

ONE VOICE

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

'I was in prison and you came to visit me'

Throughout the coronavirus crisis, prisons have largely been ignored by the media. But an outbreak in one could be deadly. Inspired by scripture, two groups in Mozambique decided to reach out to help protect prisoners from the virus.

These two groups are connected to two of our local church partners. The groups meet regularly to read the Bible and apply its teachings to their lives. They also save money together to help lift themselves out of poverty.

When news of the pandemic reached them, they decided to put their faith into action by protecting some of the most vulnerable people in society.

God-given

Both groups delivered 40 bars of soap and 50 facemasks to a local prison. This gave prisoners the means to better protect themselves from the virus. It was a gesture marked with love, and it came straight from the Bible. The groups shared that they were inspired to do this because the Bible calls us to remember those in prison.

'I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me...Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' (Matthew 25:36,40)

Called to love

As uncertainty continues to mount around coronavirus and the measures we must take to help prevent its spread, let us keep our eyes focused on Jesus and what he calls us to do.

'Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters... Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.' (Hebrews 13:1,3)

Please pray

Lord Jesus,

We thank you for these groups in Mozambique and how they are helping protect prisoners from coronavirus and sharing your love.

Let the glory be yours.

We ask that you highlight, in our own lives, how we can serve the most vulnerable, especially in these trying times. We ask you to be our guide as we follow you in our prayers and actions where the need is greatest.

Let the glory be yours,
Amen.

A note from...

'The prison fellowship that these groups carried out brings life to Matthew 25:36 "I was in prison and you came to visit me." During the coronavirus pandemic, let us continue to live out the scriptures and help people in need.'

Edgar Jone, Country Director for Mozambique

Seeking justice for indigenous communities and creation in Brazil

Thousands of fires are raging in Brazilian forests. Trees are burning, wildlife is dying, and indigenous people are being driven from the land they have inhabited for centuries. But groups of Christians across Brazil are rising up to demand justice.

Indigenous tribes in Brazil have been peacefully coexisting with nature for hundreds of years, but now their way of life is under serious threat. Forests around them are being destroyed to make way for farming or gold mining. Fires are being started to clear space for livestock and agriculture, often spreading into their living areas.

A risk to all life

Laws aimed at protecting natural habitats and indigenous communities are not being enforced. The rights of some of the most vulnerable people are being violated. And, as authorities and societies stay silent, the problem is getting worse.

For Josias, the 39-year-old Brazilian founder of *Nós na Criação* – which translates as 'We in the Creation' – this injustice couldn't be ignored. He knew that it was the responsibility of Christians to respond.

'There is a risk of annihilating the entire indigenous population in Brazil, losing the history of our people, destroying an entire biodiversity and ecosystem from soil to air,' Josias explains. 'This will bring harm not only to the lives of indigenous people, but to all life in this ecosystem called Latin America.'

The church and God's creation

As a follower of Jesus, Josias felt called to take action to both love his neighbour and care for creation. The two are inseparable: when we destroy nature, we inevitably harm our neighbour at the same time. Unfortunately, it is often the poorest communities that suffer the most, as they can be left powerless in the face of the destruction of their local environment.

Josias was concerned that many young Christians and churches in Brazil did not see responding to environmental issues as a priority. He realised that this is in part due to an incomplete understanding of the high value God places on creation, and the role we are called to play in it as God's people. For example, a belief that the Earth is going to be destroyed anyway, or a disconnect between the spiritual and physical, can result in a lack of care for the planet.

Josias started *We in the Creation* to explain the biblical responsibility we have for caring for creation and to help young Christians and churches take practical action to prevent environmental destruction.

'From the beginning to the end of Scriptures, we see God declaring his love for his creation,' says Josias. 'Creation reveals God and he has a direct intention to reconcile all things with himself through Jesus. Our first priority as We in the Creation is to assist the local church to see itself as an integral part of God's creation.'

'When the church sees itself as part of creation, people will start to think differently. They will understand that creation is not a big storehouse where we can take whatever we want to consume.'

A growing movement

Josias himself was inspired and informed by some of Tearfund's educational resources on creation care.

'There is a Tearfund booklet that has inspired me since the beginning of *We in the Creation*,' he says. 'It says: if we say that the Kingdom of God has arrived, it must be followed by the signs of that kingdom... and Isaiah 11 says that the signs of God are harmony in creation. So, Tearfund studies have helped me a lot to make connections between what we read in the Bible, the revelation of God in his creation, and what we see in society today.'

Now, over 100 people have taken part in *We in the Creation* Bible study groups, and the movement is growing. Christians from all over Brazil are growing in their awareness of the importance of protecting and caring for creation and learning how they can influence local government and campaign on environmental issues.

Standing up for the rights of indigenous people

The Brazilian government has recently attempted to pass new laws that would put indigenous communities at even greater risk. Law 191/20 proposes that indigenous lands can be opened up for research and mining. Indigenous communities will lose the legal rights and protections they currently have, and will be unable to prevent corporations or the government taking over their land. *We in the Creation* has been active in campaigning against this, starting a petition that has already been signed by over 61,000 people.

'[These laws] are aimed at destroying indigenous peoples and transforming their land into merchandise,' says Josias. 'The petition is intended to gather as many signatures as possible to pressure the Brazilian government to give up on the proposal that opens indigenous lands for mining. We understand it to be important because it is an aggression against nature, but, above all, because it is the church's responsibility to heed God's call to the ministry of reconciliation.'

Youth representing their local communities

Tearfund's local partners are currently supporting Brazilian youth involved in the *We in the Creation* movement. Young people from different areas of the country have been selected to be part of our *World Rebooted* campaign, which is focused on urging governments to prioritise protecting the environment and the poorest communities as they 'rebuild' societies after the coronavirus pandemic.

Tearfund provides young people with tools and training to connect with their local communities and find out about people's environmental needs and concerns. These young advocates then share this feedback with local authorities and the wider community through thought-provoking YouTube videos and podcasts.

Christians leading the way

This is just the beginning of what Josias hopes to achieve through We in the Creation and in collaboration with other local and global Christian groups. He hopes that the church across Brazil, and around the world, will embrace the truth that caring for creation is a fundamental part of living out the Christian faith. He looks to a future where Christians will lead the way in protecting and caring for God's creation.

'In the future, I see that We in the Creation is part of a much larger movement in which the church will perceive itself as part of God's creation and will act directly to build a harmonious coexistence in that creation,' says Josias.

'This is the dream that God has had since the beginning where all human and non-human beings relate to each other in care and love. This revival is something that will shake the structures of this empire that tries to manipulate and transform God's creation into merchandise.'

Please pray

- Josias has requested prayer for all those involved in We in the Creation. He asks that they will continue to be guided by God as they step out in faith.
- Thank God for the young people who are part of the *World Rebooted* campaign and advocating for the needs of communities across Brazil. Please pray that the Brazilian authorities will listen to their requests, and that new laws and policies will focus on protecting the environment and people.
- Pray that Christians around the world will make caring for God's creation a priority. Pray that we will all find ways to take practical action to prevent the exploitation of the environment and people around us.

Blessed are the peacemakers: praying for an end to conflict around the world

Tearfund's News Editor, Andrew Horton, reflects on the importance of praying for peace.

I met a man who couldn't stand up, his strength depleted, his diet: grass. This is one of the enduring memories of my visit to South Sudan in 2017. I went to see the work Tearfund was doing to help people facing a deadly famine.

When I was visiting our office in Twic East, I was asked to lead a Bible study for the Tearfund staff team. I finished by asking them what the people of South Sudan most needed prayer for. It wasn't what I expected to hear. After my encounter with the man who only had grass to eat, I had in my mind that they would say 'food'. Surely food is what is needed most in a famine, I thought?

No. The answer was 'peace'.

How they long for peace in South Sudan, still today. Peace would mean people can feel secure in their homes and communities, sustain their education and businesses, and be able to feed their families.

This is why peace is so important – why, as Christians, we should pray to our God for an end to violence and conflict.

Here is a prayer you can bring to God now:

Father God,

Since December 2013, the conflict in South Sudan has claimed thousands of lives and driven nearly four million people from their homes.

Lord, bring peace.

Honduras has one of the highest murder rates in the world.

Lord, bring peace.

Conflict broke out in Syria in 2011. Over 400,000 people are estimated to have been killed, and many millions have been forced to flee their homes.

Lord, bring peace.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), decades of conflict have brought devastation to the country. One in four women experience sexual and gender-based violence in their lifetime.

Lord, bring peace.

Yemen faces the world's worst humanitarian crisis. Conflict has left more than 24 million people in urgent need of food and clean water. The country is on the brink of famine.

Lord, bring peace.

The conflict provoked by Boko Haram in North East Nigeria has led to more than 20,000 people being killed, and forced 2.1 million people from their homes.

Lord, bring peace.

In every country where violence and conflict is destroying lives and pushing people further into poverty –

Lord, bring peace.

Amen.

Pray for the world



Ahead of next month's presidential election in Ivory Coast, the incumbent president's main challenger, and a group of opposition parties, have called for a civil disobedience campaign to stop him running for a third term. Pray that the run-up to the election will be free from violence and intimidation. Pray for a fair and inclusive election, and for the results to be respected.



Praise God: our local partners in Guatemala and Honduras have been able to begin distributing food parcels and providing cash assistance to the poorest families in their regions. Over the next three months, thousands of families will benefit from this vital support. Many will have had no income recently due to coronavirus-enforced lockdowns. Keep these families in your prayers.



Almost three quarters of Zimbabwe's workforce in urban areas are now jobless. This is primarily made up of female traders. This was already an increasing problem pre-pandemic, due to the deteriorating economic situation, but coronavirus-enforced lockdowns have added to this. Pray for provision for families in need – especially in light of rising food costs.