

CCOW Prayer Email

Week of 10 May

- **Reflection: Green Communion**
- **Fair Trade: Keeping Apart, Staying United**
- **Christian Aid Week**
- **World Debt Day**
- **Coming up ... Thy Kingdom Come, Biodiversity Day
(Dates for Prayer and Action)**

Thanks for the responses to last week's email - we're glad to know people found it useful. Please do continue to tell us what we can do to help you pray and act - and thank you for all you are doing.

Reflection: Green Communion

As we go through lockdown together, there's been a sense of renewed appreciation for the beauty of God's creation. Whether you're able to walk outside for exercise or are looking through the window, whether your vista is wide or narrow, there's so much beauty in everything - from the tiniest bug to the vastness of hills or plains. A few years ago Elizabeth did a powerpoint called 'Green Communion', which highlights this beauty, marvelling at all things green, small and large. Praise God from whom all blessings flow! [Enjoy](#).

Fair Trade: Keeping Apart, Staying United

"Fair Trade is a trading partnership, based on dialogue, transparency and respect, that seeks greater equity in international trade." That's the first line of the [internationally agreed definition of Fair Trade](#) - and a reminder that at its heart, the Fair Trade movement is about connection and mutuality.

In our work on Fair Trade, we're always struck by the ways participating in the movement has increased the capacity of producers to be agents of change and how they have used that to help others - whether it's been [Eswatini Kitchen in Swaziland giving work opportunities](#) to people isolated by disabilities or the Eksteenskuil farmers supporting a woman who takes in children abandoned by their parents.

During the Coronavirus pandemic, too, Fair Trade producers, using [Fairtrade premium money](#) and other resources, are uniting to take positive action for their members and communities. Two Salvadoran co-ops [are using the premium to offer food and financial assistance to members](#), and some [Peruvian ones are also giving food to vulnerable members of the community](#). A vanilla [producer in Madagascar has used Fairtrade premium funding to buy soap](#) for its members and vulnerable people in the community. Sixteen Fairtrade coffee companies in Colombia [have helped to fund a local COVID testing site](#). And there's much more: [Fairtrade International has put together two funds to assist producer responses](#) and the Latin America, Asia, and Africa Fairtrade organisations have gathered together many stories about their members' actions.*

But the gathered stories also reflect the very real suffering and risks faced by producers and their communities. The [Fairtrade flower industry in Kenya has been devastated](#) by the impacts of internal lockdown, inability to transport products and lack of demand. [West African farmers are hit by falling cocoa prices](#). South American craft producers are unable to pick up the raw materials to make their goods. Reports from Asia show that some sectors, like the Indian tea industry, have been greatly harmed by the lockdown's coinciding with harvest. Others could keep going - but are finding that orders are drying up, and customers aren't making payments for goods received. As the situation continues, many groups face uncertainty about how their work will proceed, how they can get products to market, and how much demand for their products there will be. Living in countries that cannot afford massive stimulus and relief packages, they are gravely concerned.

We can and should pray about these situations. In addition, we can play our part in 'keeping united'. We can show our thanks and appreciation for the work of producers on social media, as the Fairtrade Foundation is encouraging. And we can encourage demand for Fair Trade products, both food and crafts ... whether by buying the products ourselves or, if that's not possible, raising awareness of the situation.

For prayer: "It starts with a change/so outwardly insignificant/That no one would notice ..." [Read our 'Just a moment' reflection](#) and then choose some stories from the list above. Pray for the producers you've chosen. Pray to be shown what you can do, within your means, to stand in solidarity with them. You might also want to use some of the other prayers on the sheet.

For action: Please add Fair Trade products to your shopping basket insofar as you are able, whether you're buying food or cards or gifts, at the market or online. You can find links to many online food and crafts retailers in our [redesigned and revised guide to using Fair Trade in churches, which contains a buying guide for many food and craft-related products](#).

Some producer groups and importers are crowdfunding for producers and their communities. Please take a look at the [World Fair Trade Organization page](#) listing their appeals - could you donate?

*Because we encountered an issue with one of the NAPP files and are uncertain whether there are issues with others, we are not linking directly to these materials. The information on Asia is taken from a summary report prepared by NAPP on 28 April.

Christian Aid Week

Every year, churches across the UK unite in Christian Aid Week, seeing to bring hope to people in difficult situations. This year, even though door-to-door collections aren't possible, Christian Aid Week still gives us an opportunity to connect with each other and with our global neighbours.

Christian Aid and its partners are working to bring hope amidst the Coronavirus pandemic. To take a few examples, it's supporting the [Karen Baptist Convention to distribute medical supplies in Myanmar](#). Its staff and their partners are [combatting false information about COVID](#) and [bringing food to vulnerable people in displacement camps](#), in Nigeria and [providing training, handwashing stations and supplies for Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazaar](#).

But the charity needs our help. It is expecting a £6 million gap in funds this year and has already [taken the difficult decision to furlough 20% of its UK staff](#) to preserve funding for its country programmes and international staff.

Could you pray, give and encourage others to give?

- Join in the prayers from this year's virtual [Christian Aid Week service](#)
- [Donate](#)
- Find out how to [make a virtual 'red envelope'](#) that you can pass along to friends and family

World Debt Day

Last week, we ran a piece on the need to tackle unsustainable developing-country debt. You can find it [here](#). This coming Saturday (16 May) is World Debt Day - so an ideal time to pray and act on the issue. We'd like to pick up one particular point for your prayer and action.

As noted in the earlier piece, the G20 countries have agreed a suspension of debt principal and interest payments through the end of the year for 77 of the world's poorest countries. They have also called on private investors to "participate in the initiative on comparable terms." But there are fears that some private investors will, instead, take these developing countries to court to force them to pay, at a time when the countries desperately need the money in question for their COVID response. The amounts involved are significant for the countries concerned: while it's difficult to get figures for privately held debt, [Jubilee Debt Campaign has "identified \\$9.4 billion of external debt payments due to be made by 46 countries covered by the G20 deal" between now and the end of the year. The total figure for what's owed, and the number of countries involved, is undoubtedly higher.](#)

Much of that debt, [the campaign argues](#), stems from contracts that come under British law - which means that if the debt holders wanted to sue countries for nonpayment, they would have to do so in UK courts. This means that the UK could provide legislation to address the situation. There is a precedent for doing so. In 2010, the UK passed the Debt Relief (Developing Countries) Act to prevent creditors, including 'Vulture Funds', from suing countries whose debt had been forgiven under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries initiative for more money than the creditors would have received if they had joined in the debt relief programme. That legislation [was made permanent in 2011](#). It only covered debts incurred prior to 2004, however - so there's a need for new legislation to cover the current situation.

Please pray: Pray the Lord's prayer using the words "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Pause when you get to that line. Pray for immediate action to enable countries to invest in their Coronavirus response instead of making debt repayments - and especially that the UK government will pass legislation that protects countries from suits by private investors who are not taking part in debt relief initiatives. Pray that in the medium and long term, there will be a sustainable and just mechanism for providing developing countries with the debt relief they need to promote flourishing for all their citizens.

You might want to use [Jubilee USA's prayer for the healing of the nations](#):

"God, we pray for healing, for wholeness in our broken world. We are frightened by this world in crisis and pray for those lost in chaos and grief. We pray, O God, for the compassion to help those we cannot be your outstretched arms to those in need. We pray for those in positions of power, that they may be led to act for the poor. We pray that through the love and action of many, all people might be made whole."

Please act:

If you haven't already signed the [Jubilee Debt Campaign](#) and [Christian Aid](#) campaign actions, please do so. If you'd like a template letter to send to your MP to ask about UK legislation, please email us.

Coming up - Thy Kingdom Come, Biodiversity Day

Next Thursday, 21 May is Ascension and the start of the global prayer initiative 'Thy Kingdom Come'. Friday, 22 May is the International Day for Biological Diversity - a great time to give thanks for and pray for God's marvelous creation ... and to reflect on the interconnection of all living things. We'll be pointing you towards resources. If you want to plan further ahead, our ['Dates for Prayer and Action 2020'](#) gives you a calendar of upcoming events, with links to resources.