

ONE VOICE

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

OPENING DOORS TO CHRISTMAS

What are the gifts – the small, joyful distractions – that we’re hoping to find behind the doors of our Advent calendars? Chocolate? Perfume? Small, plastic, tenuously-linked-to-Christmas figurines...?

‘Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in...’ (Revelation 3:20)

It can be so easy to get lost in the loudness of life – particularly in the run-up to Christmas. So much to do... or not enough. So much to remember... or forget. So much to spend... or worry about spending. In the midst of it all, we find peace as we hear again the whisper of the one who sustains us – who offers to come in and sit at our table.

Remembering the reason for the season

‘Waymaker.

Miracle worker.

Promise keeper.

Light in the darkness.’

This worship song from the Christian band Leeland calls out some of the characteristics of God. The Bible gives us many more names that tell of who he is to us – reminding us who we are to him.

Protector – we are whom he wants to protect.

Comforter – we are whom he longs to comfort.

Ever-present help in trouble – we are the beloved whom he will never leave or forsake.

Healer – ours are the broken hearts he is waiting to bind up

Saviour – we are whom he chooses to save.

Placed to lie in a manger. The ultimate gift. The perfect plan of a Father who loved us so beyond our understanding that – weak and flawed as we are – he gave us his only son. Majesty set aside for the humility of humanity.

For us. To bring us close to him.

PLEASE PRAY:

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for your great love for humanity. Thank you that you teach us to love by first loving us.

We praise you for your goodness, your kindness, your great mercy and compassion toward us.

Please help us to follow you, as we show your love to those who are in need.

Amen.

Small treats hidden behind cardboard cut-outs can make us smile for a moment... but in Christ we have something infinitely better. **Sign up to receive our daily Advent emails at https://www.tearfund.org/about_you/resources/christmas/**

A NOTE FROM...

'Whilst at Christmas, we are painted an image of Jesus as a child, we remember that he is the one who can protect, comfort, heal and be present with all those suffering in poverty at this time of year. Thank you for continuing to join us in prayer for those in need and we hope you have a blessed Advent season.'

Graeme McMeekin, Acting Scotland Director

ROCKING THE CLASSROOM

How a group of teachers from the UK rocked a maths class in rural Zambia... with the help of Freddie Mercury and Queen.

The challenges facing Zambian teachers are huge. They have few resources, little to no pay and overcrowded classrooms.

Tearfund Go volunteers, James and Cathryn, watched some of Zambia's dedicated teachers at work and offered them a few tips and tricks to make their lives easier.

'The school staff we worked with are inspiringly passionate and dedicated, but there is very little funding,' explains student and Tearfund Go volunteer James. 'Basic resources such as paper or chalk are in short supply. One teacher shared that she has a class of 85 children. That creates a space problem. Children are often crammed three or four to a desk, and sometimes even have to sit on the floor.'

'The community school teachers have very little training,' adds fellow teacher Cathryn. 'The main method of teaching in Zambia is through rote learning, which focuses on memorising facts through repetition.'

'It was a real privilege to encourage the teachers with interactive teaching methods. We wanted to bring a bit of energy and excitement into the classroom.'

Learning together

To share their insights, Cathryn and the team decided to run a three day teacher training course with the help of Tearfund's partner organisation in Zambia, the Jubilee Centre. Encouraging the teachers to break away from repetitive rote learning, they introduce simple, fun teaching techniques.

'One of the highlights was chanting the multiplication tables with body percussion to the rhythm of We Will Rock You by Queen.'

As well as reinventing classic rock, the training was a personal learning experience for the Tearfund Go volunteers says James:

'It was a real cultural exchange. The teacher training wasn't just one way. It was a catalyst for ideas and experience to be shared across the whole group. This was one of the most humbling experiences of the trip; I realised that I wasn't the expert and had so much to learn too.'

Serious fun

Following the training sessions the team were able to visit some of the teachers at their schools to see how they had put the training into practice. Mr Kelvin, who attended the sessions, explained the difference the new teaching techniques had made:

'The Tearfund team were our friends and our partners. I learnt a lot of games – things like dance and drama to help in the lessons. We have been using drama to help the classes with their revision.

'My favourite game was hangman. I have used it to introduce my lessons since then. The class enjoyed it so much and nearly everyone learnt from the games. It opens pupils' minds – now it's difficult for me to teach without these games!'

As Nelson Mandela said: 'Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world.' Thanks to a meeting of minds between two sets of teachers, that world-changing learning has become serious fun for hundreds more kids.

PLEASE PRAY

- Thank God for the shared learning and friendships between Tearfund Go volunteers and the communities they work with.
- Pray for more opportunities for teachers to receive training across Zambia.
- Pray that the teachers in Zambia's community schools will remain passionate and committed.

UBUNTU: THE CIRCLE OF LOVE

'Is *Ubuntu* the key to happiness?' asked the *Daily Mail* recently. Ben Cohen investigates a centuries-old southern African word that has a powerful message for our lives in the UK.

These days you can't set foot in a bookshop without seeing another book about how you can live a better, happier, more fulfilled life. There are exotic sounding words like *Hygge* (a Danish word that means 'a feeling of comfort and cosiness') and *Lagom* (from Sweden, meaning 'living with just enough'), but now there's another word, and way of life, to learn about:

Ubuntu

It's the subject of a new book *Everyday Ubuntu* by Mungi Ngomane, granddaughter of South Africa's Archbishop Desmond Tutu. It gained attention when Prince Harry and Megan Markle championed both the book and the concept of *ubuntu* on their visit to South Africa recently.

It's a bit different to *Lagom* and *Hygge* though. For one thing, *Ubuntu* is from Africa and not Scandinavia – it's a term that's been familiar across Africa for generations.

Secondly, this isn't just 'self-improvement'. That's because *Ubuntu* isn't just about 'me', it's about 'us'.

'*Ubuntu* teaches us to look outside ourselves to find answers,' says Mungi Ngomane, author of *Everyday Ubuntu*. '*Ubuntu* is a way of living that is based on the idea that all humans are of infinite worth and value.'

Put in its simplest form: 'I am only because you are'.

This attitude of community and togetherness has been part of Tearfund's work around the world since we started.

Self-improvement without the 'self'

'I don't think individualism is bad,' says Mungi, who currently lives in the States. 'However, I think the rugged individualism we currently treasure can actually be harmful. We now spend money seeing therapists and trying out all these new wellness fads, partly to compensate for the fact that we aren't comfortable leaning on our friends and families.'

Everyday Ubuntu is crammed with examples of the concept in action. She cites *Ubuntu* as the philosophy that made South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission possible.

Another example Mungi gives is the life of Christophe Mbonyingabo. Christophe is one of Tearfund's Inspired Individuals – men and women working to radically change their communities. Christophe has been modelling *ubuntu* for many years, as he brings reconciliation between the Hutus and Tutsis in Burundi, following the 1994 genocide.

Ubuntu isn't just for the likes of Archbishop Desmond Tutu or Christophe though, says Mungi:

'It's not restrictive, it's just a challenge to do and be better each day. If you fail one day, then start over the next. It's about giving yourself and others the benefit of the doubt, rather than assuming you know best. When I give people the benefit of the doubt, they're more likely to do the same.'

14 ways to practice *Ubuntu*

1. **See yourself in other people.** Recognise that we are all human beings (we're not all the same and that's okay!)
2. **Strength lies in unity.** There is help out there if you look for it.
3. **Put yourself in the shoes of others.** There's much to gain from seeing someone else's point of view.
4. **Choose to see the wider perspective.** Nothing in life is black and white.
5. **Have dignity and respect for yourself and others.** If you refuse to show others dignity then you also lose some for yourself.
6. **Believe in the good of everyone.** If you look for it, you'll find it.
7. **Choose hope over optimism.** A hopeful nature is a wonderful gift.
8. **Seek out ways to connect.** The more connected you are to others, the happier you will feel.
9. **The power of the F-word: forgiveness.** Forgiving relieves a burden on yourself and on others.
10. **Embrace our diversity.** Draw on the strengths of our differences and leave all judgement behind.
11. **Acknowledge reality.** Accept where you are now, in order to get where you

want to be in the future.

12. **Find humour in our humanity.** Being able to laugh during the worst of times lifts our spirits.

13. **Little things make a big difference.** You matter. The way you choose to live your life matters.

14. **Learn to listen so that you can hear.** Good communication is the basis of making the strong connections we all need to thrive.

PLEASE PRAY

Read through the list above again and pause after each one to reflect on what this would look like in your own life. As things come to mind, commit them to God and spend time listening to him. You may find it helpful to write things down.

***Everyday Ubuntu* is published by Penguin Random House.**

PRAYER POINTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

✔ Tearfund is supporting the 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence (GBV) to raise awareness of violence against women and girls, to speak out against it and to work towards ending this global epidemic. Please pray for all those affected by GBV and for Tearfund's work in this vital area.

✔ Praise God that we have been awarded EU funding for new work in Rwanda. This will enable our staff and partners to help people develop knowledge and skills in farming and the sale of produce. Pray for the people who will take part in this training, that they will gain the skills they need to overcome poverty.

✔ Political protests across Iraq are continuing into a third month. More than 300 people have died and thousands more have been injured. Please continue to pray for the safety of the public, for peaceful resolutions to the problems and for political stability.