



tearfund
Ireland

Spring 2017

teartimes

STRICTLY WITH TEARFUND IRELAND

Dust off those dance shoes

LOST AND IN LIMBO

Syrian children on the
scrapheap?

DECADES OF DEVOTION

Founding Director of Tearfund
Ireland Sheila MacDougall at 90

Be part of a miracle

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There's a constant tension between the world we live in and being part of the kingdom of God here on earth. Trying to straddle both can be exhausting.

But God created us to worship him and point others to him through the way we live. It's what we're here for.

Tearfund Ireland's 'founding mother' Sheila MacDougald's story (pages 3–5) illustrates the beauty and impact of a life lived in service to others, while Steve Timmis' book (reviewed on page 12) challenges us to follow Jesus' teachings in our day-to-day lives. Both are inspiring... and challenging.

Whole-life Christianity is about people following Jesus far out of their comfort zones and building God's kingdom even in the hardest of places.

Our partners in Lebanon are tireless in showing God's love to Syrian refugee families – even though their task is huge and there is no sign of an end to the crisis (pages 6–7).

But Woykishet's moving story from Ethiopia (pages 9–11) is a powerful example of what God makes possible when we persist and when his kingdom breaks through. The Self Help Group project of which she's a part of has transformed her life, her marriage, her family and community. As far as I'm concerned, it's a little glimpse of heaven.

We know that you too live in that tension between the world and God's kingdom. We recognise your giving and your prayers are sacrificial and we don't take them for granted. I thank God for the way he's joined us together to bridge the gap between our world and God's kingdom.

Sharan Kelly

Sharan Kelly
 Chief Executive Officer Tearfund Ireland
 Chair of Dóchas, the association of Irish Non-Governmental Development Organisations
 Vice 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.



Cover photo: Syrian child refugees living in Lebanon. Stella Chetham/Tearfund

GET IN TOUCH WITH US!

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DECADES OF DEVOTION



For almost half a century, Sheila MacDougald has been the life and soul of Tearfund Ireland. As she celebrates a big birthday, we celebrate her amazing contribution.

Words: Deryal Cromie, Tearfund Ireland supporter and volunteer.
 Photo: Gavin Leane



Sheila pictured with Derval Cromie Tearfund Ireland supporter and volunteer. Photo: Tearfund Ireland

'Stalwart supporter' doesn't even come close to describing Sheila MacDougald. She has been tireless in communicating our vision across Ireland for nearly 50 years. Even as she turns 90 this spring, she remains as passionate about Tearfund and tackling poverty as when she first heard about it.

Sheila joined the Tearfund UK board soon after the charity was established in 1968, representing the voice of Ireland and its churches. In fact, she embodied Tearfund in Ireland to such an extent that her Dublin home was the postal address for that ministry for decades.

Born Sheila Davis in 1927, she grew up in Limerick. Her father was then general manager of Matterson's Bacon Factory – and committee secretary of the Irish Baptist Foreign Missions. Both her parents were hugely mission-minded and visiting missionary speakers to local churches often stayed with the Davis family. Mission soon became part of Sheila's DNA.

'If you went out in the morning, you never could be sure about who would be in your house at night,' Sheila says. 'We were brought up with that background, and I don't think you ever lose it.'

Sheila moved to Dublin to study science at Trinity College Dublin in the mid-1940s. Her specialism was bacteriology, and after graduation she worked in a lab until she married Ian MacDougald in 1952.

Though busy with raising her daughters, Olga and Sandra, Sheila became heavily involved at Grosvenor Road Baptist Church in Dublin, where she still worships to this day. Neither the minister nor his wife at the time could drive so Sheila gave Mr and Mrs Deane lifts everywhere in her trusty black Morris Minor. They too were very mission-focused and made a strong impression on Sheila.

Tearfund UK was founded in 1968, in response to the Biafran War in eastern Nigeria and subsequent famine. Tearfund visiting speakers began to visit Grosvenor Road Baptist and other churches – and many would stay at Sheila and Ian's home. The MacDougald visitors' book (pictured right) is full of their signatures, including that of Tearfund's founder, George Hoffman.

Accepting an invitation to serve on Tearfund UK's board meant the start of regular visits to England, every two months or so, with her family's blessing. She never balked at the commitment. 'If it was something you loved doing, you looked forward to the next one,' she says.

As Tearfund's work became more widely known in Ireland, Sheila received more and more speaking invitations, and was soon giving talks at least once a week. Over the years, her travels took her to the farthest reaches of the Irish Republic, from Dundalk



Sheila with her daughter Olga. Photo: Gavin Leane

to Cork, from Sligo to Wexford. She always drove and never got the train, except during the 1970s oil crisis. Gradually, the number of Tearfund church reps in Ireland grew – but she was perhaps the prototype.

Sheila was thrilled to see Tearfund Ireland launch as an Irish, independent charity in 2008. Sheila was one of the founders of Tearfund Ireland and served as a Director for the first years to ensure a smooth transition and strong presence as an

Irish-run organisation. Being able to ring the Dublin office to confirm that Tearfund partners were on the ground in emergency situations meant she could encourage people's giving with the latest updates. It also meant she got less post.

Sheila is pleased with the progress Tearfund Ireland is making. Ever gracious, she says it has always been a privilege to serve Tearfund. 'Tearfund has made my life: I have gotten back much more than I ever gave.'

FOR TEARFUND IRELAND CEO SHARAN KELLY, SHEILA'S EXAMPLE HAS BEEN INSPIRATIONAL.



CHILDREN *on the* SCRAPHEAP?

Ahed is living in a shelter made of scraps. He is one of a lost generation of Syrian children who are struggling as refugees and desperate to restart their lives. Your support is showing they're not forgotten.



Ahed's brother and sister who live with him in their makeshift home. Photos: Stella Chetham/Tearfund

WORDS: PETER SHAW

Six years of upheaval is a long time in anyone's life but, for Ahed, it's almost all he can remember. Ahed lives with his mum, dad and five brothers and sisters in a shelter made of scraps in the Bekaa Valley in Lebanon. The area is home to 350,000 refugees: like Ahed, most of them are from Syria.

Its civil war is now in its seventh year, which makes it longer than the Second World War. Memories of his city, Homs, are still vivid—and disturbing. 'We were bombed every day,' says Ahed. 'I saw the damage all around me. I saw buildings collapse near my house. Then our home was destroyed too.'

The family have been living in Lebanon for five years now and Ahed is not happy. 'We live in the dirt and the rubbish,' he says. 'My cousins and I used to play in our back garden. They have fled and I don't see them any more. At least it's peaceful and we're safe. But I wish I was back in Syria and not here as I want to go back to school. I hate everything that is happening to my country.'

The UN Refugee Agency estimates that more than two-thirds of Syrian refugee children are not attending school regularly. If the situation does not improve, when peace does come, Syria could be left with a lost generation, who are under-educated and with poor prospects. That has huge implications for both them and their nation.

'Last year I went to school, but the bus doesn't come to collect us any more,' says Ahed. 'I love school. I'd love to study maths again. My dream is to be a football star.'

It's not just the children who are suffering, of course. Few jobs means that refugee families' meagre savings, already decimated by the weak Syrian currency, have either been spent or are running out.

This often leaves Syrians in debt with landlords and shopkeepers. Families face eviction and hunger. The additional strain upon Lebanon's local services and infrastructure has caused discontent: a quarter of its population is now made up of refugees.

But your generous support is making a huge difference to Syrian families like Ahed's. One of our partners in Lebanon organises

Christians to distribute essential food and hygiene parcels to displaced families, including Ahed's. Those at least are a source of comfort, as his mother, Yana, explains.

'Thank you for supporting us with food parcels,' Yana says. 'There are so many things we could not have without the food parcel. We wouldn't have meat for our children every week. Thanks to the food parcels, we have money left over to pay for medical treatment and fresh fruit for our children. So, thank you for all you do to support us. And thank you that it's something we can rely on every month.'

Thank you for your continued, generous support for our work with refugees and displaced people in fragile political situations. Please continue to pray for peace, so that families such as Ahed's can return home and pick up the pieces of their lives.

'LAST YEAR I WENT TO SCHOOL, BUT THE BUS DOESN'T COME TO COLLECT US ANY MORE'



Left: Half of ten-year-old Ahed's life has been marred by conflict in Syria. Right: Ahed's mum who is thankful for Tearfund's monthly food parcels.



Strictly with Tearfund Ireland

Tearfund Ireland is about to go dance-crazy!

We are looking for dancers and volunteers who will make sure our show in November goes as smoothly as a waltz.

It's going to be a lot of hard work but loads of fun, and will really make a difference where the need is greatest. What are you waiting for??

Contact Niamh on 01 878 3200 or email niamh.daly@tearfund.ie today.

Ethiopia

FROM ETHIOPIA WITH LOVE

We can sometimes confuse true love with pink hearts and prosecco... but this moving account from Ethiopia reminds us of the power of true love to transform lives and renew minds.

Words: Gemma Kelly

Woynishet has found fresh confidence through her Self Help Group.

Photo: Gavin Leane



Woynishet's is not a conventional love story. She and her husband have been married for years and there's no great romance to recount.

But they have found true love at last... and it's turned their lives around completely. And all because Woynishet joined a Self Help Group that you helped fund.

When we met her last October, she told us that, before she joined a savings and loan group, the family were really struggling and couldn't afford three meals a day. Woynishet didn't work and they relied on her husband's meagre income. She was very keen to join the group: her husband was set against it.

Woynishet had little or no self-esteem. In such a patriarchal society as hers, women's voices are rarely heard. But she desperately wanted to change her family's situation. So, she and two other women began to meet in secret. They had to be careful: one of them was already suffering violence at home, and all three of them feared their husband's disapproval.

As time passed, their savings grew as they pooled their resources as a group, and so did their confidence. Woynishet and her friends became stronger and more assertive: they began to recognise their potential and strengths. But they did not want to continue in this journey alone, so they told their husbands what they'd been doing.



Their husbands were furious and banned them from going to their group. The women carried on meeting.

Gradually, their husbands began to notice that their economic situation was improving. They saw there was more food for the family, that the children could attend school. They noticed the difference in their wives. They asked how this could have happened and their wives explained to them that it was as a result of their Self Help Group.

From that moment, their lives and relationships changed. Woynishet's husband began to see her value and worth, for the first time. He saw she

could be an equal partner in their relationship and in their home. The men actively encouraged the women to go to group meetings, taking care of the children themselves.

Woynishet had felt completely alone in her marriage, undervalued and powerless. Now, she has a partner who respects her and consults her about everything.

Ethiopia is currently in the grip of the worst drought it has experienced for half a century. An estimated 10 million people there are in desperate need of food aid, due to erratic rains and the effect of the global weather

phenomenon, El Niño. Even before this latest crisis, more than 70 per cent of Ethiopia's population lived on less than US\$ 2 a day.

However, even in the midst of desperate need, stories of transformation such as Woynishet's are emerging. Families and communities are being lifted out of poverty. Children who once went hungry are having three meals per day and attending school. Relationships between husbands and wives are being restored. Communities and government representatives are coming together to work together for the good of the community.

'AND NOW THESE THREE REMAIN: FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE. BUT THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE.'

1 CORINTHIANS 13:13

Tearfund Ireland has been a part of these stories through supporting Self Help Groups – thanks to your generosity and support.

The material benefits that people involved in Self Help Groups are experiencing are nothing short of a miracle. But what stands out the most, what cannot be captured so easily, is the restoration taking place: the change in relationships and marriages.

Woynishet's story shows how love can grow in the most unpromising and difficult of circumstances... and it doesn't end there.

Woynishet and her Self Help Group recently held a ceremony in their community where they spoke of the benefits of joining a Self Help Group, to encourage others to join.

The women shared powerful personal testimonies, but the most powerful words came when their husbands stood up to speak. With tears streaming down their faces, they told their community, their friends, their government representatives, how they used to disrespect and beat their wives. They also shared how much they now love and respect their wives, how they honour and support them, and how their wives have lifted their families out of poverty. They declared their love.

Theirs is a story of true transformation, of the power of healing and forgiveness. And it is a story of hope, that change is possible, and that, no matter what the circumstances, love can win.

WALKING IN STEP WITH JESUS

If you want to live 'whole-life' Christianity as God intended, Steve Timmis lays down the gauntlet in his hard-hitting and challenging book...

Book review: Ingrid Harley

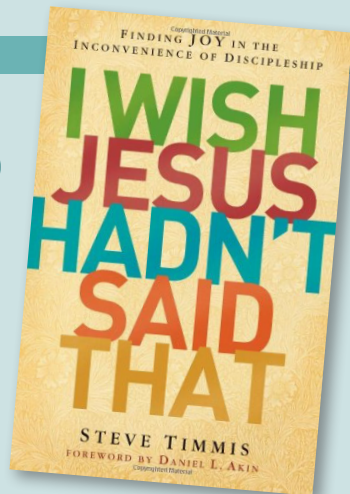
Following Jesus can be 'rather inconvenient'. So begins Steve Timmis's book, *I wish Jesus hadn't said that...but I'm really glad he did!* This striking statement sets the tone as the author examines the conflicting responses Christians often have towards Jesus' teachings.

He aims to expose the underlying tension between what Jesus asks of us and our own preoccupation with health, wealth and prosperity. His broader point is that, while Jesus' teachings may turn our comfortable world upside down, they bring meaning and sanity to our existence, and to the world.

Timmis entitles each chapter with a familiar saying from Jesus – 'Love your neighbour', 'You cannot serve both God and money'. He often includes historical and biblical context, along with clear explanations for some of the more complex issues. Timmis' main concern, however, is to expose our excuses for failing to follow Jesus' commands – and suggest practical ways to address this. The book is peppered with stark



Ingrid Harley juggles being a mum of five children with a job teaching French and Spanish at her local secondary school in North County Dublin. She attends Donabate Presbyterian Church along with her lovely husband Bruce. Along the way, she has picked up a Masters in Applied Theology and a PhD in French poetry. Ingrid is an avid reader, a lover of Scandinavian Noir drama and an obsessive coffee drinker.



I wish Jesus hadn't said that... but I'm really glad he did! Steve Timmis (IVP, 2013)

challenges and is very effective in encouraging us to reflect afresh on familiar words from Jesus.

When exploring the notion of denying yourself and taking up your cross, for example, Timmis is blunt: if we are not prepared to give up a holiday abroad so we can support gospel ministry financially, then we can be certain that we won't give up our life for Jesus. Timmis asserts that Jesus calls us to make radical, self-sacrificial decisions as regards our relationships, time and money and to be creative in doing so. Timmis stresses that God has shown us infinite mercy and compassion through Jesus, so Christians should be constantly fighting to create a world that is more merciful and compassionate.

Despite the serious subject matter, Timmis' writing style is very readable, often humorous and eminently practical. Timmis uses examples from his personal life and role in church leadership to illustrate ideas, and his humility shines through.

DANDIN VISIT

We were thrilled to welcome our Filipino partner Dandin Espina to Ireland recently and, as you'll see in this photo album, we kept him busy...



Dandin Espina met the Voce Christiana Choir which is made up of members of the Filipino community in Ireland. Both Dandin and the choir took part in the Women's World Day of Prayer Service, which was written by women from the Philippines and led by Jean Kenny.



Dandin and Tearfund Ireland's Emma Lynch were on set with Majors Gillian and Stuart Dicke on the day RTE 1 recorded the Women's World Day of Prayer Service.



St Catherine's Youth Group in Thomas Street, Dublin, held a 'Meeting God in a Typhoon' event. Dandin spoke about his work in response to Typhoon Haiyan and how he uses his creative gifts and beautiful illustrations to raise awareness of child abuse issues in the Philippines.

Let us pray

APRIL 2017

This month, let's take time to pause and reflect on the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus – recognising his sacrifice as the supreme example of obedience and generosity towards others.

SUNDAY 2ND

Lord, we recognise that we often proclaim your name one minute and sin against you the next. Help us this Easter and beyond to live our lives in a way that both our words and actions honour your name. Amen.

SUNDAY 9TH

Thank God for his great love for the world and the sacrifice he made in giving up his Son so that we might be reconciled with him.

SUNDAY 16TH

Jesus said to her, **'I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?'** John 11:25–26

The question Jesus asks here is one that we should consider every day. If we truly believe that he is the resurrection and the life, we will see evidence of this truth in our lives. Lord, keep us mindful of the risen Christ and the new life we have received. Amen.

SUNDAY 23RD

Pray for Christians suffering today because of war, conflict and persecution. Ask God to help them find comfort in the victory that Christ won through his death and resurrection.

SUNDAY 30TH

Lift up Tearfund Ireland partners in the Middle East, who are working in unstable and often dangerous conditions. Pray for God's hand of protection upon them, that they may continue to help those in the greatest need.

MAY 2017

'God sets the lonely in families' (Psalm 68:6). All through the Bible we see God's special concern for the orphan, the widow and the foreigner – those who may well be alone and vulnerable. He longs for them to know the love and protection of a family. **This message is as relevant as ever in today's society.**

SUNDAY 7TH

Lift up the thousands of orphans who are currently homeless in the countries where Tearfund Ireland's partners work to reintegrate orphaned children back into families. Pray that these precious children will be protected from all harm. Ask that more foster families will be inspired to provide orphans with safe and loving homes.

SUNDAY 14TH

Thank God for all those who care for, and actively defend, the rights of orphans across the world with passion and commitment.

SUNDAY 21ST

Pray for family units to be strengthened. Ask God to restore damaged relationships, break the hold of addictions, protect vulnerable people and reveal his unfailing love as heavenly Father.

SUNDAY 28TH

'Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed.' Psalm 82:3

Pray for Tearfund Ireland speakers as they visit churches and communities to share stories of our work and talk about God's heart for those living in poverty. Keep them in your prayers as they seek to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves.

JUNE 2017

Our God is in the business of transformation: beauty from ashes, joy from despair. And as his followers, so are we. This month we think about how we can transform the way we use our resources as part of God's work renewing creation.

SUNDAY 4TH

God has entrusted his beautiful world to our care. Spend some time giving thanks for all he has made – the oceans, mountains, deserts and forests; the magnificent array of birds, animals and fish; the abundant varieties of plants that provide us with food and medicine. Be still and reflect on what it means to be a steward of creation.

SUNDAY 11TH

In Ireland we consume approximately three times our fair share of the earth's resources. We also produce large amounts of waste that end up in landfill and in our oceans, leading to climate change and pollution. Lord, forgive us for not treading gently on the earth. Help us to take steps to live more in step with your creation.

SUNDAY 18TH

Pause and think about how we can take simple actions in our own lives to be part of God's work renewing creation. In Ireland we throw away more than 1 million tonnes of food each year. As well as creating waste, the methane it produces when it goes to landfill leads to climate change. Ask God how you could reduce food waste in your home.

SUNDAY 25TH

Sometimes we may feel the world is too broken to fix. Then we remember that God often works through our small offerings to create a huge impact. Consider the small stones in David's sling... a boy with five loaves and two fish.... a tiny mustard seed. Thank God that he is able to do abundantly more than all we could ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20).

THE FRUIT OF THE RIGHTEOUS IS A TREE OF LIFE

PROVERBS 11:30

Leaving a gift in your will enables you to bless future generations. You're planting a tree of life that will bear rich fruit.

Writing a will is the single most important thing you can do to safeguard the people you care about, especially friends and family.

It's also a wonderful way to help people living in poverty. Just one per cent of an estate will make a huge difference to struggling communities – a life-changing legacy that will last for generations.

To find out more, contact Niamh at Tearfund Ireland:

call 01 878 3200

email niamh.daly@tearfund.ie

visit www.tearfund.ie/giving/legacies

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