

ONE VOICE

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

Helping children in refugee camps to dream again

When Menara arrived in Cox's Bazar – the world's largest refugee camp – she no longer spoke. Just a child, she made the harrowing journey from Myanmar to Bangladesh with her mother and father. They arrived with nothing – only the clothes on their backs. Here's the story of how Menara found her voice again.

More than 911,000 Rohingya people made the same perilous journey as Menara's family to flee violence in Myanmar. Of these, an estimated 7,700 are children. They are surviving in terrible conditions. The camp is surrounded by the jungle. At night Menara* would regularly wake up, terrified by the animal noises she heard. Afraid, she would cling to her mother. Sometimes Menara would express herself with gestures. Menara's parents were worried for her.

Journey to healing

In Cox's Bazar, Tearfund's local partner runs child-friendly spaces where children can play, as well as take part in informal learning.

Menara was invited. At first, she would sit quietly in the corner, watching what everyone else was doing. Over time, she began to slowly mingle with the others. Then she started playing and joining in the activities.

Menara now has a safe space to finally feel like she can be herself and to process her trauma. Menara found her voice and began to talk about her feelings with others. She's also learnt how to write. And through the craft activities the spaces offer, Menara has found a love of needle and thread. She now talks regularly about wanting to be a tailor.

Life is still hard, but our local partners are doing all they can to help families like Menara's feel safe, so they can process their trauma and begin to rebuild their lives.

Please pray

- Thank God for each child in Cox's Bazar. Ask God to give them dreams and excitement for the future.
- Refugees in Cox's Bazar continue to face unimaginable hardships, including a devastating fire that broke out last week that destroyed 550 homes, forcing refugees to flee. Pray for God's comfort, protection and peace over those who have lost their homes and who have been triggered by the fire. Pray for provision as they rebuild what's been lost.
- Pray for wisdom for leaders in Bangladesh as they look for long-term solutions to help Rohingya refugees.

**Name changed to protect identity*

A note from...

'Children, like Menara, who arrive at Cox's Bazar have witnessed horrific violence while fleeing their homes. Everything they know has been taken away from them. We could easily lose a whole generation to trauma. But thanks to the generosity of our supporters, children are breaking free of their trauma and are starting to dream again.'

Sudarshan Reddy Kodooru, Tearfund Country Director for Bangladesh

Three simple ideas for praying with children about poverty

Peter Shaw, Editor of Tearfund's free magazine Tear Times, shares fun activities to do with children to teach them about praying for an end to poverty.

Like all life skills – such as reading, mathematics and writing – the earlier you learn to pray the better. And children that are encouraged to pray in fun and accessible ways are much more likely to pray throughout their lives.

When teaching children to pray, it is important that they learn that prayer is not about just themselves, their family and friends, but it includes the whole world. That means praying for things such as global poverty, the environment and world peace.

Each of those are pretty daunting issues for adults to pray about, let alone for children. That's why we've produced these three simple and fun ways to help little people pray about big issues.

A rambling prayer: an interactive prayer walk

Most children will start to learn at school about climate change and the importance of looking after the earth, its people, and the plant and animal life. But it's a very big subject to pray about. Even for adults, it can be hard to know what to pray. This is a way to break that block, to step out into creation and get inspired...

All you need to do is plan a trip out with the children to a local beauty spot or nature reserve. Make sure they are in suitable clothes that can get a little muddy, then set off... On the way, tell them about how God created the whole world, all the plants, animals and people. And that God said that it was 'very good' (Genesis 1:31). He also asked all of us people to take care of the world.

Then explain that we haven't all followed God's instructions, and that the way that many of us live our lives is hurting nature. Depending on the age of your children, you could explain more about climate change: how the burning of fossil fuels is causing temperatures to rise and the damage that is causing.

The children will probably know that climate change is harming wildlife such as polar bears and bees. But it is important to also let them know that millions of people are suffering too. You can explain that many of the poorest people in the world are struggling because the climate has changed. Farmers can't grow enough crops to feed their families because there's not enough rain. And sometimes when the rains come it's too much at once, which means people's homes are flooded.

You can also explain that litter (particularly plastic) is also harming nature as well as people. Many people in poverty have homes surrounded by rubbish that other people have thrown away. It's dirty and can cause them to be ill.

When you start your walk, suggest to the children that they pick up a few things on the way, such as fallen leaves, acorns or twigs (you will use them later to prompt prayer). Of course, make sure

they don't damage living plants and animals! You could bring a bin bag, gloves or a litter picker and clear up rubbish on your way too.

Either on the walk or when you are back at home, lay out in front of you the natural items you have collected. Ask the children why they picked up those particular things. Look at the forms and shapes of the items such as pine cones and leaves. Talk about how God is a great designer and created all the amazing things that grow. Spend a short time in prayer, thanking God for his creation and asking him to help us care for all of nature, particularly people in poverty who are suffering.

If you collected litter, take a look in the bag at all the rubbish that people discard. Ask the children if they would like that tipped in their bedrooms... Then ask God to help us to only buy what we need and to look after what he has given to us. Pray for families in poverty who live among litter, ask that they will be released from rubbish. Pray that the plastic will be collected and recycled, so that families can stay healthy.

Finally, ask the children what they have learnt from the walk, and what they are going to change about how they live their lives as a result.

Peace prayer: a written prayer to say together

It can be hard for children to know what to pray, and they might be scared to pray out loud. So this is a prayer written in simple language for children to understand and pray together with an adult.

All you need is the introduction to read to the children and the prayer to say together afterwards. You can do this directly from a screen, or print off copies for each child (feel free to cut-and-paste into a document). Make sure it is big enough for a young child to easily read and follow. (For children who cannot read, you can either just read it out in full to them, or line-by-line for them to repeat.)

Introduce the prayer by saying this to the children:

You may have learnt or heard about wars and battles that took place in the past, such as the Battle of Hastings or World War One and Two. In November each year, we wear poppies to remember the people who died in recent wars. And we pray for peace and an end to war.

Sadly, there are still places in the world that are at war. Even where we live, people can be unkind and hurt each other. In the Bible (Isaiah 9:6), it is said that Jesus will be called 'The Prince of Peace'. That's because Jesus wants us all to live together and love each other, not fight and hurt each other.

Most of the places in the world that are at war today are far away. But that doesn't mean we can't help to bring peace. We can pray and ask God to bring peace to places where there is fighting. We can also live our lives in a way that is kind and brings peace to our friends, family and where we live. That's how Jesus, The Prince of Peace, wants us to live our lives.

Now we are going to say a prayer for peace together:

Dear God,

We pray for all the countries at war today.
We ask that you bring peace
so that families can stay safe.

And as we live our lives today,
help us bring peace in everything we do.

Help us bring love where there is hurt
and kindness when there is pain.

Help us bring happiness when there is sadness
and comfort when people are scared.

Help us be a light when it is dark,
to take care of people and be a good friend.

Help us to always look after
people when they are in need.

Help us to always be good, kind
and may love be in our hearts forever.

When we give to others, we also get a gift
When we forgive others, we are also forgiven.

Amen.

Pray with crayons: get creative with your prayers

For some children, prayer could seem a little dull if it just means being still, closing your eyes and talking. (To be fair, a few of us adults may feel that too.) But prayer doesn't have to be like that; God has given us all our senses and creativity to pray, praise and worship him.

So, for children of all ages for whom prayers need a nudge to get flowing, here is an artistic way to pray...

First, get out a load of arts and craft materials. It could be pens and paper, plasticine and playdough, bracelets and fuzzy felt (is that still a thing?). Anything and everything you've got!

Then take a look at this story about Ruth from Tearfund's website: www.tearfund.org/OVRuth (If you don't think it's suitable, have a root around Tearfund's website for an alternative.)

Read it out to the children, or print it off for them to keep with them. Then ask them to draw a picture inspired by the story: it could be Ruth at different times in her life, Ruth growing potatoes with her husband, or the pig she's been able to buy thanks to her savings group. If using another story, note down some aspects of that in advance in case the children need a prompt.

Then get creative (you too!) and when you've all finished your paintings/drawings/sculptures get each person to describe what they have created. Remember this isn't an art competition! Then ask them if what they have produced could be turned into a prayer (you can help them out if it's tricky).

Once the session is over, display the creations on the fridge, the mantelpiece or somewhere else you will see it every day. And use that as a reminder to pray for Ruth and the many amazing people around the world whom God loves.

Over to you!

That's just three simple ways to pray but there are plenty more. I'm sure you could come up with a few yourself – something that teaches children prayer is an exciting event, and how the world can change as a result.

We hope you find these resources a blessing for you and your family. Please share them with your friends, neighbours and church groups.

Feeding families and futures in Colombia

Meet Darimar: ‘My name is Darimar Josefina Alvarez Gómez. I am 40 years old. I have eight children and I come from Venezuela. I live in Barranquilla... and I thank the Lord our food has arrived!’

Every parent longs to see their children healthy, strong and on track to a bright future with the chance to achieve their God-given potential. For Darimar, there have been times when these things seemed almost impossible.

‘My life in Venezuela was horrible,’ she says. ‘We ate very little – only once a day... My children were getting too malnourished and one of my daughters was about to die because we didn’t have enough food. We had no money to buy the medicines and that forced me to come to Barranquilla.’

When home is where the hurt is

The current socio-economic crisis in Venezuela has resulted in power cuts, extreme inflation rates, and a shortage of many essential items – including food and medicine. So far, the situation has forced around 5 million Venezuelans to leave their homes and make long journeys to other South American countries in the desperate hope of being able to find work and food.

Barranquilla, in neighbouring Colombia, currently hosts around 15,000 Venezuelan families like Darimar’s. At first when they arrived they were managing to earn some money to buy food. Two of Darimar’s young children were also benefiting from meals provided by one of Tearfund’s local partners. Darimar was so happy to see her children starting to gain weight.

Then the pandemic hit and lockdowns made things more difficult again.

Special delivery

With people unable to go out to find work, Tearfund’s partner changed its strategy and began delivering food baskets to families like Darimar’s instead.

‘Thank God,’ says Darimar. ‘We no longer have the worry that we lack food... [Now] whenever my children ask me for something, I can give it to them. This food basket is a great blessing. My children are very healthy... They were very skinny when we got here, but thanks to the food we’ve received my children are now a normal weight.’

Darimar goes on to tell us that when the food basket arrives: ‘it is a joy for my children. They open it and tell me “Mom, look we got cookies and there’s cereal!” They go crazy with happiness because back in Venezuela it was very rare for them to eat something good... We never imagined that we would receive this help.’

Hope and a future

Darimar dreams of having a house and a job in the future – to be able to earn her money, feed her children without aid, and not worry about being made homeless because she can’t afford the rent (as has already happened twice). For now though, she is grateful for the assistance. ‘If we weren’t receiving this food basket we would be on the street asking for money and we would eat only once a day,’ she explains. ‘Thank the Lord and you for the help that you give us.’

Please pray

- Pray for Darimar and her family. That they will stay healthy and that soon Darimar will be able to find a job and the home that she dreams of.
- Lift up people who are facing the fear of not being able to feed their families. Ask God for his provision.
- Praise God for the improved health of Darimar’s eight children. Pray for children who are experiencing hunger – that they will have enough to eat.

Pray for the world



Last week, an earthquake shook the island of Sulawesi in Indonesia, triggering landslides. More than 80 people have been killed and hundreds of buildings have been destroyed, including a hospital, which collapsed with a dozen patients and staff inside. Pray for comfort and provision for those who have lost their loved ones, their homes and businesses. And lift up the recovery and rebuilding efforts.



Yoweri Museveni has been re-elected as president in Uganda amidst allegations of fraud. Ahead of the election, social media and the internet was shut down, and there were reports of violence. The opposition candidate is under house arrest. Pray for transparency over the coming weeks. If the result is upheld, pray that Museveni will lead fairly and justly. Pray for tensions to be eased, and for peace in Uganda.



Sunday (24 January) is the International Day for Education. Lift up to God children around the world whose schooling has been interrupted by the coronavirus pandemic. Pray for children around the world for whom home is not a safe place. Ask God to protect and free children who have been forced into marriage or work because of the hardship caused by the pandemic.