



Dear friend,

As we approach another Christmas in the shadow of the coronavirus pandemic, I want to say a heartfelt thank you for the love you show for people living in poverty around the world.

Despite the restrictions and privations we have endured during these last 21 months, it has been inspiring to see how you have continued to give, act and pray in support of our global neighbours. I never cease to be amazed by your fundraising creativity and by your remarkable dedication to the cause of ending extreme poverty.

The arrival on our shores of the Omicron variant is another reminder of the need to vaccinate the whole world against coronavirus. This year, with fewer than 8% of people in low-income countries having received at least one dose of the vaccine, many of you have joined our calls for governments to suspend the intellectual property laws that allow pharmaceutical companies to keep their 'recipes' and know-how secret, enabling more doses to be produced so that more people can be given the vaccine.

But for millions of people around the world, coronavirus is not the only - or even the worst - crisis they face. Conflict and climate change are powerful drivers of poverty, and millions of people in countries such as Afghanistan and South Sudan have been caught between the effects of both.

In Afghanistan, the worst drought in 27 years has contributed to the hunger crisis there, and the situation was made even more severe when fighting pushed thousands from their homes and prevented farmers from sowing and harvesting their crops. We have all been moved by the heart-breaking scenes as starving families do all they can to try and feed their families. We have even seen the most desperate contemplate selling their own children to buy food. Christian Aid has worked in Afghanistan for around 30 years and we are responding still, by providing food packages to some of the most vulnerable families. And with your support, we are working hard to press governments to allow more humanitarian aid to reach those most in need.

Across large swathes of South Sudan, flooding in recent months - the worst in almost 60 years - inundated homes, destroyed crops and killed livestock. Across the country, 2.4 million people are at risk of falling into famine but with your help, we provided emergency life-saving support including blankets, mosquito nets and cash to families impacted by the floods and those struggling to get enough food to eat.

At the time of the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow, you prayed with us and marched with us to urge world leaders to take the bold and decisive steps needed to prevent runaway climate change. You joined the chorus of voices demanding the money needed by low-income countries to help protect them from the worst impacts of extreme weather made worse by rising temperatures, as well as the additional funding they need to compensate them for the loss and damage inflicted by unavoidable climate change. Those living on the climate crisis frontline are paying the price of rich countries' pollution. And while it's easy to focus on the shortcomings of the deals made in Glasgow, we must remain resolute that we can close the gap between what has been agreed already and the justice we seek.

Especially at this time of year, it's easy to give in to the darkness and to find reasons to be downcast and despondent. But there are so many reasons to go on working, to go on campaigning, to keep on praying and to stay hopeful. The better world we all seek - justice for the poor and the beautiful planet on which we all depend - is within our grasp if only we can remain positive and determined.

As we celebrate the birth of Jesus, born in a stable, I want to thank you for the sacrifices you make to share what you have with those who have so little. I never cease to be inspired by your Christian witness to the gospel, and by the love you show for our global neighbours.

Thank you for standing in solidarity with the poor. Thank you for using your voice to demand a better world. Thank you for leading by example.

I wish you all, each and everyone, a very happy and peaceful Christmas and God's richest blessings for 2022.

Rosamond

Rosamond Bennett
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