



Esther Saizi prays in her church in Malawi.

# A service outline for Christian Aid Week 2023

Thank you for downloading this Christian Aid Week order of service.

We hope that the elements will give you plenty to choose from as you build your service, and will be suitable for the many traditions and denominations that support Christian Aid's work.

This is an editable template, so you can omit, add and rearrange sections to suit your community's worship traditions. Think of it as a pick and mix of prayers, readings and worship activities to help you celebrate Christian Aid Week.

## Call to worship (based on Psalm 47)

Clap your hands, all you peoples.

**Shout to God with songs of joy.**

God has gone up with a shout.

**Sing praises to the most high.**

God is ruler over all the Earth.

**We worship God with all our heart.**

## Prayer of approach

Creator God, you have planted the seed of love  
in our hearts, in our souls, in our lives.

We long for the brightness of your presence  
drawing ever closer to you  
and to one another,  
as we join with your people  
at all times  
in all places  
to worship and to serve.

We confess  
those frequent times  
when we have been stony ground,  
too hard to value the tiny seed,  
the generous smile,  
the heartfelt word.

**[Women] You grow us into community.**

**[Men] You grow us into community.**

**[All] You grow us into community.**

We confess  
those frequent times  
when we have been stony ground,  
too hard to see beyond our selfish desires  
and for tacitly accepting  
a world that smothers the dreams of those with less power and wealth.

Creator God, once again, you have planted the seed of love  
in our hearts, in our souls, in our lives.

We draw near today  
in the knowledge that your forgiveness  
waters the seed  
and nurtures us with the power of your Spirit  
to grow, to flourish  
and to bear the fruit of your justice  
now and forevermore.

**Amen**

## All-age worship

If you are curating an all-ages service, you can introduce Esther's story using our PowerPoint available at [caweek.ie/resources](http://caweek.ie/resources)

## Collect for Christian Aid Week

God, gardener of Eden, who flung stars into space  
and nurtures the tiniest plant,  
lift our hopes and dreams  
above the loss and damage of our suffering planet,  
that we might share  
your long-dreamed vision  
which values the pea as much as the plant,<sup>1</sup>  
fill us with your life-giving hope  
and inspire us with your creative Spirit  
now, and in the age to come.

## Bible readings

### Joel 1:10-12; 2:18-29

This dramatised reading of Joel 1:10-12; 2:18-29 has been set for three voices.

The first section should be read slowly and solemnly. The second is a crescendo that becomes gradually more excited. The final section looks forward, calmly and reflectively.

---

<sup>1</sup> If you wanted to use this prayer outside of Christian Aid Week, you could change this line to: 'which values the seed as much as the tree'.



**Jen has two acres of pigeon peas, but she is struggling with the effects of the climate crisis. The rainfall is unreliable, and there are more storms, flooding and stronger winds.**

**Voice 1**            The fields are devastated: the ground mourns.

**Voice 2**            For the grain is destroyed, the wine dries up, the oil fails.

**Voice 3**            Be dismayed, you farmers, wail, you vine-dressers, over the wheat and the barley;

**Voices 1 & 2:** For the crops of the field are ruined.

**Voice 3**            The vine withers, the fig tree droops. Pomegranate, palm, and apple, all the trees of the field are dried up.

**Voices 1 & 2** Surely, joy withers away among the people.



**Jen holds pigeon peas in her hands. These humble little peas are bursting with life-changing goodness.**

**Voice 1** Then the Lord became jealous for the land, and had pity on the people.

**Voice 2** In response to the people, the Lord said; I am sending you grain, wine, and oil, and you will be satisfied; and I will no more make you a mockery among the nations.

**Voice 1** Do not fear, O soil; be glad and rejoice, for the Lord has done great things!

**Voice 2** Do not fear, you animals of the field, for the pastures of the wilderness are green.

**Voice 3** The tree bears its fruit, the fig tree and vine give their full yield.

**Voice 1** O children of Zion, be glad and rejoice in the Lord your God.

**Voice 2** For God has given the early rain for your vindication, abundant rain, the early and the later rain, as before.

**Voice 3** The threshing-floors shall be full of grain, the vats shall overflow with wine and oil.

**Voice 1** I will repay you for the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my great army, which I sent against you.

**Voice 2** You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, who has dealt wondrously with you.

**Voices 1&3** And my people shall never again be put to shame.



**Ziwone and Peter in their workshop. Ziwone's dream of becoming a carpenter came true thanks to her mother Esther's pigeon pea business.**

- Voice 3** Then afterwards, I will pour out my spirit on all flesh.
- Voice 1** Your children shall prophesy.
- Voice 2** Your elders shall dream dreams.
- Voice 3** And your youth shall see visions.
- Voice 1** Even on the enslaved ones.
- All** In those days, I will pour out my spirit.

**Matthew 13:1-9, 31-32**

Before reading the text, hand round a pot of mustard seeds. Invite everyone to take one seed and reflect on the big changes our small actions can bring to the world this Christian Aid Week. Then read the passage.

## Offertory prayer

God, our Farmer

You plant the seed

You water the seed

You nourish the seed

You value the widow's mite

You value Esther's peas

You value what we bring today

What we bring today

Is already yours

Accept these, our offerings

And use them to help dreams come true

In this community

Through this church

And in your world

Through Christian Aid.

Amen.

## Communion liturgy for two voices

We have written a communion liturgy that you can use if it is appropriate for your church and style of worship. To begin, you may like to read 1 Corinthians 11:23–26.

**Voice 1:** Bring the harvest home.  
Bread baking and wine fermenting.  
Fruit of the toil of working the land.  
Reward of months of waiting and worrying.  
Of watching for the sun  
and praying for the rains.

**Voice 2:** We gather around this table with all who work in food production.  
From farming and transport  
to preparation and sale.

**Voice 1:** Bring the harvest home.  
The peas that are picked and ready for sale.  
The negotiations complete and deals signed.  
Farmers and cooks coming together.

Cooperatives formed, recipes written, dreams inspired  
and income improved.

**Voice 2:** We gather around this table with all who bring people together  
to form co-operatives and unions,  
enabling safer working practices and fairer trade.

**Voice 1:** Bring the harvest home.  
The crops that have withered in the drought  
or rotted in flooded fields.  
Impoverishing the seeds for the next year  
and dashing people's hopes and dreams  
as our climate emergency  
takes lives and livelihood.

**Voice 2:** We gather around this table with all who campaign for climate justice.  
For scientists and innovators,  
protesters and politicians.

**Voice 1:** Bring the harvest home.  
The peas that are milled into flour.  
Bread broken symbolising the injustice  
and brokenness of our world.  
Where those who grow food go hungry  
and those responsible for our climate emergency  
get richer and richer with impunity.

**Voice 2:** On the night before he died,  
Jesus took bread and gave thanks  
and gave it to them, saying:  
'This is my body broken for you.  
'Take, eat, do this in memory of me.'  
And the tables start to turn  
as truth is spoken to power  
and reparations are made.

**Communion:** [Bread is shared]

**Voice 1:** Bring the harvest home.  
The grapes that are fermented.  
Wine poured, symbolising the possibility  
of a new way of living together.



A new covenant with the Earth  
that is our home.

Where dreams may come true

**Voice 2:** After he had given thanks,  
Jesus took a cup of wine  
and gave it to them, saying:  
'This is the wine of the new covenant.  
'Take, drink, do this in memory of me.'  
And we start to dream together  
of sustainable alternatives  
and new ways to live together.

**Communion:** [Wine is shared]

## Thanksgiving prayer

God of broken bread and wine shared.

We give you thanks for the story of Esther  
and her community that helps each other.

May we learn and be inspired  
to be part of that community that helps each other  
and to extend that community to the Earth  
and to the ends of the Earth  
that all may live and live abundantly.

Amen.

## Intercessions

There are two options provided for intercessions. Following a short introductory prayer, you may use either:

- the set of bullet points, which can be used as a starting point to write your own prayers.
- the prayer activity which can involve the whole congregation.

### Introduction to intercessions

Esther Saizi told Christian Aid: 'When my husband passed away last year, it was a difficult period. I was heartbroken by his passing. Eventually as I knelt down and prayed to God, I knew he was with him and I had to move forward. I knelt and prayed that God would help me.'

Rejoicing in the answer to prayer that Esther received, and confident in the power of prayer to change the world, together we pray.

### Intercessory prayer

People throughout the world suffering from poverty and injustice

- The challenge of soaring inflation making it difficult to afford everyday essentials.
- People affected by natural disasters such as drought, famine and flood.
- The impact of climate change, particularly when it destroys essential crops.
- Esther Saizi and women like her who bring their communities together.
- Farmers who provide essential food for their communities.
- Cooperatives which give people more power over their own lives.
- An end to the economic exploitation by big businesses.

### Prayer activity

Use the outline of the prayer person that you can find at the back of this pack. Print these on two different coloured papers, if possible. Give everyone one of each and a pen or pencil. Ask them to write two short prayers.

- On the first colour, people write or draw something or someone they are praying for.
- On the second, they write or draw a hope, dream or vision they have for the world.

This can be enough for a time of prayer, but you can also share in a spoken time of prayer by reading out the prayers that have been written on the people. At the end of the service, you can tape or string the people together to form a chain to display.

## Sending and blessing

Go into the world  
working together for change  
so that everyone can thrive  
and share life in its fullness.

And in all we do  
let us show the love of Jesus.

Let us treat everyone with dignity.

**We will show the love of Jesus.**

Let us stand up for equality.

**We will show the love of Jesus.**

Let us fight for justice.

**We will show the love of Jesus.**

May the God of hope  
fill you with all joy and peace in believing,  
so that you may overflow with hope  
by the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

## Songs and music

For opening songs, you could consider songs of welcome, unity and inclusivity, such as:

- *For Everyone Born a Place at the Table* (Shirley Erena Murray)
- *In Christ There is No East or West* (John Oxenham/William Arthur Dunkerley)
- *Come People of the Risen King* (Keith Getty, Kristyn Getty, Stuart Townend)
- *Jesus Shall Reign Where'er the Sun* (Isaac Watts) could be suitable for Ascension.

Some more reflective songs which could link well with prayers include:

- *We Lay Our Broken World* (Anna Briggs)
- *Lord, You Hear the Cry* (Geraldine Latty)
- *For the Healing of the Nations* (Fred Kaan).

If you are using the gospel story of the mustard seed, then *In our lives plant seeds of hope* (Carol Dixon) is a great, lively song.

Some more general songs which could be used as responses are *When I Needed A Neighbour Were You There?* (Sydney Carter) and *God of All Comfort* (Joel Payne/Matt Weeks), which were both written for Christian Aid, and *Heaven Shall Not Wait* (John L Bell/Graham Maule).

You could finish either with a song of commitment, such as *Act Justly, Love Mercy, Walk Humbly* (Chris Tomlin, Jason Ingram, Pat Barrett) or *Sent by the Lord am I* (Jorge Maldonado), or a song which echoes the theme of being united by hope, such as *All my Hope on God is Founded* (Robert Bridges/Joachim Neander) or *Living Hope* (Brian Johnson/Phil Wickham).



**Prayer person template**

