

Winter 2024

TearTimes

† tearfund.ie

**'What Would
you Do? Would
you stay or
would you flee?'**



tearfund

Ireland

‘How do you remain hopeful when all around is war, injustice and death?’

‘I am deeply troubled by what is going on. How do I lift this heaviness...?’

I was recently asked these questions by two different friends within two days of each other. I can understand where they are coming from. With all that is going on in the world, it is easy to feel sad and weary, confused or even angry. Our news feeds are constantly updating us with details of the conflict in the Middle East, and the ongoing war in Ukraine. Thousands of people are still dying, being injured, and going hungry.

In addition to these headline conflicts, there are many humanitarian emergencies that do not reach our news feeds. In Sudan’s civil war, for example, thousands have been killed and millions of people are displaced, malnourished and starving. Similarly, millions of people suffer in forgotten conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar and Ethiopia.

When my friends asked me their questions recently, I shared a few principles that have helped me over the years. You can read more on these practices opposite.

At Tearfund Ireland, we are regularly exposed to tragic stories of injustice. But we strive to fulfill the commands to love our neighbour and to care for the vulnerable. At the same time, we pray for His Kingdom to come so that His will would be done on earth as it is in heaven.

We are grateful for the many ways you choose to journey with us.

Thank you,



Sean Copeland
Tearfund Ireland CEO

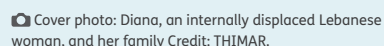
Tearfund Ireland

Demonstrating God’s goodness, love and justice to the most marginalised and vulnerable people around the world.

Get in touch with us!

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 Cover photo: Diana, an internally displaced Lebanese woman, and her family Credit: THIMAR.

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 Dóchas



God is good... all the time

When we are exposed to injustice, it is essential that we keep our eyes on Jesus, writes Sean Copeland.

Our yearning for the righteousness of heaven amplifies our compassion for those who suffer, who are displaced and who struggle to survive. But in our desire for justice, it is important to remain humble and reliant on the mercy of God. Here are four practices that have helped me over the years.

1. Guard your heart. Scriptures tell us multiple times to protect the vulnerable and speak up for the oppressed. In acknowledging this fundamental aspect of our Christian faith, it is essential that we do not allow our hearts to become hardened towards the oppressors. It is not easy, but we must endeavour to prevent anger or bitterness from settling within the soil of our hearts. This is an outworking of learning to love our enemies, pray for the persecutor and endeavour to live in peace with everyone.

2. Remember God is good...all of the time. This can often slip from top-of-mind in the middle of a crisis, tragedy or in the face of evil. But it is crucial to remember that God is our good Father who loves all people.

3. Recognise the limits of your understanding. I cannot answer the questions of ‘why’. Sometimes all I can do is acknowledge the wrong, grieve with those who grieve, pray for God’s justice and mercy, then do what I am able to do. When I am confused, I remind myself of who God is, that he is within me, and he has invited me to live with him.

4. Keep your eyes on Jesus. Often, I am tempted to ‘do something’ to try to ‘fix the problem’ but, as I am repeatedly learning, the best thing I can do is slow down and focus my attention on

Jesus. Am I keeping in step with him or moving in a different direction? Am I keeping my eyes fixed on him or am I giving more attention to the voices and expectations of others?

For more than ten years, Tearfund Ireland has been working in partnership with a Christian organisation in Lebanon. The Lebanese team are some of the most committed, resilient, wise and humble servants I know. During a recent online meeting, they were asked about how they maintain their hope and keep going in spite of the challenges all around them.

One of the team said, **‘We have learned how to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus.’**

This was not a trite, simplistic slogan. This was an authentic, matter-of-fact statement which was mirrored in the woman’s face. Her eyes were serious; her expression resolute and sincere. As I looked at her, I was reminded of the Book of Acts where the officials saw the courage of the disciples and noted that they had been with Jesus (see Acts 4:13).

None of us can address every need, or answer every question. But guarding our hearts, and keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, helps us to keep going – in our pursuit of his reign in our hearts and his righteousness on the earth.

In the days prior to writing this article, I received the awful news that two humanitarian workers within the global network of Tearfund organisations were killed as they travelled within a convoy of vehicles. Please join with us as we continue to pray for the grieving families, friends and colleagues of these two men.

Poverty is personal



In late February, Tearfund Ireland's Emma Lynch (Church Engagement and Education Manager) and Sophie Moreno (International Programmes Manager) had the opportunity to see first-hand the work of our local partner in Cambodia, M'lup Russey. We caught up with them to ask a few questions.



Q What needs are M'lup Russey addressing?

Sophie: Violence against children is a pervasive issue in Cambodia: over 50 percent of children have experienced a violent incident before the age of 18, and over one third of children aged 13-17 have witnessed physical violence in their home within the last twelve months.¹ Children are also at risk of economic exploitation; 19 percent of children aged 5-17 are economically active.

Battambang, where one of M'lup Russey's offices is located, is a largely rural province. Many areas have poverty levels above the national average. It is home to some of the most vulnerable children in the country. Poverty, domestic violence, drug or alcohol abuse, or family disintegration due to a parent's death or migration are reasons why children are at risk of being placed in a residential care institution (RCI)².

Q What is the community impact of the partner's work?

Sophie: A lot of time and investment goes into providing mentoring and job skills training for individuals who have left institutionalised care, or to providing vulnerable parents with skills training.

We met a mother of two small children who had gained parenting skills and also some support in household budgeting. Through that, she became a much more confident mother and started saving small amounts that have enabled her to send her older boy to school (and he's doing well there!). Her husband learned about the negative effects that violent disciplinary methods have on children.

He has recently become part of the city council and is now advocating for children's safety on a political level.

Q Was anything different from your expectations?

Emma: The complexity of life for young people leaving children's homes really struck me. Many children have their names changed, largely for the convenience of those who run the home. But this means the child's birth certificate (if they have one) doesn't match with their school registration documents. This makes it very difficult for young people to continue their education, as both documents are required to progress to the second and third levels. Our partners spend a lot of time working with young people and the authorities to ensure that young people have their proper paperwork so that they can move on with their lives.

There is also an issue with early marriage, particularly for girls. In orphanages, children do not get the opportunity to observe healthy relationships in the community, so young people leaving care homes in Cambodia are vulnerable to manipulation, exploitation and even trafficking.

Youth clubs, set up by our partners in children's homes and orphanages, are helping young people to prepare for life back in the community and with their families. I didn't expect to learn that many of these young people are taking the initiative to establish these clubs when they return to their communities so that they can continue to support their peers as they journey together into adulthood.

Q What experience stayed with you after you returned home?

Sophie: All of our partner staff have such strong personal testimonies; they love God and truly love their neighbour. It was so inspiring hearing them describe their vision for children and families in Cambodia and their commitment to this work. I was also impressed by the work our partners are doing with the directors of residential care institutions to inform them about the detrimental developmental outcomes that result from children being in institutional care, and to educate them that there are more sustainable ways to care for children (most of whom have living parents and a family!).

Emma: I wish our supporters could meet the young people who have grown up in an orphanage, and hear them speak of the pain they have experienced in being separated from their families and birth communities. Most parents believe that their children will be better off in an institution. They think they are offering their children better access to an education. My hope is that, as we tell the stories of these young people, that the church in Ireland will continue to help us bring change that makes it possible to keep more children at home, within their safe and nurturing families.

¹ Ministry of Women's Affairs (2014) Cambodia: Violence Against Children Survey 2013.

² This term can include orphanages and children's homes.

Global round-up

Loving Our Neighbour

We recently launched a report on climate justice – the first of its kind in Ireland!

Published by Tearfund Ireland*, *Loving Our Neighbour* highlights the perspectives of young adult Irish Christians concerning climate change, and explores how the church in Ireland is addressing this urgent issue.

Some of the key findings from the report are:

1. An overwhelming majority of younger Christians are concerned about climate change
2. Young Christians believe it is important to act now
3. Young Christians believe care for creation should be part of the Church's mission
4. Young Christians are confused about their church's response to climate change
5. There are many opportunities for the Church

Articulating that creation care is part of our biblical mandate to love our neighbour, the report also recognises there are differing views and encourages humble conversation on this important topic. To read or download a copy of the report visit our website.

* Survey conducted with Praxis and VOX Magazine, research compiled by Ruth Garvey-Williams.



A 58-1 return on investment!

If someone told you that you would receive a 5,700% return on an investment, you'd probably say that it was too good to be true!

But these are the results that our Self Help Groups in Ethiopia are achieving! SHGs are made up of 15-20 women who are encouraged to set up a savings scheme in order that members can take out small loans with low interest. Research reveals that, for every Euro spent, there is a return of between 58 and 173 Euros in benefits.

If you would like to donate towards our work with Self Help Groups, please get in touch to find out more.



Advocacy success!

Tearfund Ireland's Church Engagement and Education Manager, Emma Lynch, is a co-convenor of the Comhlámh¹ working group to End Orphanage Volunteering.

In January 2023, the group met with members of the Oireachtas to call for an end to international orphanage volunteering. Joining with childcare reformers across Ireland, and NGO activists who are members of Comhlámh, the group presented recommendations

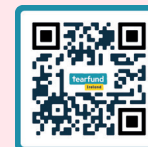


designed to protect orphaned and vulnerable children from the harms of volunteering tourism.

We are happy to announce that the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) now advises young people against volunteering in orphanages. It also notes the growing evidence demonstrating the links between institutions and trafficking, and that volunteer visits help to sustain an 'orphanage industry', increasing the risk of children being vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

We are delighted to see this updated advice. Tearfund Ireland will continue to raise awareness about this issue.

See the advice from the DFA on their website here.



Read HERE

Lenten Series

This year, we had lots of fun running an interactive Lenten Series with Crinken Church, Co. Dublin called *Who Is My Neighbour?* Over the series of four sessions, 25 participants creatively explored issues around justice, faith and our global inter connectedness. There were inputs from Tearfund Ireland partners in both Ethiopia and Lebanon giving deep insight into the impact of changing climate (Ethiopia) and what life is like for refugees who find themselves far from home due to conflict and persecution (Lebanon).

If your church would be interested in hosting an interactive series with Tearfund Ireland in 2025, please do get in touch!

Living Gifts

Did you know that the gift of beekeeping can help transform an individual's life? Gifts such as these can give so much to an individual and a community. Explore our Living Gifts options to find out more and to give a gift this holiday season that makes a difference.



GIVE TODAY

We are now on What's App!

We now have a WhatsApp channel! You can follow us and receive our monthly updates, plus news of upcoming events, and ad hoc info that we will post from time to time.

How does it work? You simply follow, and in the updates section of WhatsApp, a new update will appear as a text and may have a link or photo with it. You can

react to the post like a normal text in WhatsApp!

If you want to try a new way to get information from Tearfund Ireland, give it a go!

Follow our WhatsApp channel here.



FOLLOW HERE

¹ Comhlámh is the Irish Association of Development Workers and Volunteers

Photo: Elfinesh from Bethel Self Help Group, Ethiopia, happily shows off her abundant potato farm. Credit: Tearfund Canada.



“...pray that the violence doesn’t escalate and that this gets resolved quickly.

Photo: Diana, an internally displaced Lebanese woman, and her family Credit: THIMAR.

What Would You Do?

In southern Lebanon, you enjoy your life. Your family shares a home full of love. Your agricultural business is able to provide for their needs. You don’t have much, but you have enough for your family and a loving surrounding community. Suddenly, life is disrupted. A conflict breaks out between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, and soon, fighting begins on the southern border near where you live. You want to stay in your home with your business

and community. But you also want to protect your family from the dangers of an escalating conflict. You can either pack what you are able to and flee for the city, hoping to stay with friends or relatives. Or you can stay, and hope that the fighting doesn’t hurt you or impact your life.

What would you do? Would you stay or would you flee? Make your decision and read more to see where your choice leads.

If you chose to flee:

You and your family hurriedly take what you can, hoping not to be gone too long. You say goodbye to your home, your friends and neighbours, and head towards Beirut. Arriving at a relative’s house, you find their home is quite full. Your relatives have also helped others fleeing the south, and there are three families as well as you. You, your spouse, and your four children share two mattresses placed on any free space you can find. It’s not ideal, but you have shelter and safety. You don’t expect to be here long. This is only temporary.

Fast forward one year, and there is still no end in sight. You have struggled through a harsh winter and are preparing for another without many winter clothes. You desperately miss home, and the money your family had is long gone. You don’t know if your home is still intact, and you are growing weary of the crowded accommodation. You try to find work to generate income, but the current economic crisis in Lebanon makes that a challenge.

Thankfully, a local Tearfund Ireland partner is working in the area and has been able to assist your family. Through them, you have received extra mattresses, plus winter clothes, food vouchers and hygiene kits. These items have helped as you have struggled through the months. Anything helps...

If you chose to stay:

You’re not expecting the violence to last long. Your olive fields are productive, and you are focused on being there for the harvest and the necessary income. The four children are doing well in school and have lots of friends. Also, your mum is not well. Moving her now would be too hard on her.

You pray that the violence doesn’t escalate and that this gets resolved quickly.

Fast forward one year, and life is quite different. The violence has intensified. The sounds of rockets and explosions are a regular occurrence. Your youngest daughter is now having night terrors because she is scared of all the noise. Your olive field has been ruined by the damage caused from artillery shells, and your harvest is gone.

The community you loved has been torn apart. People are scared, many have left, and businesses are dying. Your mum’s health is deteriorating, and you don’t know what to do to help her.

You start thinking about heading towards Beirut...

Each Choice is a Challenge

As you can see, no matter what choice you make, there are immense challenges to be faced. Unfortunately, those living in southern Lebanon are facing these realities. They are still in their own country, but everything feels different.

Our local partner has been assisting those internally displaced with items such as blankets, mattresses, food vouchers and hygiene kits. Tearfund Ireland has been working alongside our partner in Lebanon for more than ten years. We have supported Syrian refugees and the internally displaced Lebanese population, and partner work has also involved providing vulnerable children with non-formal education and safe spaces.

Join with us in prayer

‘...but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth.’

Jeremiah 9:24 (ESV)

Prayer is integral to Tearfund Ireland and our local partners. It is a wonderful privilege to be able come to our Heavenly Father and lift so many global needs and placing them in His gentle, merciful and just care. We know that God is good, all the time, and that He is restoring all things. Please join us in prayer:

- For the Tearfund Ireland staff and Board as we implement a new strategic direction. Pray that we pursue our vision for communities to flourish, free from poverty. Pray that we deploy our teams, partners and resources to the best of our ability. Pray that we can deepen relationships with churches and individuals in Ireland who share our vision to demonstrate Jesus’ love among our global neighbours. Help us, Lord, to continue to seek, find and invest in creative solutions to effect long-lasting change.
- For the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, we pray for the immediate de-escalations of violence, for a ceasefire to be agreed and for all hostages to be returned home safe and well. We pray for peacemakers to rise up and influence decision-makers toward peaceful long-term solutions. We pray for the unhindered movement of food, water, medicines and hygiene supplies to those in need. We pray for the safety and care of the thousands of children injured, homeless and injured; protect them from further trauma and bring them healing and comfort. We pray for the safety of our partners, who are working to bring provisions to the vulnerable and displaced, that they would continue to be a source of courage, hope and compassion to all.
- Please pray for our partners’ work in Cambodia to keep children in safe and nurturing families. Please continue to pray that God will supply all their needs.
- Pray for our ongoing Self Help Group project in Ethiopia. Thank the Lord for the continued increase of crops in the conservation agriculture and we pray that vulnerable people will become resilient through the project.
- Pray that more people and churches in Ireland would have opportunities to read and consider, ‘Loving Our Neighbour’, Tearfund Ireland’s recently published report on young Irish adults’ perspectives on climate justice.
- Pray that the nine Tearfund organisations around the world, will continue deepening our ways of working together to show how Jesus is working through the Church to help people overcome poverty, withstand disasters and transform their communities.
- Please pray for our partners and all the individuals participating in our projects that they may continue working together, strengthening their communities and seeing God’s hand in their lives.

If you would like to join us in prayer each month, sign up for our Monthly Prayer Bulletin with our QR code here:



Pray with us HERE

Your giving makes a world of difference

Monthly giving

‘I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth.’

Jeremiah 9:24 (ESV)

Our vision is to see people flourish – free from poverty and injustice. People like Zenatiche in Ethiopia, who struggled to feed her children after her husband abandoned her. But now, thanks to a Self Help Group, Zenatiche has a thriving business and is able to send her children to school.

‘God, his Church and the Self-Help Group have been good to me. I have sent my children to school and now I care for my sister’s children.’

Please consider giving regularly to help us continue to demonstrate God’s goodness, love and justice to thousands of people like Zenatiche.

€9 a month could provide small business training for young leaders

€24 a month could provide training in sustainable agriculture methods

€52 a month could help maintain a Self-Help Group in Ethiopia for a year



Thank you for partnering with Tearfund Ireland.

If you give €21 a month, the yearly total will meet the €250 needed for us to benefit from Revenue’s charitable tax scheme. At no additional cost to you, we can potentially receive an additional €112.32 from Revenue, increasing your yearly donation to €364.32!

Similarly, if you give €40 a month, we could benefit from an additional €224.64 from Revenue, increasing your yearly donation to €704.64!

Legacy Giving

At Tearfund Ireland, we have been truly blessed by the generous supporters who remembered us in their legacy giving. Legacy gifts allow us to continue giving beyond our own lifetimes and help transform lives for generations to come. If you would like more information, please email us at info@tearfund.ie

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