,' she recalls.

He would never consult her for any decisions about their household. 'He even told me that my parents wasted their money sending me to school,' she said, although, as a girl, she had been allowed only the most basic education.

When Masika joined the self-help group, everything changed. With her loan, she started selling tomatoes and then small doughnut-like cakes known as mandazi.

Suddenly she was making money and could contribute to household expenses. As that happened, her husband's attitude changed. 'Now my opinion counts in the house,' she says. The abuse and the violence have stopped too.

Double the difference

Working for Tearfund in the DRC, I love helping to empower people to escape poverty as we work in partnership with local churches. However, there's something doubly special when a woman is empowered.

When you support a woman, it gives them economic power for the first time. That changes the whole way their family operates. And, in rural DRC, a woman's income often contributes more to the welfare of the family.

Not only has the abuse stopped for Masika, it's ceasing for other women in her village. She's teaching and counselling other survivors of gender-based violence in her village – a serious problem in the DRC – and helping them to speak out about it.

PLEASE PRAY

Thank you, dear God, that you made women and men equal, both bearing your image. Thank you for every woman and man that understands their value as a child of yours. Please help your church across the world to empower millions more women like Masika. Let them discover their abilities and their true worth and go on to transform their families and communities. Amen.

**Name changed to protect identity.*

THE ELECTION IS OVER: WHAT NOW?

The election has happened: many of you cast your vote and the results are in. As the new parliament takes to those iconic green benches, there will be a mixture of feelings across the country.

Perhaps the candidate you were backing was elected, or perhaps they weren't. Maybe you really struggled to know how to vote, or you're worried about what will happen next. However you're feeling after this election, it's important to continue engaging with MPs and other political leaders to keep them accountable and make sure they're aware of the issues you care about.

Here are some ways to stay engaged and keep influencing the direction the country is heading in:

Pray

Whether you voted for them or not, your MP now represents you and your constituency in parliament. That's a big job that won't be simple. They need your prayers.

The Message paraphrase of 1 Timothy 2:1–3 says: 'The first thing I want you to do is pray. Pray every way you know how, for everyone you know. Pray especially for rulers and their governments to rule well so we can be quietly about our business of living simply, in humble contemplation. This is the way our Saviour God wants us to live.'

Ask God to give your MP wisdom, energy and strength as this parliamentary session begins. Pray that God will stir your MP's heart and mind for people living in poverty and for the environment.

Disagree well

A lot of families may (understandably) choose to ban all talk of politics at the dinner table this Christmas. In our day-to-day lives, people can feel nervous about discussing potentially divisive issues. But we have the opportunity to model how to disagree well, and be enriched by each other's differences instead of being driven apart.

Be curious about other people's perspectives. It is a wonderful thing that God has created all of us uniquely, in his image. We can recognise this by listening deeply and seeking to understand others. Discuss, rather than debate, and ask questions.

Be humble. Just because someone has a different opinion to you doesn't mean they are wrong. If you find yourself reacting out of anger or offence, it's important to look at yourself first. What in you caused you to respond to the other person in that way? Is there something you need to give to God?

Find common ground. The Bible teaches that we are all one in Christ Jesus. It is possible for people with radically different opinions to have a very similar motivation for those views. What are the areas where you can find unity?

Send your MP a Christmas card

Why not show your MP some love this Christmas and send them a Christmas card? This could also be an opportunity to let them know what issues you care about, such as tackling global poverty and climate change.

Tweet your MP

Social media can be a great tool to communicate with your MP. It can also be quite a negative, discouraging place for MPs. Make your tweet stand out by encouraging your MP, congratulate them (even if you didn't vote for them) and let them know what you are looking forward to seeing them take action on as your representative.

Visit them at a surgery

Most MPs hold weekly surgeries to give their constituents a chance to meet with them and discuss matters concerning them. Often these will be held on a Friday or at the weekend. Some MPs will hold these as drops-ins; for others, they will be by appointment only. You can find out how surgeries are run in your constituency on your MP's website.

Before you go, research your MP and find out what issues they care about. You can do this by reading their biography on the parliamentary website or on www.theyworkforyou.com. Plan what you would like to talk about with them, and how you would like to structure the meeting. Focus on one or two main asks.

After the meeting, send a 'thank you' email and follow up on any actions your MP committed to take.

If you have any questions on how to keep engaging with the political process, please email our team at campaigns@tearfund.org.

PRAYER POINTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

 Pray for the people of Sulawesi, Indonesia, where more than 200 families have been forced from their homes by flooding. Many of these people are still recovering from the earthquake in 2018. Lift up all those responding, including staff from Tearfund partners, and pray that help will reach those in most need.

 As Christians around the world gather to celebrate Christmas, please pray for those in countries where Christians are marginalised. Pray that they'll be able to come together safely and worship as a community. In any dark and despairing situations, pray they will know the light of Christ in their lives.

 Eight years of conflict have marred Syria's recent history. Pray for peace across Syria throughout the Christmas season and into the New Year. Pray that the next decade will be blessed with hope as the people of Syria recover from the effects of the conflict.