

Get Your Hands Dirty for Africa



*A toolkit designed to assist leaders
in mobilizing a Christian response
to current needs in Africa*

A large graphic of the African continent. The landmass is filled with a teal color, and a yellow shape, resembling a stylized bird or a flame, is superimposed over the center of the continent. To the left of the continent, the text 'Africa Faith & Justice Network' is written in a teal, sans-serif font. A yellow curved line starts from the bottom left and curves upwards towards the text.

Africa
Faith &
Justice
Network

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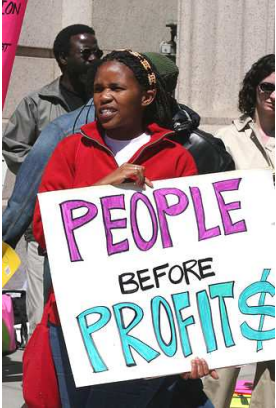


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Overview



Debt and Trade: Alternatives to Unjust Systems

Photo compliments of Matthew Bradley

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Child Soldiers and Conflict: The Roots of Conflict and Ways to Peace

Photo compliments of East Africa

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/josephmichaelphotography/379990827/in/set-72157594552064706/>



HIV/AIDS in Africa

Photo compliments of PGASP

[http://www.flickr.com/photos/jonathanpalmer/492954066/
#comment72157600204299010](http://www.flickr.com/photos/jonathanpalmer/492954066/#comment72157600204299010)



Water for All

Photo compliments of insiderflash.publish

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/56774671@N00/316275660/>



Curriculum Philosophy

Get Your Hands Dirty for Africa, is a toolkit developed with the intention of providing leaders with a myriad of possible avenues for educating and mobilizing the Christian community to respond to current needs in Africa. With this purpose in mind, you are invited to take liberty with the suggestions provided in the following pages: tweak ideas, follow leads, use these thoughts as a brainstorming tool...essentially, do whatever you need to do to effectively connect your group with needs in Africa. Contributors to this project ask only that you properly cite your sources.

Each topic in this toolkit is designed to function as a self-contained lesson or as part of the integrated whole. The leader should feel free to “cut and paste” components as s/he sees fit. Components of each topic include:

- 1) Words to Live By
A scripture and/or quote to contemplate as a means of introducing the corresponding issue
- 2) Issue Brief
A comprehensive look at the selected topic
- 3) Audio/Visual Suggestions
Possible A/V components to incorporate into discussion/presentation
- 4) Food For Thought
Discussion questions for group to consider
- 5) So What?
An exploration of how we, as Christians, can use the “much” we have been given to bring hope, peace, justice and change to Africa in Jesus’ name.
- 6) Prayer
Prayer and prayer guide pertaining to the issue
- 7) Resource Guide
A list of resources pertaining to the issue
- 8) Political Action
Information on how to lobby and advocate on a political level

Thanks for helping bridge the gap between head knowledge and action for Africa! Please feel free to contact any of the organizations associated with this project for more information.



Words to Live By

"Africa makes a fool of our idea of justice; it makes a farce of our idea of equality. It mocks our pieties; it doubts our concern, and it questions our commitment. Six and a half thousand Africans are still dying every day of preventable, treatable disease, for lack of drugs we can buy at any drug store. This is not about charity: This is about justice and equality. Because there's no way we can look at what's happening in Africa and, if we're honest, conclude that deep down, we would let it happen anywhere else -- if we really accepted that Africans are equal to us."

Bono, Lead singer of U2

Keynote Address at the 54th National Prayer Breakfast, Washington DC

For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required;
and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.

Jesus

Luke 12:48b



Introduction

Leader: Take a moment to read the quote from Bono on the previous page. Let it sink in.

Feel free to read the following word-for-word, or paraphrase.

Ask your group: What words/concepts stick out in your mind? With what do you agree or disagree?

Don't be afraid of silence here. Give your group time to think and respond or not respond.

We've come together to explore how we [as individuals, as a church, as a small group, as students etc.] can "get our hands dirty for Africa". We're going to commit the next couple of [weeks, months, hours, days etc.] to gaining a greater understanding of some of the most pressing needs in Africa; we are also going to explore God's perspective on some of these issues. But we're not going to stop there. A cerebral understanding of needs and our responsibility to respond is not enough. Knowledge must lead to action; faith, too, must translate into action for, as James declares, "...faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead." (James 2:17)

You are invited to meet Africa and her people:

Get to know Africa.

Ask questions.

Listen.

Engage.

Interact.

Respond.

World Vision founder, Bob Pierce, is known for this simple, yet powerful prayer: "Let my heart be broken with the things that break the heart of God." Consider praying a similar prayer as we delve into issues affecting the great continent of Africa over the next couple of [weeks, months, hours, days etc.]. Open yourself up to whatever God may want to do in your heart and life and however he may call you to respond. But don't expect to only encounter a bleak picture of pain and despair. Expect to see God at work, bringing redemption, restoration and hope to places of devastation, sorrow, despair. Expect to see the resilience of the African people. Expect to understand your own weakness and poverty of spirit in greater depth than ever before. This is the great mystery of the gospel: it is when we are weak that we are strong. Let us walk in solidarity with the people of Africa, for we're not as far apart as it may seem.

Leader: Consider incorporating an A/V piece here (suggestions on next page).




A/V Suggestions

Consider incorporating one or more of the following elements as a springboard for discussion and/or a means of introducing your group to *Get Your Hands Dirty for Africa*.

 **Film:** Journey of Hope

Journey of Hope highlights the lives and work of three Africans—an aid worker from Ghana, a counselor in Uganda and a village leader in The Gambia—all of whom have dedicated their lives to improving their communities, their countries and the African continent.

Supported by Catholic Relief Services and led by these three outstanding workers, you will visit three very different communities coping with the common challenges faced as a result of HIV/AIDS, poverty and the lack of education.

 **Film:** Africa Rising: Hope and Healing

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) has been working in Africa for more than 50 years. The Africa campaign, **Africa Rising, Hope and Healing**, is a CRS initiative to provide an opportunity for the U.S. Catholic community to learn more about Africa and to put their faith into action, working in solidarity with the people of Africa.

Focusing on the global health risks of HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, increased aid to sub-Saharan Africa and efforts for building a more peaceful society, the Africa campaign invites you to join in the effort to advocate for these issues through your local community. Use this video as a resource to provide your group with a better understanding of what the Africa campaign is and how they can become involved.


For more information on both films, contact:

Catholic Relief Services

209 West Fayette Street - Baltimore, MD 21201-3443

Phone: 1-800-724-2530

Web: www.catholicrelief.org


 **Song:** Paradise, Phil Collins

From the album: ...But Seriously

 **Song/Music Video:** World on Fire, Sarah McLachlan

From the album: Afterglow Live

Watch music video at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hzoNInZ2ClQ>

 **Computer/Internet activity:** Global Rich List

Every year we gaze enviously at the lists of the richest people in the world, wondering what it would be like to have that sort of cash. But where would you sit on one of those lists? Here's your chance to find out.

<http://www.globalrichlist.com/>



Food for Thought

- Bono asserts, “This is about justice and equality. Because there's no way we can look at what’s happening in Africa and, if we're honest, conclude that deep down, we would let it happen anywhere else -- if we really accepted that Africans are equal to us." Do you agree? Why or why not?



Song: Paradise, Phil Collins

- Who is “she” in this song? Who might this woman represent?
- What do you think of the line, “*Oh Lord, is there nothing more anybody can do? Oh Lord, there must be something you can say...* ”?
Is there “nothing more anybody can do”?
What do you think the Lord has said/is saying?



Song/Music Video: World on Fire, Sarah Mclachlan

- What strikes you about this song/music video?
- What do you think of the line, “*The more we take, the less we become, The fortune of one that means less for some...* ”?



Global Rich List

- Were you surprised at where you fell on the Global Rich List scale?
- What do you think it would take to redistribute wealth?



So What?

Leader: Feel free to read the following word-for-word, or paraphrase. Consider providing each person in your group with pen/paper and encouraging them to write a response - a prayer, a thought, a reflection, a poem...anything that speaks to what you have considered tonight.

In the gospel of Luke, Jesus proclaims, “For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.” (Luke 12:48b) How do you define the “much” you have been given? Think about these components:

- Food, Shelter, Clothing, access to healthcare etc.
- Relationships (Friends, family, teachers, counselors etc.)
- Experiences (Opportunities to travel, exposure to new ideas, leadership development etc.)
- Education
- Status
- Access to resources
- Support (physical, emotional, spiritual etc.)
- Finances (If you haven’t already, take a few moments to visit www.globalrichlist.com)
- Your voice (ability to vote, freedom of speech, life in a democracy etc.)
- Freedom
- Talents/gifts

If you had to measure the “much” you have been given compared to [your knowledge of] the rest of the world, where do you think you might fall?

We serve a God who desires to work through His people to accomplish His purposes on the earth. Think about the much you have been given. Ask God how He might desire to use YOU to bring love and hope to places in Africa.

Jennifer Way

Africa Faith and Justice Network, 2007



Praying for Africa

Leader: Consider printing and creatively posting photographs displaying different needs in Africa (a good place to start might be with the photographs used in this publication). Invite your group to find an image that draws them and pray for whatever it brings to mind.

Several prayers you may want to consider incorporating:

Unison Prayer

Noelle Damico

God of Truth, show us how our destinies are literally bound up together as rich and poor, sick and healthy, Americans and peoples of other nations. Too often we don't feel as if our lives are intertwined. Help us identify those systems and powers that prevent us from seeing our lives as inextricable from the lives of others. Help us to build relationships that defy all that would deny, demean, dehumanize, and destroy your people and your creation. Help us share this vision of your world, whole and well, with our elected officials and our neighbors, that the public policy our nation adopts reflects a true assessment of the rights and needs of our one human family. We pray this in the name of the one who intertwined your divine life with ours, even Jesus Christ Amen.

Prayer of Confession

Noelle Damico

God of Moses and the prophets, God of Jesus and the Church, as we pause to account for who we are and how we live, we find that we are lacking. We confess that we have resisted your demand for justice and domesticated your call to discipleship. We have ignored your persistent cry in the voices of our neighbors. We have refused the mantle of prophecy vaguely hoping that someone else would dare proclaim your shalom. Time and again we've helped to build structures that contain and constrain your transforming power and so trivialize the church's witness in a broken world. Forgive us God. We want to change, God; to start fresh; to be transformed. Grant us vision and voice when we stand stupefied in the face of injustice. Let us taste the vigor and resilience of your Spirit when our spirits are exhausted and cynical. And nourish in us a trust in you that perseveres, until your realm becomes a reality in our midst. We pray trusting in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Unison Prayer

Alan Paton, author

O Lord, open my eyes that I may see the needs of others; open my ears that I may hear their cries; open my heart so that they need not be without succor; let me not be afraid to defend the weak because of the anger of the strong, nor afraid to defend the poor because of the anger of the rich. Show me where love and hope and faith are needed, and use me to bring them to those places. And so open my eyes and my ears that I may this coming day be able to do some work of peace for thee. Amen.



Political Action

- **How to Schedule A Meeting With Your Member of Congress**

Michael Edwards and Lindsay Shulman star in this entertaining and informative short film on how to schedule a meeting with your member of Congress.

 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=daOAeB-zIIA>

- **Write an article or letter for a newspaper or magazine**

EPIC: A Format for Powerful Writing (Jubilee USA Network, 2007)

Use EPIC to organize your ideas and clarify your message. This format makes opinion writing much easier and less time-consuming. Instead of spending a lot of time trying to figure out where to begin, use the EPIC outline and your letter to the editor will almost write itself!

Engage: Engage the reader with a startling fact, a visceral image or a strong statement of a serious problem.

Propose: Make a specific proposal regarding the Offering of Letters or a piece of legislation.

Illustrate: Illustrate how the proposal would work and why it's important. Give a few details or examples to make it concrete.

Call to action or Commitment: Call on your legislators to take a specific action or express your commitment to alleviating hunger.



Organization Resource Guide

Africa Action

Contact: Salih Booker, Executive Director
1634 Eye St. NW Suite 810
Washington, DC 20006
Phone: 202-546-7961 • Fax: 202-546-1545 • E-mail: sbooker@africaaction.org
Web: <http://www.africaaction.org>

Catholic Relief Services

209 W. Fayette Street
Baltimore, MD 21201
Phone: 410-625-2220 • Fax: 410-234-3178 • E-mail: igary@catholicrelief.org
Web: <http://www.catholicrelief.org>

Church World Service

Contact: Kathleen McNeely,
110 Maryland Ave., NE, #108
Washington, DC 20002-5694
Phone: 202-481-6942 • Fax: 202-546-6232 • E-mail: kmcneely@churchworldservice.org
Web: <http://www.churchworldservice.org/africainitiative/index.html>

DATA

Web: <http://www.data.org/whyafrica/>

Washington Office on Africa

Contact: Mhizha Edmund Chifamba, Executive Director
212 East Capitol St.
Washington, DC 20003
Phone: 202-547-7503 • Fax: 202-547-7505 • E-mail: woa@igc.org
Web: <http://www.woafrica.org/>

World Vision

Contact: Rory Anderson, Advocacy
220 I Street, NE, #270
Washington, DC 20002
Phone: 202-547-3743 • Fax: 202-547-4834 • E-mail: randers@worldvision.org
Web: <https://wvioaptus.wvi.org/Africa/africaweb.nsf>



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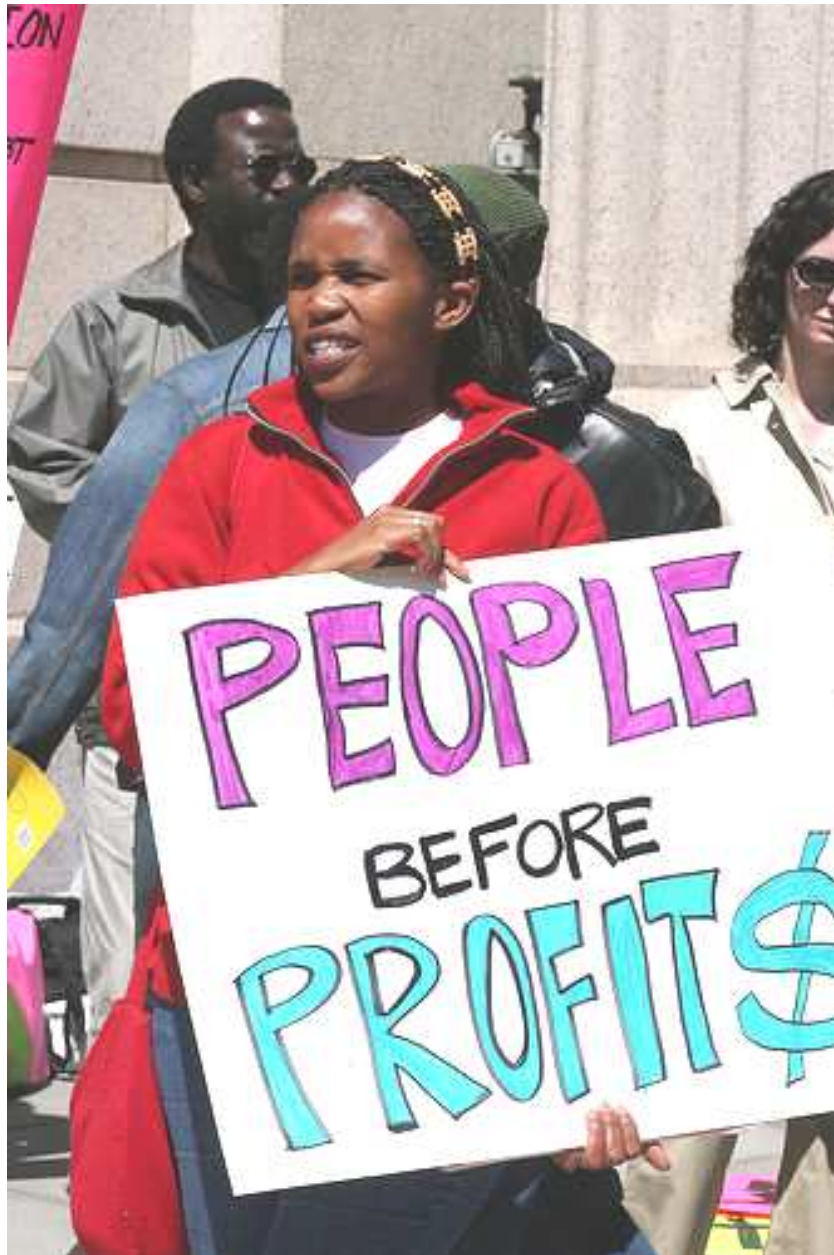
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Jubilee USA Network. 2007. *EPIC: A Format for Powerful Writing*. Retrieved April 17, 2007 from <http://www.jubileeusa.org/get-active/grassroots-resources/media-and-advocacy-how-tos/epic.html>

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Debt and Trade: Alternatives to Unjust Systems





Words to Live By

“If I were a parent in a poor, debt-riddled nation, cradling my dying child in my arms, my heart would be broken and I would cry out for a solution. My prayer is that the leaders of the world will heed these cries and will work together to solve this critical problem. As a follower of Jesus, however, I believe this is not just a political or economic issue, it's a moral and spiritual issue as well.”

-The Rev. Billy Graham

“Debt relief is urgent and a precondition for the poorest countries to make progress in their fight against poverty. This is something which is now widely recognized. We have to ask, however, why progress in resolving the debt problem is still so slow. Why so many hesitations?”

-Pope John Paul II

“I've called for a long time for the cancellation of the crippling debt which we have had to bear for so long... this is the new moral crusade: to have the debt cancelled, following the Biblical principle of Jubilee. Basically this principle says that everything belongs to God; all debts must be cancelled ... to give debtors a chance to make a new beginning.”

-Archbishop Desmond Tutu



Issue Brief

According to Africa Action (2007),

Africa's massive external debt burden is the single biggest obstacle to the continent's development and to the fight against HIV/AIDS. The over \$200 billion that African countries owe to foreign creditors represents a crippling load that undermines economic and social progress. The All-Africa Conference of Churches has called this debt "a new form of slavery, as vicious as the slave trade".

The albatross of illegitimate debt diverts money directly from spending on health care, education and other important needs. While most people in Africa live on less than \$2 per day, African countries are forced to spend almost \$14 billion each year servicing old, illegitimate debts to rich country governments and their institutions, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Over the past two decades, African countries have paid out more in debt service to foreign creditors than they have received in development assistance or in new loans.

Much of Africa's foreign debt is illegitimate in nature, having been incurred by unrepresentative and despotic regimes, mainly during the era of Cold War patronage. Loans were made to corrupt leaders who used the money for their own personal gain, often with the full knowledge and support of lenders. These loans did not benefit Africa's people. More generally, many Africans question the notion of an African "debt" to the U.S. and European countries after centuries of exploitation. They ask, "Who really owes whom?"

...In July 2005, following years of civil society campaigns in Africa, the U.S. and elsewhere, the Group of Eight (G-8) rich countries announced a deal on debt cancellation for 18 impoverished countries, 14 of which are in Africa. The World Bank and IMF approved this debt package in September 2005...

While the G-8 deal marked a small victory, it still fell short of the promises of 100% debt cancellation made by G-8 officials in 2004, and it did not take full effect until July 2006. The deal still leaves the majority of African countries on "debt row," required to meet harmful economic conditions as a condition for future debt relief or cancellation.

The U.S. is the single largest shareholder in the World Bank and IMF, the institutions to which most of Africa's debts are owed. As such, it holds major influence over the international response to Africa's debt crisis. An independent audit of these two institutions has revealed that they can afford to write off Africa's debt completely. Recent IMF reports have also demonstrated how debt cancellation can be financed primarily through IMF gold and secondarily from World Bank reserves without harm to these institutions.

The U.S. should use its power to achieve the cancellation of all of Africa's debts. Just as the U.S. advocated for the cancellation of Iraq's odious debts, it should apply the same standard to the illegitimate and odious debts African countries still have to repay. Debt cancellation is essential to the continent's efforts to fight HIV/AIDS and poverty, and to regain its economic independence."



A/V Suggestions



You Tube film: Drop the Debt

The world's poorest countries give back more in debt repayments to the richest countries than they get in aid.

To download: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=daOAeB-zIIA>



Global Justice Film Project

Whether you're a seasoned organizer or new to activism, this resource kit is for use by everyone! Organize a screening in your community center, public library, synagogue, union hall, church, or living room. The Kit includes multiple resources to assist and facilitate discussion and dialogue.

The cost of the Organizing Kit is \$15 PER KIT in the US.

For more information visit: <http://www.50years.org/gjfp/>



WebSight Simulation Games

Talking about global economic injustice can seem like “heady” stuff. It’s hard to understand how the global economy works, and it’s even harder to see how it all relates to us, personally. Simulation games help us both understand and make the connection. They provoke emotions that help us begin to see how we are part of the worldwide web of the global economy. These are games in which global realities are simulated on a small scale—realities such as the disparities of wealth between different countries and the causes and effects of some countries being financially indebted to others. By participating in simulation games, participants have an opportunity to experience some of the dynamics of the global economy. Some games make the connections to real world situation more evident than others; some include greater complexity than others.

To download, visit: <http://www.united-church.ca/websight/games/>



Food for Thought

- Have you ever been (or are you currently) in debt? What are some of the feelings/emotions/realities that one encounters when in this position? Can you project this experience to an entire country? What might be the ramifications for an entire country living under the burden of debt?

 **You Tube film:** Drop the Debt

- What was your reaction to the second half of this film?
- Did you expect the scenes contrasting 1st world wealth with 3rd world poverty?
- Who did you identify with more — 1st world or third?

Israel Kloss, 2007

Compassionate Action



So What?

Read Matt. 18: 21-35

Leader: Depending on your group, you may want to consider using the following text from The Message -- a more contemporary translation.

At that point Peter got up the nerve to ask, "Master, how many times do I forgive a brother or sister who hurts me? Seven?"

Jesus replied, "Seven! Hardly. Try seventy times seven.

"The kingdom of God is like a king who decided to square accounts with his servants. As he got under way, one servant was brought before him who had run up a debt of a hundred thousand dollars. He couldn't pay up, so the king ordered the man, along with his wife, children, and goods, to be auctioned off at the slave market.

"The poor wretch threw himself at the king's feet and begged, 'Give me a chance and I'll pay it all back.' Touched by his plea, the king let him off, erasing the debt

"The servant was no sooner out of the room when he came upon one of his fellow servants who owed him ten dollars. He seized him by the throat and demanded, 'Pay up. Now!'

"The poor wretch threw himself down and begged, 'Give me a chance and I'll pay it all back.' But he wouldn't do it. He had him arrested and put in jail until the debt was paid. When the other servants saw this going on, they were outraged and brought a detailed report to the king.

"The king summoned the man and said, 'You evil servant! I forgave your entire debt when you begged me for mercy. Shouldn't you be compelled to be merciful to your fellow servant who asked for mercy?' The king was furious and put the screws to the man until he paid back his entire debt. And that's exactly what my Father in heaven is going to do to each one of you who doesn't forgive unconditionally anyone who asks for mercy."

While this parable is framed in the context of a message on forgiveness, it is interesting to reflect on these words of Jesus as we consider the problem of odious debt in Africa. What characteristics of God do you find portrayed in this parable? Where or in whom do you see yourself in this parable?

As Christians, we believe that humanity is made in the image of God. Shane Claiborne (2006, p. 80) expresses a powerful experience with this concept during his time in India. He writes, "Over and over, the dying and the lepers would whisper the mystical word *namaste* in my ear. We really don't have a word like it in English (or even much of a Western conception of it). They explained to me that *namaste* means 'I honor the Holy One who lives in you.' I knew I could see God in their eyes."

What do you think it means to reflect the image of God in this broken world? How might that be expressed? Can you think of a time when you had an opportunity to "honor the Holy One" in another person? Who/what comes to mind when you consider examples of others you have observed living out this concept?

Jennifer Way

Africa Faith and Justice Network, 2007



Prayer

“O God, to whom we owe more than we can count, in our desire to control all that will come to be, we hold your children in the grip of debt which they cannot repay; and make them suffer now the poverty we dread. Do not hold us to our debts, but unchain us from our fear, that we may release others into an open future of unbounded hope.”

Janet Morley, Great Britain

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done
On earth as *it is* in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors.
And do not lead us into temptation,
But deliver us from the evil one.
For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen

From: Matt. 6:9-13



Political Action

- **How To Contact Congress**

<http://www.jubileeusa.org/get-active/grassroots-resources/how-to-contact-congress.html>

- **Contact your member of Congress**

<http://www.democracyinaction.org/dia/organizationsORG/JubileeUSA/getLocal.jsp>

- **Jubilee Begins With Me**

An excellent example of how an ordinary American citizen made an extraordinary difference in the movement for debt relief in Africa.

http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3849/is_200007/ai_n8909560

- **Tell Your Leaders**

DATA has set up a special toll-free number, so you can call your leaders in Washington and urge them to follow through on last year's progress in fighting AIDS and poverty in Africa. This call is toll free and you can choose to be directly connected to your Senators and Congressional Representatives in Washington, DC.

<http://www.data.org/action/tellyourleaders/>



Organization Resource Guide

Africa Action

Contact: Nii Akuetteh, Executive Director
1634 Eye St. NW Suite 810
Washington, DC 20006
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Web: www.africaaction.org

Center for Economic Justice

733 15th St., NW Suite 928
Washington, DC 20005
Phone: 202-393-6665 • Fax: 202-393-1358 • E-mail:
Web: www.econjustice.net

DATA

The Debt Crisis
Web: www.data.org/whyafrica/issuedebt.php

Jubilee USA Network

222 E. Capitol St. NE
Washington, DC 22003
Phone: 202-783-0215 • Fax: 202-546-4468 • E-mail: marie@jubileeusa.org
Web: www.jubileeusa.org

Beginner's Guide to Debt

www.jubileeusa.org/?id=109

50 Years is Enough Network

628 12th St. NE
Washington, DC 20017
Phone: 202-IMF-BANK (202-463-2265) Email: info@50years.org
Web: www.50years.org

The Grassroots Guide to the IMF and the World Bank

www.50years.org/pubs/grassroots-guide/order.html

World Bank Operations Evaluation Department

[http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/oed/oeddoelib.nsf/24cc3bb1f94ae11c85256808006a0046/b2e88ec35c7c686885256ce60076439c/\\$FILE/HIPC_precis.pdf](http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/oed/oeddoelib.nsf/24cc3bb1f94ae11c85256808006a0046/b2e88ec35c7c686885256ce60076439c/$FILE/HIPC_precis.pdf)



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Child Soldiers and Conflict: The Roots of Conflict and Ways to Peace





Words to Live By

“Anyone can love peace, but Jesus doesn’t say, ‘Blessed are the peace lovers.’ He says peace makers. He is referring to a life vocation, not a hobby on the sidelines of life.”

Jim Wallis

Peace is costly, but it is worth the expense.

African Proverb



Issue Brief

Imagine every man, woman, and child in your city being forcibly evicted from their homes and transported to overcrowded camps...Imagine a thousand people dying in those camps every week for 20 years... Most of us can't imagine such an atrocity; we have no frame of reference for such a horrific event here in America. But that's exactly what has been happening in Uganda for the past twenty years.

The Acholi people of Northern Uganda rose up in opposition to the government of Uganda because they were feeling slighted and pushed out of power. Out of this opposition, the LRA (Lord's Resistance Army) emerged, led by Joseph Kony. Though initially the LRA was supported by the Acholi people, things soon got out of hand. Kony started abducting child soldiers into his army and thus began the tragedy of the past 20 years. An article in the Washington Times summarizes the history well: *"Since 1987, a band of rebels known as the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has fought the Ugandan government for power. Led by Joseph Kony, the LRA has become known for its practice of abducting children from civilian villages and forcing them to serve as soldiers and sex slaves within its ranks."*

When we take a closer look at how this war is affecting children and families in Uganda, we find that thousands of children (most sources seem to indicate between 20,000-30,000) have been abducted to serve as child soldiers and sex slaves and a significant portion of the population (most sources indicate somewhere between 1.7-2 million people – approx. 80% of the population) has been removed from their homes to live in camps protected by the government.

On August 29, 2006, the LRA and the government of Uganda entered into a ceasefire/peace agreement. Around that time, the Sudan Tribune reported, *"The peace process is widely regarded as the best chance to end a two-decade insurgency that has killed tens of thousands and uprooted 2 million others."* While peace was wanted and needed in Uganda, the prospect was unstable at best. Joseph Kony, wanted by the International Criminal Court for crimes committed against humanity, would only enter into a permanent peace agreement if granted amnesty. The attempted peace process was soon replete with complications and fell through.

While the situation in Northern Uganda is improving with increasing attention and awareness drawn to the issue, there is still a long way to go. Reconciliation and rehabilitation is always a process. Uganda is not the only location in Africa where children are being used as soldiers; this is just one story -- Sierra Leone, Liberia and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) are a few other countries in Africa where similar atrocities are taking place.

In the midst of great pain and suffering, there is also great hope and resilience among the African people. Ishmael Beah (2007), former child soldier in Sierra Leone, writes, "I and many others are living proof that it is possible for children who have undergone and experienced such horrors to regain their lives and become ambassadors of peace. My experience and those of other survivors exemplifies the resilience of children and the capability of the human spirit to outlive life's worst circumstances, if given a chance, the right care and support."

Jennifer Way

Africa Faith and Justice Network, 2007



A/V Suggestions

Film: Invisible Children

Can a story change the world? In the spring of 2003, three young Americans traveled to Africa in search of such a story. What they found was a tragedy that disgusted and inspired them. A story where children are the weapons, and children are the victims. The “Invisible Children: rough cut” film exposes the effects of a 20 year-long war on the children of Northern Uganda. These children live in fear of abduction by rebel soldiers, and are being forced to fight as part of a violent army. This wonderfully reckless documentary is fast paced, with an MTV beat, and is something truly unique. To see Africa through young eyes is humorous and heart breaking, quick and informative—all in the very same breath. See this film, you will be forever changed.

To Order, Visit: www.invisiblechildren.com (Can also be streamed from site)

Film: Uganda Rising

For two decades, the Acholi people of Northern Uganda have been caught in a civil war between a rebel group whose main objective is inhumane terror and a government whose military response has often increased misery and suffering.

Over 1.5 million people have been displaced into camps and over 25,000 children have been abducted to be used as soldiers and sex slaves. Yet through it all, these children remain an unstoppable testimony to the power of resilience and hope.

To Order, Visit: www.ugandarising.com

Film: Blood Diamonds

An ex-mercenary turned smuggler (Leonard DiCaprio). A Mende fisherman (Djimon Hounsou). Amid the explosive civil war overtaking 1999 Sierra Leone, these men join for two desperate missions: recovering a rare pink diamond of immense value and rescuing the fisherman's son, conscripted as a child soldier into the brutal rebel forces ripping a swath of torture and bloodshed across the alternately beautiful and ravaged countryside. Directed by Edward Zwick (Glory, The Last Samurai), this urgent, intensely moving adventure shapes gripping human stories and heart-pounding action into a modern epic of profound impact.

For More Information, Visit: <http://blooddiamondmovie.warnerbros.com>

Music: African Children's Choir - Still Walking in the Light

Song: “Walking in the Light”

To Order, Visit: <http://www.africanchildrenschoir.com/howtohelp/howtohelp.php?pageID=20>



Food for Thought

- What role do you think the U.S. *can* play in resolving the child soldiers situation in Africa?
- What role do you think the U.S. *should* play in resolving the child soldiers situation in Africa?
- Why should we care about this situation?
- What keeps us from caring about this situation?
- How can we care about this situation?



So What?

Check out this passage in Luke 5:17-26:

One day as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law, who had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem, were sitting there. And the power of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick. Some men came carrying a paralytic on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven."

The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...." He said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today."

Take a minute to think about the role of the paralytic man's friends. This man had no hope of getting to Jesus in and of himself; he was completely dependant on others to take up his cause. What words and/or characteristics might define the paralytic's friends?

A few suggestions: Compassionate, Advocates, Intercessors, Perseverance, Out-of-the-box, Creative, Loyal, Full of faith, Desperate

In Proverbs 31:8 we are called to, "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute." We have the means and ability to be a voice for the voiceless. How might child soldiers in Africa fit into the scriptures we've read?

In Galations 6:2, Paul admonishes us to "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way...fulfill the law of Christ." Use the prayer on page 33 as an entry point of intercession for the voiceless. This prayer is written from the perspective of a child soldier. As you assume this child's voice, carry the burdens of those affected by the brutality of war to our great Heavenly Father.

Jennifer Way

Africa Faith and Justice Network, 2007



Prayer

A Prayer from the Perspective of a Child Soldier **By, Jacques Bahati**

Heavenly Father, you know my story more than any one else. Before you I stand still to remember and tell you what happened to me. I know and remember my name, but now they call me child soldier. Underserved by my government, underage, yet I am enrolled in the army. I was captured, brutalized, threatened with death; I cried and feared, but you alone, God of peace, keep me this day. Many we were, but most of us died on the battle field. Creator from whom all blessing come, many of us dreamed of becoming teachers, priests, nuns, doctors and lawyers, but we were subjected to lives as sex slaves, bodyguards and soldiers. We fought for a cause that we did not know. God of yesterday, today and the days to come, our trust is in you because you alone transform hopelessness into hopefulness. Heavenly God, wrap your loving, caring, and gentle arms around me. God of mercy and restorer of the broken, touch me at the point of my need. Among the many things I faithfully pray and ask of you, God of Justice, I ask for peace. In your holy name Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen

Collect for Social Justice and Responsibility (Common Worship)

Eternal God, in whose perfect realm no sword is drawn but the sword of righteousness, and no strength known but the strength of love: so guide and inspire the work of those who seek your kingdom that all your people may find their security in that love which casts out fear and in the fellowship revealed to us in Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

Basic Texts for the Roman Catholic Eucharist, Eucharistic Prayers for Masses of Reconciliation I - II

Father, all powerful and ever living God, we praise and thank you through Jesus Christ our Lord for your presence and action in the world.

In the midst of conflict and division, we know it is you who turn our minds to thoughts of peace.

Your Spirit changes our hearts: enemies begin to speak to one another, those who were estranged join hands in friendship, and nations seek the way of peace together.

Your Spirit is at work when understanding puts an end to strife, when hatred is quenched by mercy, and vengeance gives way to forgiveness.

For this we should never cease to thank and praise you.

We join with all the choirs of heaven as they sing for ever to your glory:



Political Action

- **Speak out for the children of Northern Uganda.** Sign the No Child Soldiers declaration at:
https://www.worldvision.org/Worldvision/guest.nsf/nochild_soldiers?OpenForm
- **Take Action!**
Resolve Uganda offers suggestions for acting to resolve the child soldiers situation in Uganda.
<http://resolveuganda.org/take-action>
- **Ask your members of Congress and the President to help protect children and their families in war-torn northern Uganda and bring an end to this 20-year conflict.**
https://secure2.convio.net/wvsite/Advocacypage=UserAction&cmd=display&id=128&lid=Uganda_action&lpos=leftnav



Organization Resource Guide

Africa Center for Peace and Democracy

Contact: Maryanne Hoekstra,
2499 Rice St. Suite 120
St. Paul, MN 55113
Phone: 651-484-0921 • Fax: 651-484-8983 • E-mail: africacenterpd@aol.com

Center for Conflict Prevention & Resolution for Africa

Contact: Robert Sonenthal,
1120 19th St., NW #600
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: 202-785-0227 • Fax: 202-785-0120 • E-mail:

ChildVoice International

Web: www.childvoiceintl.org

ChildSoldiers.org

Giving a voice to children affected by war
www.childsoldiers.org

Congolese American Council for Peace and Development

Contact: Marie Stella Mbala Heiser, L.Frederiksson, Coordinators
11319 Elkin St.
Wheaton, MD 20902
Phone: 202-390-7550 • Fax: n.a. • E-mail: mbalams@hotmail.com

Friends of Uganda

Contact: Alan Olson,
Bldg 10, Room B1D-125
Bethesda, MD 20892-1000
Phone: 301-496-8139 • Fax: n.a. • E-mail: olson@nmrsun.ncrr.nih.gov

Resolve Uganda

Contact: Michael Poffenberger
211 8th St. NE, Studio
Washington, DC 20002
Phone: (202) 548-2517
Fax: (202) 548-2518
Email: info@resolveuganda.org

World Vision

Web: www.seekjustice.org

Request a Children of War Mobilizer's Toolkit:

Email: nochildsoldiers@worldvisioin.org to request this comprehensive DVD.



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HIV/AIDS in Africa





Words to Live By

“AIDS is not just a disease. It is a symptom of many things going wrong and it challenges the way we support one another.”

- *Rev. Gideon Byamugisha,*
An HIV-positive priest from Uganda

"[I] beseech the rich countries to respond to the needs of AIDS patients in the poor countries with all means at their disposal, so that these men and women tested in body and soul may have access to the medicines which they need."

- *Pope John Paul II, June 26, 2001*

“Some people ask me why I don't pray to God for miracle healing. I always reply that as far as I'm concerned, just being alive is a miracle. When you study the Bible, you find situations where difficult situations were turned into opportunities. Paul, for example, never waited for God to release him from prison so he could preach the Gospel. He used the circumstances he was in to spread the Word of God.”

- *Canon Gideon Byamugisha,*
HIV-positive priest from Uganda, in Open Secret (ActionAid, 2000)



Issue Brief

Today, all churches are living with and affected by HIV/AIDS. As God's grace holds inclusive love for all humanity, we are compelled to work together to stop the spread of the deadly virus.

The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) that causes acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) was discovered in 1981. Since 1981, approximately 60 million people have been infected with HIV/AIDS, and over 20 million have died of AIDS. As a result of poverty, conflict, violence against women and girls, a lack of appropriate education, high-risk behavior, gender inequality and a number of other socioeconomic factors, people living in the least developed regions, such as many countries in Africa, are most adversely affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Southern Africa has been particularly devastated, where the virus has infected more than one-third of the populations in Botswana and Swaziland, and one-fourth of the population in Lesotho and Zimbabwe. The disease wipes out the most productive sector of society, undermining economic development efforts and exacerbating preexisting problems.

Two thirds of all people living with the virus are in sub-Saharan Africa, where 77 per cent of all new infections are among women and young girls. In addition, HIV/AIDS has orphaned more than 12 million children in Africa, a number likely to more than double by 2020 if current trends continue.

If more resources are dedicated to research on effective treatments of the virus, coupled with attacking the problems that prevent African countries from developing the capacity to handle the disease effectively, the pandemic can be stopped. As such, efforts to drop international debt, favor poor countries in trade agreements, and encourage good governance are central to the fight against the spread of HIV and AIDS.

Michael Poffenberge

Africa Faith and Justice Network, 2006



A/V Suggestions

Life Interrupted - online exhibition

World-renowned photojournalist, Don McCullin, looks at the impact of anti-retroviral treatment (ART) on the lives of people living with HIV in Zambia and South Africa.

View the online exhibition at: <http://www.christianaid.org.uk/donmccullin/gallery/main.html>

World AIDS Day Film Guide

This **World AIDS Day Film Guide** contains synopses of several films about the HIV/AIDS crisis in Africa as well as information on how to acquire copies. Included are sample questions to guide the post-film discussion. Contact Africa Action if you are interested in hosting a screening or are having difficulty acquiring any of the films.

http://www.africaaction.org/campaign_new/page.php?op=read&documentid=1544&type=27&issues=1

AidsinAfrica.net

An online resource for current information on HIV/AIDS in Africa. This website uses visual models, such as animated maps and diagrams, to make the the statistics behind HIV/AIDS in Africa more engaging and easy to understand. AidsinAfrica.net is also home of the in-progress documentary "5 Heroes of AIDS in Africa."

www.aidsinafrica.net



Food for Thought

Leader: Read the following account to your group. Encourage participants to insert themselves somewhere in this story. Follow up with questions at end.

She told me "if anyone finds out, I will be shamed by my family and the whole village." This sweet grandmother just found out that she is HIV positive.

Why does she feel the world condemns her when she has committed no crime? Why does she feel ashamed?

She was married at age 15 and was the first of five wives. She has raised great kids (students of ours). Reflecting back, she remembers that the youngest wife was unfaithful and left. And that was the beginning of death in this extended home. She's widowed and she has lost some of her children. Her co-wives are also wondering what is happening. They are next -- unless they are helped to get treatment. Her concern is for her young grandchildren whose parents are dead. "What will happen to them if I die?"

Fortunately, someone cared enough to bring this grandmother so we could get her to Lugoda where there is a hospital and I can get her tested and moved onto treatment. Someone has to break the silence in her village. It starts with just one brave person. Perhaps she will be the first to educate, encourage and bring hope. We just opened a school in her village. Everywhere AIDS is killing families, and people are dying ashamed, alone, afraid, their children orphaned, with a few babies HIV+ to add to the despair and the burden on those who still live. It is overwhelming to us, and it's silly to pretend that it's not overwhelming to us, but certainly it's not overwhelming to God. When we launched VSI, Steve and I did it with a plan (I'm a planner!) and the hope that somehow God intended to us and our co-workers to eventually build 56 schools -- and that those 56 schools would bring 56 clinics and 56 community development centers and 220 churches and that the gospel would transform these villages and the lives of all of these people. We never dreamed that these schools would also bring help for the widows and the orphans and those suffering from AIDS. We never came prepared to deal with AIDS because we never knew that this would be the reality of our lives here, but now that we have made our lives in these villages and this is our home it is now impossible to close our eyes to what is happening all around us. I will not pretend to imagine the full extent of what God has intended for us to do – but I do know that doing nothing is not an option.

It is hard to imagine now but it has already been a week since Eliza's mother had died. I almost couldn't believe it because she was scheduled that very day to travel to the hospital at Lugoda. Eliza is my student and her hope has been that her mom would be there for her secondary school graduation which would have been in two years. That will no longer happen as Mama Eliza is now with the Lord, the One who gave her peace these past few months. Last year we buried her sweet four-year-old daughter Ruti. This leaves Eliza "alone" and without any family at all. She is yet one more orphan at our school now. Mama Eliza was doing so well. She was receiving treatment for both the AIDS virus and TB. We felt real victory when we were able to get her the TB treatment she needed. There was so much hope. In fact, she was just at the ladies group at church doing great 36 hours before she left this world. It is hard to understand. And it hurts.



This morning, Florida brought me a note from the village leaders of Egereke. It read in broken English: "Concerning you Mama Vinton. We give this report that our youth Testi Kiwale has died. We expect to bury him at 1:00 this afternoon." Florida is one of our many students who is at school because we "happened" to cross paths as we tried to help her family members who have AIDS. She walks about 3 hours a day to get to and from school. In spite of the distance, I did get to the burial and was on that beautiful mountainside in time to say our good-byes to this sweet young man. As the women cried on the grave, the village chief asked me to get up and speak to the people. As surprised as I was by his request, I managed to address this large, mainly non-Christian crowd starting with "It doesn't please God for so many to be widowed and orphaned at such young ages. God has a plan for us to have peace with him. An enemy is killing your babies, youth, parents and grandparents. Do you know this enemy?" They all said "yes." So, I explained that I had tried to help Testi, but he was beyond help. He had waited too long like almost all the other youth. I asked them why they keep waiting until there is nothing we can do to help them. The good news is that there is testing, there is treatment, there is medicines at the hospital and "we" will do everything we can to get them there. Just talk to me! Come to my house. I want to help. That's why God sent me to your village. Because He cares about you and He wants you to get treatment and He wants you to live."

At least now in these villages right here we have erased the shame and fear that so many people have had concerning HIV and AIDS. The dialogue has started. Those who spoke out against "testing" last year are starting to be the first to say "Everyone get tested! It's important!" And people are getting well. However, if the word gets to people too late -- as it did to Testi - they die without ever really living. I'm hoping that our schools will be able to address AIDS in each of their respective areas. One thing that is impossible is to talk about AIDS and the good news of HIV treatment without also talking about the really, really great news of Christ Jesus and His eternal healing power. Please pray that we would have wisdom as we work in new areas of this country and we enter into new villages. Please pray that when we get invited to places we would have never imagined being invited to that some how God would give us the right words to say. If someone like Paul could ask people to pray that God would give him the right words to say, that surely I need those kinds of prayers more than anybody. I would have never imagined that one day I'd end up being on a hillside with a bunch of people crying over a grave and being asked to stand up and speak.

Testi died. My hope is that many others will not die.

- There seems to be a strong stigma associated with AIDS. Have you ever had a secret you didn't want anyone to know about? How hard was/is it to break the silence? How might those living with AIDS feel?
- Susan declared to the village of Egereke, "'It doesn't please God for so many to be widowed and orphaned at such young ages. God has a plan for us to have peace with him...'" Do you think this is true?
- Susan writes candidly about her work in Africa, *"We never came prepared to deal with AIDS because we never knew that this would be the reality of our lives here, but now that we have made our lives in these villages and this is our home it is now impossible to close our eyes to what is happening all around us. I will not pretend to imagine the full extent of what God has intended for us to do – but I do know that doing nothing is not an option."* What do you think about her statement, "doing nothing is not an option"?



So What?

Biblical reflection: A Gethsemane moment

Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, 'Sit here while I go over there and pray.' He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, 'My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.'

(Matthew 26:36-38)

I suspect that for many of us the facts and figures of the HIV/AIDS epidemic are daunting. Perhaps like Jesus in Gethsemane we will find our souls overwhelmed with sorrow.

How very much we would rather live in a world that HIV/AIDS had never entered. And from heaven I hear God's compassion echoing that. How very much I long for that world too. We may groan like Jesus, 'Must we drink this cup?' But we must. That is the world in which we find ourselves. This is the Gethsemane the world must pass through.

Many are simply asleep, like the disciples a stone's throw from Jesus, simply unaware or unconcerned about the relentless threat in parts of the world far from them. And in streets very close to them.

Others come armed, as soldiers were preparing to do to Jesus. Armed with hatred; armed with prejudice; armed with selfish desire to distance themselves; armed with the potential to make money from the difficulty in which people find themselves.

And there are others who come as angels, as Luke tells us happened in Gethsemane, bringing strength to the one who had become weighed down with human frailty.

But even with ministers from God to strengthen and to comfort, this is a crisis which the world must endure. It is a cup we must drink. And just as crucifixion lay ahead for Jesus before he was raised to life, so there is a journey that the world must go - through death - before this epidemic is at an end.

Christians have a genuine role to play in being God's ministers in this Gethsemane. The lesson of Gethsemane is that God does not expect us to do what is impossible, but he does call us to be faithful in what we can do.

Peter Graystone, Christian Aid

This piece was originally produced in January 2003



Prayer

Dear God, we ask you to walk with us in our HIV/AIDS filled world.

We pray expecting your presence among us!

Be with all who live with the effects of this disease.

Be with those who wait to die because they have no access to medication.

Be with children who received HIV as a legacy from their parents.

Be with orphans and families who have lost loved ones.

Be with countries who have millions of citizens with HIV/AIDS.

Be with all who are stigmatized and ignored because they have HIV/AIDS.

Be with politicians and corporate executives who control access to affordable medications.

Be with researchers and scientists who work to find a cure.

Be with healthcare workers and caregivers who comfort and encourage.

Be with all who have lost hope because of HIV/AIDS.

Lord, we hear the angel's song of peace!

Fill the hearts of people around the world with good will

so that together we can work for justice and healing

for all who suffer from HIV/AIDS.

Amen.

Carol Penner of Vineland, Ontario for Peace Ministries (2005)

Go out into the world and take with you

The hope of God our creator who in love

Created a world where all would be whole

and longs for that wholeness to be restored.

The hope of Jesus who touched and ate with the broken

And offered them healing as he offers us now.

In the hope of the Spirit who inspires and guides and energises

us in times of apathy and despair

To work to bring all God's people into oneness and health.

Eildon Dyer



Political Action

G8: Keep your Promises on global AIDS: Act Now

A policy briefing and call to action

[http://www.worldvision.org/resources.nsf/main/G8_paper_07.pdf/\\$file/G8_paper_07.pdf?open&lid=g8_caption&lpos=righnav](http://www.worldvision.org/resources.nsf/main/G8_paper_07.pdf/$file/G8_paper_07.pdf?open&lid=g8_caption&lpos=righnav)

Lobbying on Capitol Hill

Some have the opportunity to lobby directly on Capitol Hill. For more information on how to effectively schedule appointments and prepare for your visit, check out: <http://www.advocacydays.org/lobby/index.php>



Organization Resource Guide

Africa Action

1634 Eye St. NW Suite 810

Washington, DC 20006

Phone: 202-546-7961 • Fax: 202-546-1545 • E-mail: sbooker@africaaction.org

Web: <http://www.africaaction.org>

Africa AIDS Watch

Contact: Valerie Papaya Mann, Executive Director

6495 New Hampshire Avenue #10

Hyattsville, MD 20783

Phone: 301-270-5449 • Fax: 301-270-6081 • E-mail: vpapayamann@aol.com

Web: <http://www.africaaidswatch.org>

Children Affected by HIV/AIDS

Contact: Susanna Grannis,

2766 Windham Hill Road

West Windham, VT 05359

Phone: 802-874-4013 • Fax: n.a. • E-mail: info@chabha.org

Web: <http://www.chabha.org>

Critical Path AIDS Project

Contact: Julie Davids,

1233 Locust Street

Philadelphia, PA 19107

Phone: 215-985-4448 • Fax: 215-985-4952 • E-mail: jdavids@critpath.org

Web: <http://www.critpath.org>

Global AIDS Alliance

Contact: Paul Zeitz,

1010 S. 49th St.

Philadelphia, PA 19143

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Web: www.globalaidsalliance.org

Power of Love Foundation

Contact: Suresh Subramanian,

11626 Alderidge Lane

San Diego, CA 92131

Phone: 858-566-6500 • Fax: n.a. • E-mail: info@poweroflove.org

Web: <http://www.poweroflove.org>



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Water for All





Words to Live By

"If you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the oppressed,
then your light will rise in the darkness,
and your night will become like the noonday.

The LORD will guide you always;
he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land
and will strengthen your frame.

You will be like a well-watered garden,
like a spring whose waters never fail.

-Isaiah 58:10-11, NIV

'When the poor and needy seek water,
and there is none,

and their tongue is parched with thirst,

I the Lord will answer them,

I the God of Israel will not forsake them.'

Isaiah 41:17



Issue Brief

Living Water International reports,

“The world’s number one killer is unsafe water. This killer takes the lives of nearly 14,000 people each day and is responsible for 80% of all sickness in the world. According to the World Health Organization, more than 1.1 billion people in the world lack access to clean drinking water...

Drinking from and bathing in polluted water are the most common causes for the spread of infectious disease, and nearly half of the world’s population suffers from water-related diseases. These diseases are the single largest killers of infants in developing countries — diarrhea alone causes 1.8 million deaths each year — and access to safe water is directly linked to the survival of children under age five.

Many poor households in developing countries are forced to rely on contaminated water, and the prevalence of waterborne diseases like cholera is increasing... Drilling wells is one of the most common solutions to the problem presented by the lack of safe drinking water.”

Blood: Water Mission paints a picture of hope as communities in Africa experience the results of clean, accessible water.

“Thousands of communities throughout Africa have experienced profound changes when clean, accessible water has been provided. Waterborne illnesses have decreased dramatically, allowing children to live healthier lives and attend school more often. Abundant water sources have eased the burden on women, who previously spent many hours each day walking long distances for water. They have used the time saved to invest in their families and communities.

In some of these communities a new well has become a focal point for community participation. These communities have taken ownership in their water source, and organized themselves around its protection and maintenance. In these communities, clean water has provided the motivation for people to take control of their health and well-being. Projects like these are sustainable; decades later these wells are still pumping out clean water and the communities who own them have developed a culture of good health.”



A/V Suggestions



East Africa Emergency Appeal Photo Gallery

The UN estimate that 11 million people across eastern Africa are in desperate need of food and water. There are reports of people dying of thirst. We are responding but we need your help to avert a region-wide catastrophe.



<http://www.christianaid.org.uk/news/gallery/eastafrica/photo1.htm>



Food for Thought

Leader: Consider providing salty snack (such as a bowl of pretzels, peanut butter crackers, salted nuts etc.) but nothing to drink. Guide your group through the following thoughts/questions.

- Think of a time when you have been really thirsty (perhaps right now). How does it feel to not have access to adequate drinking water?
- Think of a time when you felt really dirty (perhaps you were camping and didn't take a shower for a couple of days, perhaps you were outside working in the garden on a hot day...) How did it feel to be in this situation?

Think about the fact that this is a reality for over 1 billion people around the world, many of whom are in Africa.

Now, what could you do?

- Do you write convincingly? Perhaps you could write an editorial to your local newspaper or magazine about your concerns over water issues in Africa.
- Do you paint? Perhaps you could auction your art e-bay to benefit a well project.
- Do you make music?
- Do you lead in any positions of influence?
- Do you blog? Perhaps you could draw attention to this issue by linking to applicable web sites.
- Do you meet with community leaders and/or have political connections?

Brainstorm ways in which you can use the gifts and talents you have been given to bring about change.

Israel Kloss, 2007

Compassionate Action



So What?

Thirst No More

'Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon. A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink".'

(John 4:6-7)

A weary traveler in a dry land is thirsty, and unable to get water. When you're dehydrated, nothing matters more than quenching your thirst. So when the Samaritan woman passes by, Jesus has to ask her for a drink. Only after that does the conversation pass onto deeper matters.

In Mali, well-digging projects supported by Christian Aid provide similar stories of transformation, which begin with a thirst for water and lead to the breaking down of barriers and the coming of new life. What can we learn from these encounters? Four things:

- **When someone is in need, that need has to come first.** Jean Somboro, a priest working with the Pel Mission in Mali, says, 'For many villages water is the primary concern and they can't think of anything else. But once they have water they can begin to think about other things. We cannot talk about faith and neglect the whole person: flesh, spirit and body'.
- **Need knows no barriers.** When Jesus asked a woman of a different religion for a drink, he was breaking significant cultural conventions. Inspired by the Gospel, Christian Aid works with people in need, regardless of race or religion. In Mali, it supports partner organisations that bring water to both Muslim and Christian communities.
- **God asks us to do what we can to meet that need.** At the well, Jesus is needy. He needs the woman's water as much as she needs his love. Jesus not only did good himself: he encouraged and enabled other people to do the same. When we thirst for justice in the world, we might sometimes wish that God would quench that thirst. But the Gospel's message is that it may be us who God asks to bring about change. Each of us has a contribution to make.
- **Meeting that need brings new life to all involved.** The encounter with Jesus at the well transformed the lives of the Samaritan woman and many people in her city. The arrival of clean water has transformed villages in Mali, releasing energy, hope and life into the community. And in giving water, we can celebrate both the life it brings, and the promise of a day when people will never be thirsty (John 4:14).

Simeon Mitchell/Christian Aid



Prayer

Christ, whom we meet in bread and wine,
in body broken and love outpoured,
fill us with your compassion
that we may hear the cries of the poor
and challenge the satisfaction of the rich.
Engender in us a thirst for justice
that our longings may turn to action
and our actions lead to transformation.
And nourish us with a vision of a world made whole
that we may reach out to friend and stranger
and work together to make all things new.
Amen.

Alan Baldwin (2006)

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Amen.

Annabel Shilson-Thomas (2006)



Political Action

- Water Advocates (2007) suggests, “Write Congress: Current U.S. foreign aid for drinking water and sanitation budgets only one dollar per year per American citizen. Few members of Congress have ever received a letter from constituents about clean drinking water abroad, despite its pivotal role in public health and global instability.”



Resource Guide

Africare

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Blood Water Mission

<http://www.bloodwatermission.com/>

Bread for the World

50 F Street NW Suite 5

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Web: <http://www.bread.org>

Living Waters for the World

<http://www.livingwatersfortheworld.org/>

Living Water International

http://www.water.cc/manager/masterpage.aspx?CO_ID=39

Oxfam America

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http://www.oxfamamerica.org/whatwedo/issues_we_work_on/water

Water for People

<http://waterforpeople.org/africa.html>



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