

Commitment for **Life**

Life-giving Faith | Defiant Hope | Generous Love

2025 | 26 Update

A woman with a warm smile, wearing a vibrant red headscarf adorned with colorful floral and geometric patterns, cradles a small, light-colored goat with a distinctive white blaze on its face. She is dressed in a dark garment with a yellow and red floral pattern. The background is a dense, textured wall of dry, golden-brown straw or hay.

Hope in the making

**Inspiring stories, news and updates
to help you pray, act and share**

Christian Aid is the official relief, development and advocacy agency of 41 sponsoring churches in Britain and Ireland. We are a global movement of people who champion dignity, equality and justice worldwide.

Global Justice Now is a democratic social justice organisation. It's part of a global movement to challenge the powerful, and create a more just and equal world. We mobilise people in the UK for change, and act in solidarity with those fighting injustice, particularly in the global South.

Commitment for Life enables URC Synods and local congregations to make global justice a key part of their mission. We encourage members to learn, to pray, to take action and to give generously for some of the poorest people in the world. 75% of all income raised goes to Christian Aid to be divided equally among the partner countries, and 5% to Global Justice Now. The remaining 20% is spent on education, resources and administration.

Cover Image Rumi Begum of Kurigram, Bangladesh holds one of the baby goats she is raising with her new learning from the Rajlokhhi Mohila Somite training.

Pray with us

Bangladesh

1. Pray for families who are part of this program that God will bless and increase the work of their hands.
2. Pray for strength and resilience for individuals like Hamida, who are committed to work and lift their families out of extreme poverty.
3. Pray that God will provide more resources and expertise to respond to the needs in Bangladesh.
4. Pray for our partners for strength and new ideas to continue responding where needs are greatest

IoPt

1. Pray that God will bring long lasting peace and calm to IoPt.
2. Pray for resilience and renewed strength for our partners as they respond to ever increasing needs of the communities.
3. Pray for God's protection over our partners as they respond to needs of the people.
4. Pray for God's comfort for those who are mourning their homes and loved one.

Zimbabwe

1. Pray that God will continue to supply the daily bread of those in need.
2. Pray that God will continue to bring hope to those experiencing humanitarian crisis.
3. Pray for God to help us as a collective to be good stewards of God's creation.
4. Pray that God will continue to equip churches to be advocates for those who are marginalised and in need.



Kevin Snyman

‘Let us hold
unswervingly
to the hope
we profess,
for the God
of promise
is faithful.’

(Hebrews 10:23)

Welcome

Dear Commitment for Life supporters and friends,

2025 has already been marked by multiple crises and uncertainties. It is quite easy to feel overwhelmed by issues such as the relentless, horrific violence in Gaza. Pakistan and India are threatening one another with nuclear bombs, putting the whole world at enormous risk. Global leaders serve billionaires rather than the people. AI's exponential explosion onto the world stage is deeply disorientating. Economic inequality widens, and global systems favour the powerful. Then there is the rapid rise in climate breakdown which disproportionately harms the world's most exploited people and species. In such a landscape, despair seems to be a perfectly legitimate reaction.

The author of the letter to the Hebrews urged their readers to 'hold unswervingly to the hope we profess' as followers of Christ Jesus, whose resurrection made empire seem woeful, pathetic and defeated. This Christian hope is not passive. It is active, yet patient; gentle, yet courageous; and relentless, yet kind. What a gift to the world – professing and living a resurrection hope amid despair!

Commitment for Life is excited to share a collection of resources that speak hope into the world and lead to a deeper commitment to the One whom we profess as Lord.

We are delighted to have the Rev Dr Graham Adams bring us a Bible Study on Matthew 11:25. Drawing insights from educator Paulo Freire, Graham explores how Jesus opens truth – not to the wise and powerful – but to those who have the openness and humility of a child.

We also bring you our interview with Charlotte Marshall, director of Sabeel-Kairos UK, a Christian campaigning charity working for human rights, justice and equality for Palestinians. Charlotte's deep hope is finally to witness justice, equality, and self-determination for the Palestinian people.

We hear stories of hope from our partners in Bangladesh, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory (IoPt) and Zimbabwe. Greta Global, our beloved mascot, returns with a message of encouragement for people of all ages. With warmth and humour, Greta reminds us that small actions for justice – when rooted in love – can ripple outward in surprising and transformative ways. Please share these resources with your congregation through the year.

The Commitment for Life team



Hope

by Graham Adams

‘At that time, Jesus said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and Earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants”.’

(Matthew 11:25)

The words of Jesus that Matthew shares were curious. It's not so obvious what this passage says about hope, but we know there are two things this verse is not saying. First, it is not saying Jesus was against intellect. He taught people to think for themselves through stories that required careful discernment. He also encouraged thinking against the grain of the powerful.

Second, Matthew is not suggesting we should desire infantile naivety and innocence – infants are more than that. Before saying this, Jesus answered a question about whether He is the one, pointing to transformation: the poor encountering good news, people being healed. Then, he posed a question: ‘to what will I compare this generation?’ He likened them to children in the marketplace, playing tunes of lament while others will not weep, or songs of joy while others will not dance.

Children signify a world in which lamentation over injustice and celebration

of new life coexist – but many remain preoccupied with stale systems serving the powerful instead of the ‘little ones.’ His words invite us to see and live differently. Infants intuitively grasp this, revealing it to us, while those in religious and political power fail to notice.

Charles Péguy, a French poet and Christian socialist, speaks of ‘Hope’ as a little girl with two older sisters, Faith and Charity, who appear to move her forward; yet it is her momentum that drives them. Hope’s energy achieves more than we expect. Likewise, Paulo Freire, a liberationist educationalist, describes infancy as revolutionary: ‘Its curiosity, restlessness, delight in questioning, fearlessness in dreaming, desire to grow, create, and change.’ If faith and love are to make a difference, hope must propel them forward. Be more child. Be more infant. Play our tunes of lament and joy, envisaging an alternative horizon and beckoning others to follow.

Greta says: 'Stay hopeful when things are hard.'



What is hope?

Have you ever said: 'I hope it doesn't rain when we're at the beach!' Or what about, 'I hope my team wins the cup!'

We are very good at wishing for things. However, when the authors in the Bible speak about hope, they don't mean it like a wish. They see hope as believing firmly in God's promises. They see it as knowing God is with us and God loves us, even in the hardest of times.

The Bible authors sometimes use symbols to represent hope like the rainbow, an olive branch, a dove, the cross, a shield or an anchor. These symbols convey a message of God's love, protection, promises and renewal.

Psalms 33: 20-22 says: 'So our hope is in the Lord. God is our help, a shield to protect us. We rejoice in God; we trust God's holy name. Lord, show your love to us as we put our hope in you.'

Psalms 33 reminds us that our hope is found in a caring God. We can always trust in God.

Sharing hope with others

We live in a world that is full of sadness. We all need hope, love, peace and happiness amidst all the heartbreak and injustice.

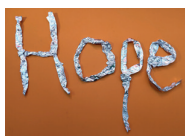
God created us to be blessings to one another. One way to have hope in our hearts is to share hope into the lives of others.

Commitment for Life works with partners in Christian Aid and Global Justice Now, together, to bring hope to children and young people in Bangladesh, IoPt and Zimbabwe.

Other ways in which you can positively bring hope to the world include:

- Send a card, picture or letter to someone who is lonely.
- Be kind.
- Stand up for others wrongly treated.
- Ask your teachers why the government allows people to go hungry, cold and homeless in the UK.

Prayer activity: H.O.P.E



Sometimes we may feel helpless and think there is nothing we can do. However, God calls us to pray for the needs of

others, even if we do not know them personally.

Use tinfoil or playdough to model out each of the letters of the word HOPE. Take time to pray these prayers over each of the letters:

Help – Pray for people or situations where help is needed.

One – Pray for one thing, person or situation that you are worried about, perhaps a person who is not very well or is sad.

Protection – God is our strength and protector. Pray for situations that need God's protection.

Everyone everywhere – Pray for the people in your church, community, country or in the world.

Taken from URC Faith Adventures for Children Together <https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/FACT-April-2025-Week-4.pdf>

Seeds of change: How Hamida transformed her family's future



Hamida feeds the cattle, practising her new livestock management skills.

Hebrews 11:1 reminds us that faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. It can often be difficult to believe things can change, but we must hope and have faith. For Hamida (52) and her family of five from Baishpara village, in Kurigram district in Bangladesh, this was their story – having to believe against all odds.

Hamida's family relied solely on her husband Abdul Goni's unreliable income as a day laborer. 'We never knew if we would have enough to eat the next day,' she recalls. 'My husband worked so hard, but the money was never enough.'

Despite the uncertainty surrounding her family's livelihood, Hamida was hopeful and gave herself to community work. Hamida was elected as the president of Shapla

Mohila Somity, a local women's group, and as part of this work she was invited to join the Gender Transformative Climate Resilient Microfinance project's training sessions. Hamida learned livestock management, poultry raising and agricultural techniques. Small seeds of hope were planted, and she kept her faith, believing that things would change for her and her family. The project did more than provide knowledge. It opened financial doors normally closed to women like Hamida who were expected only to look after homesteads.

With support from Christian Aid partner Gana Unnayan Kendrks (GUK) and the implementing organisation, Hamida secured a loan of 100,000 BDT (approximately £730) from National Bank. Taking a bold step of faith, she also sold her two local cows for another 100,000 BDT

(£730), giving her a total capital of 200,000 BDT (£1,460).

‘I was nervous about investing so much money,’ Hamida admits. ‘But I trusted the training I had received.’

Hamida invested her capital in a high-yielding crossbreed cow with a calf. ‘That first cow changed my perception,’ she says. The cow produced 20 litres of milk daily during lactation, generating approximately 10,000 BDT (£73) monthly after expenses – a substantial sum in her village economy. She could see a light at the end of the tunnel, a means for regular income.

Hamida’s journey wasn’t without challenges. Three months after purchasing her first cow, it developed a serious infection that threatened her entire investment. ‘I nearly lost everything when my first cow fell ill,’ she shares. ‘The local treatment wasn’t working, and I was afraid I would lose my investment.’

Drawing on her training, Hamida contacted the Department of Livestock Services she had met during the workshops. Using her emergency savings of 3,500 BDT (£25), she purchased the recommended medications and followed strict treatment as suggested by the veterinary surgeon. The cow recovered fully within two weeks.

‘The training taught me not just how to care for healthy animals, but also how to respond when problems arise,’ Hamida explains. ‘That knowledge saved my business.’

After successfully repaying her first loan, Hamida secured a second loan of 100,000 BDT (£730). She purchased another crossbreed cow with a calf. Within 11 months, her careful management allowed her to purchase a third cow, and eventually a fourth. With two lactating cows, her dairy now produces 40 litres of milk daily.

As the business grew, Abdul began helping, particularly with selling milk at local markets. Their partnership represents a significant shift in their relationship. Abdul says: ‘Before, I thought I must carry all the burden alone. Now I see how much stronger we are working together.’

Today, Hamida’s dairy business generates approximately 18,000 BDT (£130) monthly, creating an annual income of about 216,000 BDT (£1,560) – a remarkable achievement for a woman who once struggled to feed her family.

Not long after the government recognized Hamida’s extraordinary journey by awarding her the prestigious Joyeeta Award for economic success. ‘The award is nice, but what matters most is what happens in my home. My children now see their mother as a businesswoman, as someone with valuable knowledge. This project gave me the tools, but I had to find the courage to use them,’ Hamida shared.



Hamida’s transformation extends beyond financial gains. She has gained respect in her community, transformed her family’s dynamics and become a model for other women. Her story demonstrates how appropriate financial services, combined with practical training and gender-sensitive approaches, can create pathways to economic independence and dignity for women in rural communities.

Hope in the midst of pain

**‘The LORD is close to
the brokenhearted
...and saves those who
are crushed in spirit.’**

(Psalms 38:14)

For many in the loPt region, grief and pain are something to which they have become accustomed. Homes are broken, cities destroyed, and families are forced to make home in temporary shelters. Despite this, we see hope in response to their needs. We see hope in humanity as communities come together to help each other during this difficult time.

Our Christian Aid partner, Palestinian Agricultural Development Association (PARC) have been on the ground for many years, walking this journey with community members, identifying needs and responding accordingly. PARC carefully assesses the needs of individuals and families to identify ways of embodying and express love. This work has reinforced the importance of working through locally managed and driven partnership.

For many internally displaced persons (IDPs), camps have become home. Those struggling with disabilities alongside displacement have found it to be especially difficult.

PARC has been working to identify these people living with disabilities in the camps who have not been able to access sanitation. This work is rooted in Christian Aid values, understanding that each person is created in God’s image and should be treated with love and dignity.

Living in an IDP camp in a wheelchair, Anisa*, was dependent on her family and unable to look after her basic needs due to a lack of adequate facilities. With the support of PARC, she now has access to a disabled toilet and bathroom which has given her some autonomy. ‘This support made me feel seen, and gave me back my dignity,’ she said.

For families with young children in the camps, the needs have been for clothing for their children. Like many of us, we can relate to how quickly children outgrow their clothes. When families moved to the



Women in the camps receive support to help meet their basic needs.



Volunteers gather to dig out the road beneath the rubble.

camps, many were running for safety and only managed to carry few belongings. And while most thought the move would be temporary, for a short season, this has not been the case. PARC partners responded, offering vouchers to families to replace the tattered and outworn clothes of children growing up in the camps.

When ceasefire talks began, hope began rising in the camps. For a moment, people saw an opportunity to return to life; an opportunity to rebuild again. What they found, however, was roads blocked with rubble from the war and nowhere to pass.

In response, PARC was able to fund the supply of tools to over 1,000 volunteers who began to dig out the road joining the northern and southern parts of Gaza. This effort helped to enable those who could, return back to their towns to restart their lives.

Through it all we see, God – who is close to the brokenhearted – see their needs and use those who avail themselves as an answer. Your partnership and support are a response to stand up and change lives, wherever those in need are. You are part of igniting hope in a difficult situation.



Volunteers labour to repair the road linking Northern and Southern Gaza.

Resilience of drought impacted communities in Zimbabwe

‘For I know the plans I have for you, to give you a hope and future.’

(Jeremiah 29:11)

Hope in crisis

It can often be difficult to trust God in the midst of a crisis. Zimbabwe experienced its worst drought in 40 years in 2024, which has created a food crisis on an unprecedented scale.

This drought has not only impacted last year's food security, but also the ability to replant the harvest for future food resources. UNHCR has predicted that over 3.5million people in Zimbabwe will experience a food and nutrition crisis requiring humanitarian assistance due to the severe El-Niño-induced drought. Christian Aid partner Zimbabwe council of Churches (ZCC) has been assessing the situations and been responding with food packages and vouchers to provide a lifeline for many affected.

Sithandzile Mabena, pictured below, holds food vouchers she received from ZCC. She has four children and also looks after her two nieces.



Sithandzile Mabena holds vouchers which can be exchanged for food items.



Phelele Ncube, a 77-year-old grandmother, provides meals for her two grandchildren.

Sithandizile shares: 'Before this assistance, I worried every day about how I would feed my children. Now, I can focus on working without the fear of going to bed hungry. This support has given me hope and dignity.'

She was able to exchange the food vouchers she received for goods like sugar beans, maize meal and cooking oil.

For those who were assessed and would be unable to utilise the vouchers, food packages were delivered to their homes.

Phelele Ncube, a 77-year-old grandmother, in Mangubo village says this means she can now make meals for her two grandchildren and is hugely grateful:

'Hunger is painful, especially when you have children looking up to you for food. At my age, I can't work, but this support has given me peace of mind, knowing my grandchildren will eat. I only pray this program continues, because it is a lifeline for people like us.'

In addition to the food crisis, the drought has also caused all of the local water sources and rivers to dry up. Communities either must go further to fetch water, or go without.

As part of the drought response, Christian Aid partners have dug 21 boreholes to supply water to the hardest hit communities. Over 600 households have benefitted from this drought response.

'...Now, I can focus on working without the fear of going to bed hungry. This support has given me hope and dignity.'

Through your support, and the work of the local church which has become the hands and feet of Jesus, we truly see the fulfillment of his promise that indeed he has good plans for us even in challenging situations.



Interview with Charlotte Marshall, director of Sabeel-Kairos UK

Sabeel-Kairos UK is a Christian campaigning charity that works with Palestinian communities for human rights, justice and equality.

What first drew you to the cause of justice in Palestine and Israel?

My first significant experience of the issues was through Christian Aid. I helped a staff member organise events in churches where people could come and hear stories about the life under occupation. It was totally eye-opening. How had this been allowed to happen unchecked for so many years? I then became a Christian Aid staff member and first visited Palestine and Israel in 2005. Since then, I've visited often, including research for my

Masters in refugee camps in the West Bank. I've built long-lasting friendships in Bethlehem. I'm constantly amazed by the incredible faith and steadfastness of the Palestinian Christian community. Working for justice feels like a David and Goliath struggle, but I know deep in my heart that one day justice will flow through this land.

Who have been the most significant in shaping your understanding?

I learn from Palestinian Christians. The Revd Mitri Raheb opened my eyes to the colonisation of Palestine. I found Elias Chacour's *Blood Brothers* inspiring in its vision of reconciliation. Munther Isaac has been both a friend and mentor. His *Christ in the*

Rubble sermon impacted me hugely and has helped me deal with the sense of hopelessness I sometimes feel. Omar Haramy's sense of humour has kept me going on many a visit to Palestine! Over the years I've met some incredibly inspiring Israeli activists. I was fortunate to meet Yehuda Shaul in the early days of *Breaking the Silence* tours of Hebron. I worked with activists from B'Tselem in the South Hebron hills, and saw one arrested for supporting a farmer. I've joined protests in Bil'in alongside Israelis, Palestinians and internationals. During visits to Gaza, especially after the 2009 war, I found the resilience of the people deeply humbling. I loved watching kids play

basketball at the YMCA centre. I am continually inspired by Raji Sourani, another human rights advocate counting the cost for his work in Gaza. The list goes on!

Can you share a recent, meaningful, and impactful campaign you've led?

I have been working with our denominational campaign groups for many years. They are the foundation of our work. Our URC group, together with participants from the URC's educational visit to Palestine and Israel in 2019, have been working to challenge Synods on the implementation of resolutions on Palestine from General Assembly in 2021 and 2024. The thrust of these resolutions is on URC investments, ensuring they do not profit companies supporting Israel's illegal occupation, and now Israeli-registered companies as well. The group writes to Synods to determine whether their investments comply with these resolutions and offer guidance where requested. Divestment is a powerful tool to show solidarity and pressure companies that violate human rights. Our partners in Palestine have for many years been calling on the global church to divest from Israeli occupation and apartheid. They tell us frequently that this is what costly solidarity looks like.

As you look ahead, what gives you hope? What role do you see for the global church?

The last 18 months have been desperate for Palestinians. As we watch people being slaughtered, starved and displaced, it would be easy to despair. However, I am filled with hope when I see hundreds of thousands of people marching on the streets through London. I am also filled with hope as I look at the collapse of other gross injustices – such as South African Apartheid – and realise that the darkest times come before the dawn. These countries in the global south are also inspiring many as they lead the legal cases against Israel in the international courts. And if our partners

play in the future of Palestine.

How does your faith in and understanding of God sustain your work?

I'm firmly convinced that my heart for justice and passion for the Palestinian people are God-given gifts. This means choosing to believe in God as sovereign, just and loving despite the brokenness of the world, and believing that we are God's agents on this earth, chosen to challenge injustice and to love people unconditionally (not an easy task!). I remind myself often that Jesus was born into a world of poverty, war and occupation, not dissimilar to the Palestine of today. He chose to stand on the side of the marginalised and against the powerful and

'The spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives, and release from darkness for the prisoners.'

(Isaiah 61:1)

refuse to succumb to despair, then the least we can do is to stand alongside them. I believe the Church has a huge responsibility and role to

unjust rulers. In challenging times, I remind myself of the great commission of Jesus, and the anointing of the Holy Spirit in helping, guiding and sustaining me.

Christian Aid Restore Campaign

In low-income countries across the world, climate breakdown and government debt are colliding to trap millions in poverty.

Reckless polluters have caused the climate crisis, robbing communities of their livelihoods.

In Guatemala, gruelling heatwaves are destroying Aurelia's farm. Many of her vital crops are withering and dying before her eyes. Aurelia's community is fighting to overcome these challenges. But they shouldn't be tackling this alone.

At the same time, greedy corporate lenders have trapped countries in debt, preventing governments from providing basic services like healthcare and education. In Malawi government debts mean only 15% of children complete secondary school and under half have access to healthcare.

What has this got to do with the UK?

For too long, the UK Government has backed those with wealth and power, but it can help repair the harm being caused – if it chooses.

The UK has the power to confront reckless polluters and greedy lenders.

With many fossil fuel companies headquartered here, the UK Government has the power to make them pay for the climate crisis.

Furthermore, most debts owed by low-income countries to private companies are governed by UK law. The UK Government is uniquely placed to legislate on how these debts are negotiated.

'Lenders put profit before people. The UK government could help end the crisis for countries like Ghana. It could pass a new law that would make the debt relief process fairer,' said Bernard Adaba, a Ghanaian debt campaigner.

You can help make change happen.

Just as you helped create the Fairtrade movement that has benefitted farmers worldwide, you can stand with our global neighbours again.

Just as you joined together to ensure the G8 cancelled billions of dollars of debt as part of the jubilee movement, you can force the UK to stand up to corporate power.

For 80 years Christian Aid and its supporters have challenged those in power to make the world a more beautiful place. We can do so again.

Join God's work to restore creation and see the flourishing of all people.

Call on the UK Government to make polluters pay for the climate crisis and to introduce new debt justice laws that could pull millions out of poverty.

Find out more at caid.org.uk/Restore

Global Justice Now



The world feels unbearably dark for so many people. Especially in Palestine. And it's easy to feel powerless watching the horrors unfold from afar. **So, when there's something we can do from here in the UK to push for real change, we must act.**

Last year the International Court of Justice in the Hague made clear that all countries must act to deter genocide and ensure that their trade relations don't support Israel's illegal occupation. **The UK's obligation to act is clear.**

Israel's genocide in Gaza is rooted in decades of illegal occupation of Palestinian land. The UK's colonial past laid the ground for the oppression of Palestinian people – and today it is continuing to provide material and diplomatic support for Israel as it commits horrific war crimes. As a movement for justice, we must do everything we can to hold the UK government accountable for its role – and push for it to change course.

Last year, we commissioned legal research on UK arms sales, organised teach-ins for

activists across the country and mobilised tens of thousands to demand an arms embargo. Since then, we've worked to expose the UK's complicity in the media and brought campaigners together to press political decision-makers for action on trade.

The last year and a half has shown, more devastatingly than ever, that Israel will not moderate its genocidal violence and repression against Palestinians without meaningful opposition. Now, Israel has escalated its attacks and welcomed Donald Trump's plan for the ethnic cleansing of Gaza. Yet, the UK government still refuses to take more meaningful action to stop the violence.

The UK's close economic ties with Israel serve to sanitise war crimes – but they could instead be a powerful tool to push for change. That's why we must escalate our campaign urgently and with clear demands like pushing for sanctions.

Will you join the demand for sanctions on Israel? Take action now:
globaljustice.org.uk/sanctions



Thank you for your support.



From struggling with daily survival to confidently managing her home and income, Rumi Begum is proof that the right support and knowledge can lead to lasting empowerment – her garden, her pigeons and her success all speak of resilience and hope.

For information about Commitment for Life, email commitmentforlife@urc.org.uk visit bit.ly/URCFL or phone 020 7916 8638



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