

Spring 2018

teartimes

CHURCH WITH A BIG HEART

Change comes when churches
face outwards

KEEPING DREAMS ALIVE IN LEBANON

Why we won't let Halla
give up hope

WAR ON PLASTIC

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Are there times when you feel disillusioned with church? You are fed up with the songs? Upset with your minister?

We can all feel a bit jaded with church from time to time – but maybe we should reconsider what church is all about. If we are in it for what we get out of it, perhaps disappointment is inevitable.

It's certainly true that, if a church and all its members turn outward towards their community and look beyond their own needs to those of other people, they can be a powerful force for change.

That's why I am so inspired by the example of our friends in Uganda and Cambodia (see pages 3–5) where churches are working with their community to tackle deep-rooted poverty... with amazing results. They're walking in step with God as he 'raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap' (Psalm 113:7). The power of the local church to bring change and restore hope is also abundantly clear in the work of our partner MERATH serving refugees in Lebanon (see pages 6–7).

Even in the most desperate of circumstances, God shows us that there is always cause for hope and that he can – and will – renew all things (Revelation 21:5). And he wants to involve us in that renewal, whether it's turning the tide on plastics consumption (page 8–9) or praying for Yemen.

We all know that church is much bigger than our Sunday services – that following Jesus involves every part of our lives across every day of the week. But I hope that, as you read this edition of *Tear Times*, you'll be inspired afresh by what 'church' is all about!

God's people are on the move and making a difference in some of the hardest, toughest places on the planet right now. And you are part of them, with every prayer, every gift and every campaign action you take as you follow him. Thank you!

Sharan Kelly

Sharan Kelly
 Chief Executive Officer
 Chair of Dóchas, the association of Irish non-governmental development organisations
 Chair of EU-CORD Administrative Council, a network of European Christian relief and development NGOs

TEARFUND IRELAND

We are bringing hope and demonstrating love to the most vulnerable and marginalised people – through the local church.



GET IN TOUCH WITH US!

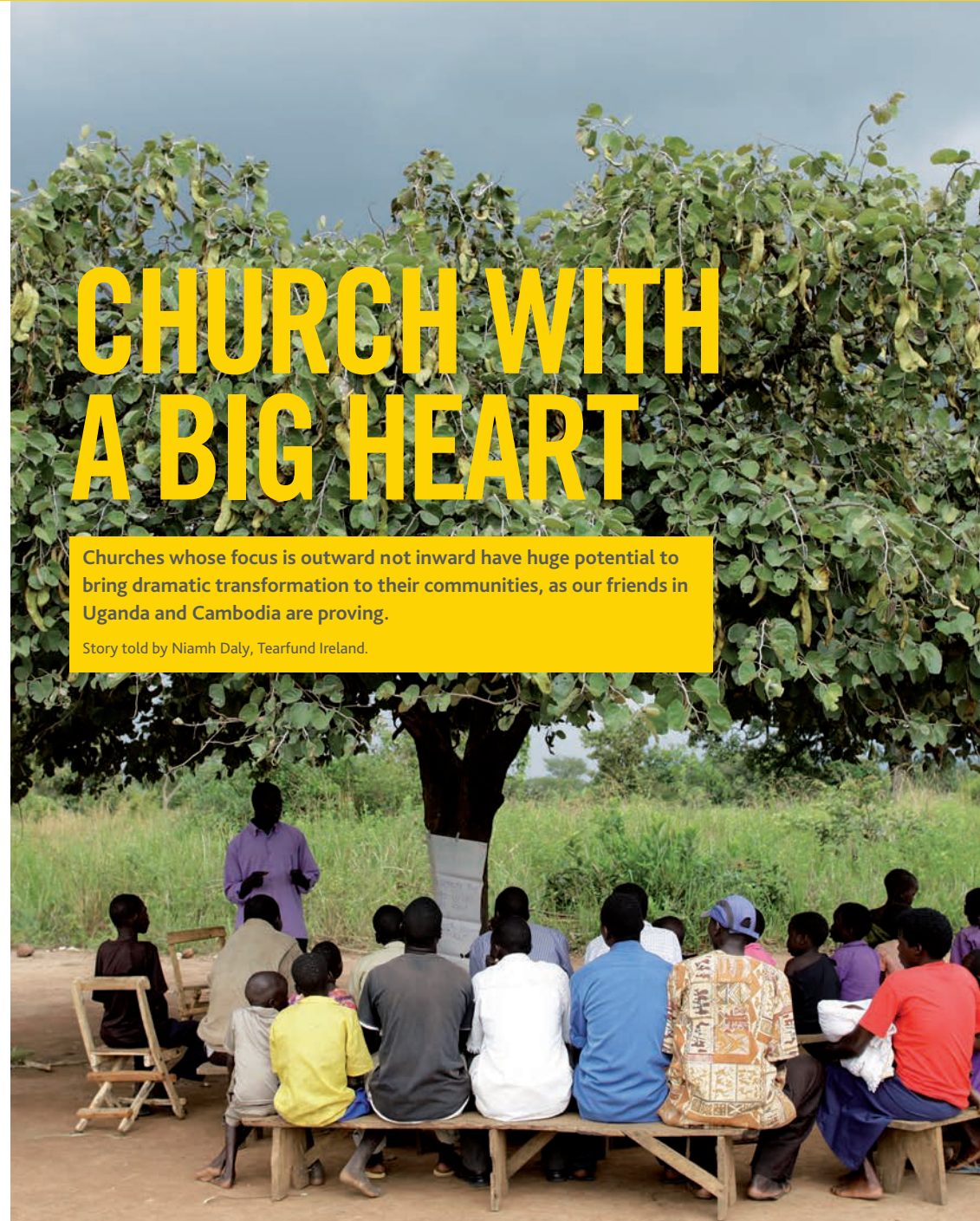
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Cover photo: Friendship blossoms among refugee children in Lebanon. Helen Manson/Integral Partnership. Helen Manson/Integral Partnership

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CHURCH WITH A BIG HEART

Churches whose focus is outward not inward have huge potential to bring dramatic transformation to their communities, as our friends in Uganda and Cambodia are proving.
 Story told by Niamh Daly, Tearfund Ireland.

Photo: Layton Thompson/Tearfund

Pastor Joseph's church in Ogongora began in 1980 when four villagers met under a mango tree and began worshipping together.

Since these humble beginnings, this church in eastern Uganda has flourished – especially since it became involved with our Church and Community Mobilisation (CCM) programme. It's a powerful reminder to churches everywhere that we should keep looking outwards and beyond our own needs.

CCM enables people and their local church to come together to make their own path out of poverty.

They do this by drawing on their own resources – using their skills and initiative to come up with solutions to their problems.

It all starts with the church taking a firm grasp of the idea that it can be a powerful agent of change in its community, with God's help. It starts with the church seeing its mission as following in the footsteps of Jesus, to 'proclaim good news to the poor... bind up the broken-hearted... proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners' (Isaiah 61:1).

'Mobilising' churches in this way is what motivates Jane Frances Achaloi of the Pentecostal Assemblies of God in Uganda who coordinates the CCM programme that Tearfund Ireland supports in that nation. Jane has been working alongside the community of Ogongora for nearly ten years now and has seen the church there grow in number and in influence.

Over the years, we have shared stories of some of the people whose lives have been transformed through the CCM ministry. People like Grace, a widow and mother of eight, and her son Dan who wants to be a teacher... Lucy, a widowed grandmother raising twins and four other grandchildren... Moses, the young footballer who

dreams of becoming a doctor to help his ailing father. Their number is growing all the time.

'My vision is to get people to have a heart,' says Jane. 'Church is very important in mobilising the community because the church carries the heart of Jesus Christ. The way Jesus feels for the needy is the way the church feels.'

It is this love that is driving the church in Ogongora forward, despite the tough challenges it continues to face. Recent drought and hunger in the region have caused delays in the construction of the new church building. People have had to prioritise food for their family over contributing to the building fund. But even so the church as a community is vibrant and hopeful.

We were privileged to have Jane with us in 2010 when she came to Dublin for a church leaders' workshop and she made a very strong impression. As someone said at the time, 'She embodies Christ, always listening, watching, asking just the right questions, guiding people on their own journey.'

Jane and the church in Ogongora remind me how important it is as a church to have a focus beyond ourselves. Without that, church life can become stagnant and we can find that instead of 'casting nets', we cast stones. Instead of helping the hurting, we can hurt the helpers.

They remind me of Galatians 6:9: 'Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.' And that is hugely encouraging.

**MY VISION IS TO
GET PEOPLE TO
HAVE A HEART**

HOPE FOR SOMETHING BETTER



Photo: The Cambodian Hope Organisation (CHO) is using Church and Community Mobilisation (CCM) to serve some of the poorest communities in Cambodia. Tearfund

In Cambodia, another group of churches are excited to see how God is working in and through them to transform their communities.

Sixty-two-year-old Pastor Bopha admits he became disillusioned as a younger Christian because of his negative experiences of church. Now, his faith is revitalised as he is leading many believers back into a close relationship with Jesus – through his church's involvement with CCM.

In Pastor Bopha's village, and in some of the poorest communities in Cambodia, it is our partner Cambodian Hope Organisation (CHO) which is overseeing the CCM programme.

CHO is based in Poipet, an area on the Thai-Cambodia border notorious for human trafficking and gambling.

Recently, CHO has expanded its work into five new villages, including Pastor Bopha's. These villages had historically found it hard to trust the church.

Some time ago, groups posing as Christians had deceived many people and taken their money – but miraculously, people were open to CHO.

The first step of church and community mobilisation is to help communities understand that they can help themselves, rather than having to wait on outside support. They are encouraged to think about their 'vision for the future' – a powerful way to give them hope and purpose, things which are often in short supply among those living in extreme poverty.

Already, new ideas are coming thick and fast. One is to create a community fish pond, to breed fish for everyone to share. As well as providing food, this would also create jobs, so people would be less likely to seek work elsewhere and less vulnerable to trafficking.

For communities which have struggled to think beyond meeting their immediate needs, having a vision for the future can be truly transformative. Here, as in so many communities worldwide, Jesus is proving that he is the hope of the nations and he works through the church to bring hope and transformation.

Tearfund Ireland is forging partnerships with church in all its expressions at every level – from our partners at the grassroots to Christian agencies in international coalitions such as EU-CORD which we are now chairing. The church is a global family and we're excited to see it being mobilised across the world.



Photo: Sharan Kelly, Tearfund Ireland's Chief Executive Officer was recently appointed Chair for EU-CORD, the European network of Christian NGOs



KEEPING DREAMS ALIVE IN LEBANON

Syria's conflict drags on, fuelling despair of ever seeing an end to the suffering. Our partners in Lebanon are helping children like Halla cling on to hope, writes Marketing and Fundraising Manager Niamh Daly.

As I write, news and images of the latest wave of atrocities to impact the people of Syria are spread across the front of our national newspapers – again.

On his RTÉ Radio 1 programme this morning, Ryan Tubridy spoke about having to 'turn his head away' from the images filling the nine o'clock news. It is unbearable to think this conflict has dragged on for seven years – and there is still no end in sight.

It's all the more heart-breaking when you listen to 11-year-old Halla and her dreams of returning to Syria, of seeing her grandparents again.

For now, she's in one of the 'tent schools' that Tearfund Ireland's partner in Lebanon is running for more than 1,000 Syrian refugee children like her.

'All of Syria is beautiful,' says Halla. 'I miss it. There, we had electricity, water and schools. I

miss my friends. We used to play jumping ropes and sit around and talk.

'Mostly, I miss my grandparents' house. They'd give me sugar and tea. The war in Syria means everyone is separated from each other.'

Pastor Marcel and his team at our partner Middle East Revive and Thrive (MERATH) are working tirelessly to keep hope alive among refugees who have sought a safe haven across the border in Lebanon.

As well as the tent schools they have set up, the MERATH team have created 'safe places' for children to play and receive support for the trauma they have experienced. They have also trained up 'child protection champions' and distributed essentials such as food, nappies and medical kits.

So, while the need is great, people are receiving support and love – and that is sustaining their hope.

That's what prompted me to pick up the phone this morning and text Ryan Tubridy while he was still live on-air. I asked him to encourage his listeners not to 'turn away' but to encourage

them to help Irish NGOs such as Tearfund Ireland in their efforts to help children like Halla – and he did.

He even suggested school teachers should encourage their classes to raise funds for tent schools in Lebanon.

For me, Halla's courage is inspiring. The tragedy of her circumstances does not stop her from dreaming.

'Right now, I go to school at the local church, but this might be the last year I am in school, as this is the oldest age they accept people,' she says. 'I want to be an English teacher.'

We won't give up on Halla, so she does not give up on her dream of becoming a teacher. And we want to help more children like Halla so hope is kept alive in a young generation who have known nothing but war. With your support, we can.

HALLA'S COURAGE IS INSPIRING

WAR ON PLASTIC

Ireland is the top producer of plastic waste in the European Union. We need to take urgent action to cut down on plastics – but it is not that easy, as Advocacy Executive Gemma Kelly finds out.

As I shopped for fruit and veg in my local supermarket recently, I bypassed the produce covered in plastic and made a beeline for the loose stuff.

But, as I looked around for something to put them in, the only option available to me was a plastic bag. So, here were my options: Option A was to buy fruit and vegetables already wrapped in plastic, Option B was buy loose fruit and veg and put them into a plastic bag, but where was Option C? How could I avoid plastic altogether? There was no Option C: it was plastic or plastic.

As I trundled through the aisles, I thought about how 10 million tonnes of plastic waste end up in our oceans each year. I considered the fact that there is an island of garbage twice the size of Texas inside the Pacific Ocean.

Oceans are critical to life on earth, providing 70 per cent of the oxygen we breathe and over 97 per cent of our water supply.

As well as threatening marine life, plastics contribute to climate change: most plastics are made of oil or gas which are polluting fossil fuels. The transport, manufacture and disposal of plastic are all causes of carbon pollution. And yet here we are in Ireland producing 61 kilograms of plastic waste per person, per year.

Pollution – including air, water, soil and chemical pollution – is killing more than 9 million people per year, three times more than HIV, tuberculosis and malaria combined. Shockingly, 92 per cent of these deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries, according to *The Lancet* medical journal.

At Tearfund Ireland we encourage people to live sustainably and care for creation. We do this because environmental damage is wreaking havoc on the world's poor and climate change is hitting the most vulnerable the hardest. Changing weather patterns, drought, severe flooding and intensifying, more frequent

weather-related disasters are resulting in displacement, crop failure, acute food shortages and in many cases the complete loss of people's homes and livelihoods.

But good stewardship of God's creation can be hard, even when I know all the facts. It is hard when my supermarket doesn't give me any options but it is also hard when I have lots of options: if I forget my re-usable coffee cup, it is nearly impossible to turn down the offer of a coffee in a non-reusable cup. My love of coffee is sometimes too strong.

But I am trying. I am taking little steps, day by day. I am going to write to my local supermarket and ask them to provide an alternative to plastic. I am going to ask my local TDs to support legislation around the banning of non-biodegradable coffee cups. I am going to stop buying unnecessary amounts of bottled water and goods wrapped in plastic.

http://www.theworldcounts.com/counters/ocean_ecosystem_facts/plastic_in_the_ocean_facts
<https://www.conserve-energy-future.com/various-ocean-pollution-facts.php>
<http://www.planetaid.org/blog/how-ocean-pollution-affects-humans>

Photo: kanvag/AdobeStock

Most importantly, I am going to remember this verse: 'The Earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world and all who live in it' (Psalm 24:1).

And I'm going to remember that loving God also means loving what belongs to him.

For some ideas on how you can 'live lightly' find out more about the *Renew Our World* campaign here: renewourworld.net

This link will provide you with a list of what can currently be recycled: recyclinglistireland.ie

**BUT I AM TRYING.
I AM TAKING
LITTLE STEPS,
DAY BY DAY.**

SEEING THE BIG PICTURE

We are passionate about inspiring a new generation of global-minded supporters, and our Church and Supporters Coordinator Emma Lynch has a cunning plan...



Photo: Helen Manson/Integral Partnership

That plan is Tearfund Ireland's Development Education training programme and it's taking off all over the country.

Over the past few months, we have been in Laois, Louth, Kildare, Cork and Wicklow, showing churches' youth leaders how to integrate issues of global and social justice into their youth work.

It is not all debates – although we do have really good, moving ones. At our most recent workshops in Cork, we had everything from balloon-bursting mayhem to activities with playdough!

We love sharing info and ideas and seeing people leave with exciting ideas for how to involve their youth in taking action on global justice issues.

Our aim is to see a whole new generation inspired, filled with enthusiasm to change the world around them, and to be salt and light wherever they go!

If you share this vision, then keep an eye on our website for details of the next series of workshops or contact emma.lynych@tearfund.ie



Photos: Tearfund Ireland



WE LOVE THE FEEDBACK WE GET FROM OUR WORKSHOPS!

Comments from Cork:

'Loads of things you can do to make social justice issues accessible – eg 'Walking in someone else's shoes' – much easier to connect with.'

'So practical: ideas, activities and resources, not overloaded by statistics and problems.'

Mentions by the Meath and Kildare group:

'We want to talk about stuff [global justice issues, and] we leave with the authority that we know what we are talking about.'

The Diocesan Youth Officer for Dublin and Glendalough commented that the workshops 'should be part of mandatory Diocesan Youth Officer training'.

FUNDRAISING UPDATE

Tearfund Ireland supporters continue to be the best supporters in the world, battling (among other things) unseasonal snow and Dublin traffic to raise funds for our work – thank you so much. As we wrote the last edition of *Tear Times* we were well on the way to making our Strictly event a success; since then our main fundraising event was our Spring Coffee Mornings supported by Spirit Radio. Over 20 coffee mornings and fundraising events, in various shapes and sizes and at a range of venues, took place across the country in February. Most of them took place while Spirit Radio dedicated their morning radio show to telling their listeners about the work of Tearfund Ireland. Spirit Radio's Richie Gardiner (below) made a special appearance at our offices during the coffee morning and did a live broadcast while things were in full swing.



Róisín Ní Cheallaigh and Michael and Helena Goss enjoy fresh Ethiopian coffee in the Tearfund Ireland offices during one of our coffee mornings in February.



Despite having to postpone their Bring/Take/Donate event because of the unseasonal snow in February, our friends at Swords Baptist Church rescheduled and raised €480 for the work of Tearfund Ireland – well done!



Strictly with Tearfund Ireland

Would you like to be a part of Strictly this autumn? Please get in touch!

2017 winners Hildegard Crimmins (Trinity Church Dublin) and Vincent Ryan (Swords Baptist Church)



The Irish National Youth Ballet performed beautiful pieces from *The Nutcracker* during the interval.

Our 16 wonderful Tearfund Ireland supporters and staff who were transformed into professional dancers over six weeks and gave us a fantastic night of entertainment.



Let's pray...

APRIL 2018

'I AM MAKING EVERYTHING NEW.' REVELATION 21:5

We rejoice because Jesus has the power to defeat death and he came to give us life in all of its fullness. We can hope in the restoration of all things. Take some time to consider what this new life means for you and the world around us.

Give thanks for global collaboration to tackle the issue of climate change expressed in the international Paris climate agreement. Pray that world leaders will turn their agreement into action.

Pray for all those who don't have electricity to power their homes and businesses. Give thanks for renewable energy options that do not damage God's creation or contribute to climate change.

Thank God for sustainable farming initiatives that are providing a secure food supply where harvests have been depleted due to the changing climate.

Pray for work in eastern and southern Africa to raise awareness and influence governments to support more sustainable farming.

MAY 2018

'WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT WE OUGHT TO PRAY FOR BUT THE SPIRIT HIMSELF INTERCEDES FOR US THROUGH WORDLESS GROANS.' ROMANS 8:26

There has been conflict in South Sudan since 2013. Pray for those involved in peace-building initiatives. Pray also for those lacking food and for all those providing emergency support, including our partners.

Please continue to pray for the Rohingya people displaced from Myanmar now living in camps in Bangladesh. Pray specifically for protection during the upcoming monsoon season.

The humanitarian crisis in Yemen remains the world's worst, with 22.2 million people in need of help. Please pray that aid will reach them.

The context in which our partners work in Lebanon is constantly changing and so is hugely challenging. Pray for them as they distribute relief to Syrian refugees and provide schooling to refugee children.

JUNE 2018

'IF YOU SPEND YOURSELF ON BEHALF OF THE HUNGRY... THEN YOUR LIGHT WILL RISE IN THE DARKNESS.' ISAIAH 58:10

Thank God for the way he is using our partners, International Cooperation Cambodia and Cambodia Hope Organisation, to strengthen communities.

Lift up all those who are struggling to make ends meet. Pray that many more lives will be reached and transformed this year through the work of our partners in Ethiopia, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

Pray for communities around the world who have lost everything to natural disasters. Thank God that in the midst of terrible situations, God's people are restoring hope.

Thank God for the sacrificial love of our partners across the world as they follow his calling to serve communities affected by poverty and injustice.

JULY 2018

'I URGE YOU TO LIVE A LIFE WORTHY OF THE CALLING YOU HAVE RECEIVED. BE COMPLETELY HUMBLE AND GENTLE; BE PATIENT, BEARING WITH ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE.' EPHESIANS 4:1-2

Spend some time meditating on Ephesians 4:1-2 (above). Pray this for our partners working faithfully with communities in desperate situations.

Give thanks for every Christian tackling injustice by taking action, praying and making lifestyle changes. Ask God to give us grace to continue when change seems slow.

Pray for young people travelling overseas to volunteer with Tearfund this summer. Pray that they will bless the communities and projects they serve, and will return home with a passion to live just and sustainable lives.

Thank God for all the volunteers who give their time and energy to support our work with their knowledge and skills.

DISASTER DOESN'T HAVE TO MEAN THE END



Photo: Helen Manson/Tearfund

When the shells and gunfire came closer, families such as Halla's had no choice but to leave everything behind in Syria and flee.

Halla's whole world was snatched away. The same thing happened to the 1.5 million other Syrian refugees like her in Lebanon. But war need not destroy people's dreams forever. Halla still wants to become a teacher. And we're determined to help her make that happen. Will you help us meet refugees' most urgent needs – to help keep hope alive?

- **€45** could give two refugee families hygiene kits, providing essentials such as soap, shampoo, toothpaste, sanitary towels and nappies.
- **€112** could pay for a water tank, giving a whole community ongoing access to safe water.

Please consider giving a gift this spring to help Halla and other vulnerable children hold on to their dreams.

Donate online at tearfund.ie/donate or by calling 01 878 3200. Thank you.

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