



WHAT CAN ONE PERSON DO?



Seven weeks of stories & prayers from around the world

Introduction

Over seven weeks in June and July 07, join with Christians around the world in prayer, reflection and action to care for and speak out with the poor and marginalised.

Our inspiration comes from God's word, from the examples of Jesus, Paul, the prophets and godly leaders like Joshua, Nehemiah, Joseph and Daniel.

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers." Galatians 6:9-10

Half time

2007 is the half way point to meet the Millennium Development Goals, the ambitious yet achievable plan to halve global absolute poverty and to put in place development practices that are fair for all.

The goals reflect God's heart for the poor and vulnerable.

We must keep our eye on the goal if we are to make a mark on global poverty. We need to make every effort in our prayers, actions and advocacy to tackle injustice at every level – from providing basic education, health care and clean water, to speaking out against unfair practices and living lives of righteousness and justice.

How to use this resource:

Each week's material should take 10 minutes during a service, school assembly, Bible study or home group. Please adapt the material to suit your needs.

Whatever you do, we urge you to pray and keep on praying, that God's Kingdom would be expanded and that the church would stand for righteousness and justice in every aspect of life.

7 things to do in 07

There are 7 suggestions for practical actions your church or group can take – you may want to do one or two activities or all 7. See www.micahchallenge.org.au for more information about these actions.

1. See the film 'Amazing Grace'
2. Make an 'Offering of Letters'
3. Hold a half time sporting event, see the info kit www.micahchallenge.org.au
4. Buy fair trade tea and coffee
5. Visit your MP or arrange an event
6. Be part of Voices for Justice
7. Send a half time postcard

Don't miss this opportunity to learn, pray and act.

Acknowledgements:

Thank you to groups in Nepal, Zambia, India, Indonesia, Bolivia, Sierra Leone and Australia who contributed stories and prayers.

We are grateful that we can hear the voices and concerns of Christians around the globe.

Statistics and facts are taken from the UNDP, UNICEF, Latin American Bureau, CIA Factbook, World Bank and Wikipedia websites.



WHAT CAN ONE PERSON DO?



Week one: stories & prayers from Sierra Leone

Excerpt for news sheet / church bulletin or announcement:

In 2000, rich and poor nations around the world made a commitment to the Millennium Development Goals. The 8 Goals tackle the basics of economic and social injustice – hunger, lack of schooling, diseases, slums, access to clean water and unfair trade rules.

Can we halve global poverty by 2015? Economists say we can.

Over the next seven weeks Micah Challenge will present a special focus on global poverty and on God's call for us to speak out for the poor and marginalised.

Our action will help to bring half a billion people out of hopeless poverty and give them a chance to contribute fully to the long-term development, security and stability of our world. Surely this outcome is worth every effort.

Amanda Jackson, Micah Challenge Australia

Bible verse:

Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed", but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. James 2:15 – 17

Millennium Development Goal 1:

Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger: reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than US\$1 a day and those who suffer from hunger.

Story from Sierra Leone:

When God created the world, the little bit of it now called Sierra Leone (Mountain Lion) was favoured with abundant resources. Tragically, this former British Colony of was torn apart by a brutal civil war that began throughout the 90s. The economy and social structure left in tatters.

Kadie Sesay, an 11-year-old girl, lives with her widowed mother and two younger siblings in a regional town north of the capital Freetown. Her father and two older brothers were killed during the civil war.

It's hard to imagine how tough life is for Kadie and her family. Every day Kadie goes out onto the streets to sell food cooked by her mother. This is her family's only source of income – the four of them have to survive on just \$US1.50 a day!

Kadie and her siblings will never go to school. They have no money for school fees, uniforms or books. Kadie will probably be married within the next couple of years to a much older man who already has two other wives.



WHAT CAN ONE PERSON DO?



Background on Sierra Leone:

Civil war between 1991 and 2003 left 50,000 people dead and 2 million people displaced (over 25% of the total population).

The average life span of a Sierra Leonean is 38 years for men and 42 years for women. 57% of its people live in desperate poverty (less than US\$1 a day) and 75% live on less than US\$2 a day. The 2006 United Nations Development Program places Sierra Leone 176 out of 177 countries in terms of human development.

The film, "Blood Diamond" was set in Sierra Leone. It was revenue from the diamond mines that sustained the war.

Prayer from Sierra Leone

Adapted from a prayer by Sirajin Rollings-Kamara, Micah Challenge Coordinator, Sierra Leone.

Our Father in heaven: You created Sierra Leone and endowed it with numerous resources. We thank you.

But today we grieve for Sierra Leone:

For the many years of conflict; For the leaders who have traded the joy of their people for untold sufferings; For the killing and maiming of innocent children; For a resource-rich country that has been impoverished by those who don't care for its people; For the many who are forced to live in abject poverty; And for a land once known as the "Athens of West Africa" which now has a literacy rate of only 21 per cent.

Lord Jesus, we call on you to have mercy on Sierra Leone.

We call on you to restore what the locusts have eaten. We call on you to provide a leadership after your own heart; that will detest corruption, nepotism and other vices; and will enable the people to enjoy the fruit of the land.

Let the fortitude of the mountain (Sierra) and the prowess of the Lion (Leone) be restored once more. We pray for a day when the leaders and people of Sierra Leone will turn to you in worship, awe and reverence.

Amen.

Prayer:

We celebrate our God who offers healing and hope - spiritual, physical, emotional and social healing for all people.

We acknowledge the reflection of your character in our desire to reduce global poverty and know that you long for all your people to be blessed.

Yet in a world that has rejected you, millions of people go hungry, millions die from preventable disease and millions live in fear.

Help us to reach those in need and bring hope to a world in fear.

In the name of Jesus, our example and our Saviour,

Amen.



WHAT CAN ONE PERSON DO?



Week two: stories & prayers from Bolivia

Excerpt for news sheet / church bulletin or announcement:

When we consider the suffering of the world, we can be lost for words. We long to see an end to violence, hunger, and pain but have little idea how this can be achieved. Injustice, oppression and violence are cruel realities visited on millions of people all around the world. Those in power, mostly men I think, untroubled by any awareness or belief in a God of justice, mercilessly persecute and exploit the poor to their own economic advantage (see Psalm 10 for a vivid description of this).

Many people are deeply troubled by these horrors, and those who are sensitive to the Spirit of God know the urge to pray. But it can be at that moment, when our hearts and minds are dwelling on the unspeakable, that our own words grind to a halt. At that time we have only the language of silence and sighs and must let God the Spirit take over.

Paul tells us that the Spirit will transform our inarticulate sighs into a conversation God longs for. What a wonderful reassurance. Time spent in genuinely quiet prayer of this sort can never be wasted. In ways completely beyond our comprehension it serves the purposes of God.

Steve Bradbury, TEAR Australia

Bible verse:

Why, O Lord, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble? In his arrogance, the wicked man hunts down the weak, who are caught in the schemes he devises. Arise Lord! Lift up your hand, O God. Do not forget the helpless. Psalm 10:1, 2, 12

Millennium Development Goal 2:

Achieve universal primary education

Millennium Development Goal Three:

Promote gender equality in education and empower women

Story from Bolivia

There are around 800,000 children working in Bolivia, many of them living on the streets. Most of these young people are illiterate and often get involved in criminal groups. In rural areas, nine out of ten girls drop out of school.

Noelia left her violent and broken home when she was 13 years old. She lived on the streets with her partner. She didn't know how to care for her young daughter properly, and considered her life was useless and without meaning. She didn't trust anybody. She had never known the presence of God in her life, since she believed that nobody would be able to love her as she was.

After the birth of her second child, a Christian community group encouraged Noelia to go back to school, restored her self confidence and encouraged her relationship with God. Now Noelia is full of hope for the future.



WHAT CAN ONE PERSON DO?



Brief background on Bolivia:

Bolivia is a country of faith: 98% of people are Christians, mostly Catholic. Bolivia is also poor: 34% of Bolivians live on less than US\$2 a day and children in half the nation's families suffer malnutrition. Each day in Bolivia, 18 children die from poor nutrition and 2 women die in childbirth, leaving behind their grieving families.

Nearly 500 Bolivians leave the country every day, seeking to improve their living standards, leaving sons and daughters, husbands and wives, and breaking up families. Trafficking of children and women is a major problem.

About 700,000 school-age children do not attend school even though it is free and compulsory. Children in rural areas receive an average of only 3.5 years of schooling.

Prayer from Bolivia:

Written by Micah Challenge, Bolivia

Lord, we ask that we, your people, be instruments in your hands and be sowers of peace in the midst of conflict. In this time of aggression, hate and racism in Bolivia, we ask that You make us sensitive to the great need that surrounds us; that we keep your word in our minds and be doers of your word.

We ask to be people who transform our environment in the midst of corruption; that we represent a culture of integrity, and where we see injustice, we work for justice.

We thank you God, because you are the God of history, who can transform uncertainty and discouragement into joy, hope and faith in those who lack in our country.

Dear God, we pray for those who do not have bread or water to sustain their bodies, for those Bolivians who are not even familiar with basic nutritional necessities.

We pray for those who have lost a loved one, a child or a parent, due to the lack of basic healthcare or because they leave the country seeking a better life.

Amen.

Prayer:

We pray that across the globe all children might be valued from the moment they are formed till they reach adulthood.

Just as Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature, we pray that children everywhere would be nurtured in body, mind and spirit.

Amen.



WHAT CAN ONE PERSON DO?



Week three: stories & prayers from India

Excerpt for news sheet / church bulletin or announcement:

In India, justice is not a natural expectation of godliness, holiness is. Holy men and women of God are those who have withdrawn from the world to attain a peaceful state of existence in the presence of God alone! This attitude seems not uncommon, even among Christians. It amuses me that I am introduced as 'a Man of God' when invited to teach the Word, and as a 'Development Thinker or Worker' when involved in justice issues.

Such a dichotomy is definitely not Biblical. The God of the Bible is known as the God of justice (Isaiah 30:18). The Bible says, 'But the Lord Almighty will be exalted by his justice, and the holy God will show himself holy by his righteousness' (Isaiah 5:16). God reveals His holiness in his commitment to justice and righteousness.

We are good at running programs. But justice is not God's program. Justice is His character. When justice is only a program, we can choose either to do it or not. But if justice is our character we will have no choice. It will be demonstrated in our life, in our actions and our priorities.

C.B Samuel, Oxford Centre for Leadership Studies

Bible verse:

For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight. I will rejoice in Jerusalem and delight in my people; no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress.

No more shall there be in the city an infant that lives but a few days; or an old person who does not live out a lifetime. Isaiah 65:17-20

Millennium Development Goal 4:

Reduce child mortality: reduce infant and child deaths by two thirds.

Story from India:

The Indian Government describes the Malto tribe from North East India as "a primitive tribal group". For generations they have been poor and exploited, with their people ravaged by TB, cholera and other results of poverty. Child mortality is up to 5 times higher here than in more developed parts of India.

So when a missionary group went into the area thirty years ago they realised that development work was a key to showing God's love. In one generation, 42,000 Maltos have become Christians and at the same time, programs in education, health, water management and community advocacy, have transformed the community.

Literacy has increased from 4% to 30% and there has been a fourfold increase in children at school. Every village now has a trained health worker and a 20 bed hospital serves the community. The people have learnt to stand up for their rights to protect their land and forests from exploitation and every village has its own development committee.



WHAT CAN ONE PERSON DO?



Brief background on India:

India's economic boom (an average growth of 8% over the last 3 years) masks the continuing poverty of millions, especially in rural areas. 26% of the population – nearly 300 million people - lives on less than US\$1 a day.

12% of babies die in their first year. 12.1 million children under 5 years die each year.

It is estimated that 55 million school age children in India work to help support their family. It is not unusual for children under 12 to work a 14 hour day to earn only Rs10 (US\$25cents).

Prayer from India:

Adapted from the faith affirmation of Micah Challenge, India.

Lord God, we confess that we often fail to fulfil your requirements of justice and mercy in our own lives and ministries. There are times when we have not stood beside suffering and powerless ones. Forgive us.

In humility and led by your Spirit, as individuals, families and churches, we want to model a lifestyle of justice in our homes, workplaces and communities.

In humility and empowered by your Spirit, Lord God, we want to work with the oppressed and marginalised, to be transforming agents in our land. We want to establish your justice and righteousness on earth.

Lord God, hear our prayers, change our hearts and give us your vision.

Amen.

Prayer:

Lord God, we know how you care for children, yet each day we allow little ones to die from preventable illnesses like malaria and diarrhoea, we do not act to protect children from exploitation and we fail to value young, vulnerable lives.

Forgive us for our indifference to statistics and stories of poverty and suffering.

Help us to value all young lives as much as we value our own and see the potential of each child. Lord, hear our prayer and help us not to harden our hearts when the concerns of our everyday life surround us.

Amen.



WHAT CAN ONE PERSON DO?



Week four: stories & prayers from Nepal

Excerpt for news sheet / church bulletin or announcement:

Jesus showed respect and care for women, including those on the margins of society – like the woman at the well, Martha and Mary, and the woman who touched him to be healed.

Still today, societies' most vulnerable are women. Women are more likely to be poor and illiterate and are more often victims of ill-health and violence. Nearly 70% of the world's illiterate adults are women. 90% of AIDS victims under the age of 20 are girls. Half a million women die each year because of complications related to pregnancy and childbirth, almost all of them among the poorest communities in developing countries.

Women are the major providers for their children and run the household, yet millions cannot earn enough to feed themselves and their families. Improving the health and education of women empowers them to break the cycle of poverty and injustice. As Christians, we can follow Jesus' example and lead the way in bringing hope and justice to women.

Amanda Jackson, Micah Challenge Australia

Bible verse:

The great God, mighty and awesome, shows no favouritism and does not accept bribes. He ensures that orphans and widows receive justice. Deuteronomy 10:17-18

Millennium Development Goal 5:

Improve maternal health: reduce by three quarters the proportion of women dying in childbirth.

Story from Nepal:

Binita Chepang, a five year old girl, was suffering from severe malnutrition and weighed just five kilograms (about 25% of the normal weight for her age) when she was found in her village. Binita, her mother and three year old brother, also severely malnourished, were brought to a health centre run by a local Christian group. After a month of loving care and proper feeding, Binita and her brother each gained ten kilograms.

Poverty crushes many of Nepal's 25 million people, especially the ethnic tribal groups in very remote hilly regions. Poverty means a lack of basic resources for many mothers and children – basics like school, clothing, food and health care and access to family planning services.

Churches in Nepal have done some advocacy on issues of domestic violence and ethnic discrimination. However, most of the community work does little to address the root causes. Church leaders have begun to realise the Biblical case for social advocacy and the effectiveness of churches working together.



WHAT CAN ONE PERSON DO?



Brief background on Nepal:

The maternal mortality rate in Nepal is 30 times greater than in the developed world. Only 40% of births are attended by skilled health staff.

Most churches are new and the number of Christians is tiny. Churches have grown rapidly since 1990 when the country gained political freedom. Many are now seeing beyond their emphasis on preaching and church growth to the need to combine word and deed in reaching out to communities.

Peace was recently declared after a ten year civil war in which Marxist rebels won control of half the country, mainly in rural areas. The rebels joined an interim government in April 2007 under an agreement that called for an assembly to be elected to write a new constitution.

Prayer from Nepal:

Written by Micah Challenge, Nepal

Heavenly Father and Lord Almighty!

Thank you for the peace process in Nepal. We pray that the Maoist and political parties will continue to work together and lead Nepal into permanent peace and greater prosperity.

We pray for people disabled, displaced and orphaned by conflict. We pray that those who have lost their homes and belongings will have their lives restored. We pray communities would be reconciled.

We pray that the priorities of the Nepali government and donor countries would be for the people and communities affected by poverty and conflict. We pray the people in government would be committed to fair and just treatment of all people, without corruption and misuse of authority.

We pray that Nepali Christian communities would be more engaged in critical social issues, and become a more effective witness of your love, justice and compassion.

Thank you for listening to the cry of your faithful servants.

Amen.

Prayer:

Lord God,

We thank you for the example of Jesus who appreciated and valued women. Like Mary, we praise you for blessing the humble and lifting up the hungry.

We pray for mothers who work long hard hours toiling for their families. Give them rest.

We pray for mothers who are ill and tired from overwork and disease. Restore them to health.

We pray for mothers who dream and hope that life will be better for their children. May their hopes not be in vain.

Help us to work for justice for the most vulnerable ones in our communities and in the wider world.

Amen.



WHAT CAN ONE PERSON DO?



Week five: stories & prayers from Indonesia

Excerpt for news sheet / church bulletin or announcement:

The 2004 Asian Tsunami affected Indonesia more than any other nation. Over 130,000 people died (half the total number of deaths) and 650,000 people were left homeless.

In the years since, landslides, drought, volcanic eruption, flood, earthquakes and smaller scale tsunamis have continued to hit most areas of the nation.

Where is God in the midst of such tragedy? The tsunami was not an act of God - it was a natural disaster with a scientific explanation. It revealed the frailty of humanity yet showed the best of humanity in our generosity.

It reminds us of the silent "tsunami" that happens every day: 29,000 children dying from the effects of poverty every day. Our compassion, both on the personal and on the political level needs to be patient and enduring.

Support for our Christian brothers and sisters in Indonesia is crucial as they contend with the demands of serving the suffering, and show the character of Jesus in the most populous Moslem nation on earth.

Adapted from a reflection by Dr Thorwald Lorenzen

Bible verse:

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people. Matthew 4:23

Millennium Development Goal 6:

Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases like TB.

Story from Indonesia:

It is not only natural disasters that impoverish the lives of Indonesians. Many die from Dengue Fever, HIV/AIDS is spreading rapidly and Indonesia has had more reported cases of Avian flu than any other country.

Some disasters are man-made. Illegal logging has caused erosion and flooding, while inefficiency and corruption hamper some aid efforts.

Micah Challenge Indonesia is a wonderful example of people from many different Christian backgrounds coming together to speak out about issues affecting their nation. It is not easy to lift your voice in a new democracy where a corrupt military ruled for over a generation. It is not easy to speak wise words to communities with tensions between Christians and Moslems. It is not easy to forgive the perpetrators of horrific violence. It is not easy to provide for those fleeing from disaster when your own family is at risk.

But that is exactly what Christian communities in Indonesia are trying to do.



WHAT CAN ONE PERSON DO?



Brief background on Indonesia:

Indonesia's total debt is US\$61 Billion (2005), from only US\$2.05 million in 1965. Such debt is ruining the basic standard of living. Debt repayments take up nearly 30% of the nation's annual budget, whilst 19.05% of the budget goes to education, and only 6.96% for health.

One in every four Indonesians lives on less than US\$1 a day and two-thirds live on US\$2 a day.

Indonesia had low HIV rates until the late 1990s, when the situation began to change rapidly. Massive economic and political disruption in recent years has produced dramatic changes in Indonesia's HIV/AIDS risk, as more people move from home to find jobs and communities are disrupted.

Prayer from Indonesia:

Written by Micah Challenge, Indonesia

God of mercy, justice and love,

We pray for churches to be involved in actions of service and justice so that your values are proclaimed in our nation.

We pray that churches and Christian networks would join in challenging oppression of the poor and speak the truth with a gentle manner.

We pray that we would stand with the majority of the nation who are poor Moslems, to cry for justice.

We pray that the government of this nation delay no more in acting to end poverty.

Give us wisdom, grace and persistence dear Lord.

Amen.

Prayer:

God of healing and mercy,

We pray that the millions of people who suffer with HIV/AIDS would be comforted by your love.

We pray that families torn apart by the disease would be strengthened.

We pray that children orphaned or abandoned because of AIDS would find security and love.

We pray that churches in AIDS ravaged communities would overcome fear and judgement to show concern and care.

We remember that compassion for all people is the essence of our faith.

Amen.



WHAT CAN ONE PERSON DO?



Week six: stories & prayers from Zambia

Excerpt for news sheet / church bulletin or announcement:

It is unthinkable that Zambia, a nation of wonderful people, abundant natural resources and a thriving church, is known mostly for its poverty and HIV/AIDS pandemic. It is time our lives reflected justice and righteousness and our nation was known for its justice, goodness and strong economy.

The Biblical stories of Nehemiah and Daniel show us how changed lives can reshape our society. It was their integrity and wisdom that opened doors for them to serve in government. Even though the government of Babylon had no respect for the God of Nehemiah and Daniel, it still recognised honesty and wisdom as important qualifications for jobs in the King's palace.

Christians in Zambia need to model a corrupt-free community, pursuing and teaching righteousness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness and godly leadership. May the church join the fight to make Zambia a safe place to raise our families.

Adapted from editorials by Lawrence Temfwe, National Coordinator, Micah Challenge Zambia

Bible verse:

Let us not become weary in doing good for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. Galatians 6:9-10

Millennium Development Goal 7:

Ensure environmental sustainability: halve the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water; transform the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020 and reverse the loss of environmental resources.

Story from Zambia:

Mapalo is a community known for its economic poverty. A densely populated community on the outskirts of Ndola, the second-largest city in Zambia, Mapalo is home to over 40,000 people.

Over 20% of the people of Mapalo are infected with HIV/AIDS (2003) with no access to anti-retroviral drugs. One clinic serves the entire community, with no doctor on-site.

There is no high school. Unpaved roads reduce the local traffic flow, preventing the export of market goods to nearby townships and raising the price of imported goods. Haphazardly-built residential shelters are home to families living as refugees in their own country.

Since 2000, churches have sought to bring transformation within the community. In 2003 thirty community leaders met and resolved to change the name of their community from Chipulukusu (meaning 'crushed') to Mapalo (meaning 'blessing').

The leaders also identified the major problems facing their community. They decided that they no longer wanted others coming into their community to bring 'development' but rather, whilst they still welcomed the help of others from outside, they wanted to lead the development of their community.



WHAT CAN ONE PERSON DO?



Brief background on Zambia:

16.5% of people over 15 years have HIV/AIDS. Life expectancy has dropped to 37 years (it was 50 in 1975). An estimated 710,000 children have lost at least one parent to HIV/AIDS.

45% of Zambians do not have access to clean water. 87% of fuel requirements come from traditional sources like timber. Zambians consume 603 kilowatt-hours of electricity per person per year. In Australia it is 11,446. (UNDP Human Development Report 2006, Table 21)

Zambia shares its southern border with the mighty Victoria Falls, a World Heritage site.

Prayer from Zambia:

Written by Micah Challenge, Zambia

Father, in name of Jesus, may we know the power we have received because of the Holy Spirit that has come upon us; we are your witnesses in our local communities, nation and to the ends of the world.

Father, we request peace and the welfare of the city and nation in which you have called us to live, and we pray for boldness to witness to the hope of Christ. We pray to you for the prosperity of our nation and ask for wisdom to do our part that there be fairness in the distribution of national wealth, "so that he who gathers much does not have too much and he who gathers little does not have too little"

Father, we pray that you direct the decisions made by church and world leaders; that they understand your concern for the poor and your heart for justice and compassion.

In Jesus' name we pray.
Amen.

Prayer:

Based on Psalm 8

Wonderful Creator God, the whole earth declares your greatness.
Your glory glows in the heavens and is seen in the moon and the stars which you have set in place.

What are we that you care for us?

Yet you have made us only a little lower than yourself and crowned us with glory and honour.
You have given us responsibility to care for the sheep and cattle, for wild things, for all creatures that swim and fly.

Forgive us for destroying rather than restoring and for polluting rather than nurturing. Help us to declare your glory and the glory of your world.

Amen



WHAT CAN ONE PERSON DO?



Week seven: stories & prayers from Australia

Excerpt for news sheet / church bulletin or announcement:

Throughout history, the rich have had a difficult time seeing that their prosperity is based on other people's poverty. Basil, the 4th century bishop of Caesarea, spoke of his frustration, to the rich, "How can I make you realize the misery of the poor? How can I make you understand that your wealth comes from their weeping?" We don't make the connection either. We don't understand that we have more than we need because the poor have much less than they need. We consume the resources of the earth far out of proportion to our numbers, while others go hungry and die for lack of life's basic necessities. In other words, our standard of living is rooted in injustice.

The question to be asked is not, 'What should we give to the poor?' but 'When will we stop taking from the poor?' The poor are not our problem; we are their problem. The idea that there is enough for everyone to live at our standard of living, or that we are rich because of hard work and God's favour, or that poverty is due to the failures of the poor – all these are cruel myths. Charged to be stewards, we have instead become exploiters... we have wasted the earth's resources to profit the few.

Jim Wallis, *The Call to Conversion*, 2005 edition, pp 43-44

Bible verse:

This is what the Lord says: "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches. But let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the Lord. Jeremiah 9:23-24

Millennium Development Goal 8:

Develop a global partnership for development: address issues such as trade, debt, aid and public health.

Story from Australia:

In 2006, Christians from all round Australia gathered in the capital city, Canberra, to take part in a unique event. They came to speak out about poverty with the country's political leaders. Together they prayed, worshipped and learned, and visited over 70 Members of Parliament asking for compassionate and just action on the Millennium Development Goals.

They went to encourage not criticise, they spoke of positive alternatives rather than making complaints and they went prayerfully and peacefully.

Their presence had a big impact on politicians. One MP said, "It's wonderful to see young people from our area taking part in the poverty campaign. I was very impressed by their understanding of the issues, and their commitment in coming to Canberra to impress the need to reduce poverty in developing countries."

The event also had a big impact on the participants who saw that they were listened to. It helped them to appreciate the role and work of government and to pray with greater vigour for elected leadership and all those in power.



WHAT CAN ONE PERSON DO?



Brief background on Australia:

Nine out of 10 Australians believe that reducing poverty is a very important issue facing the world today.

Australia has zero tariffs on goods from the poorest countries (LDCs) and has a low level of support for agricultural products compared with other developed nations. Australia strongly supports a reduction in agricultural trade barriers and subsidies.

Australia makes 1.5% of the world's total carbon dioxide emissions (2000) but has only 0.3% of the world's population.

Prayer from Australia:

From a Micah Challenge service for the meeting of the G20 Finance Ministers in Melbourne.

We pray today for God's world. We pray for a world divided unequally between the prosperous and the desperate, between the privileged and the powerless, between the wealthy and the poor.

God of life, into this divided human community you come. You sit amongst the poor, you walk with the lonely and the abandoned, you stand among the hungry crowds, you live among the powerless, the frightened and the weak.

Grant us the energy to serve others in your name.
Grant us the love to heal despair.
Grant us the strength to continue in your service.
Grant us the power to overcome evil.

Help us to walk humbly where you walk so that in your name, we become the answer to the prayers of the silent, suffering, struggling ones.

Amen.

Prayer:

A Franciscan Benediction

May God bless us with discomfort at easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships, so that we may live deep within our hearts.

May God bless us with anger at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people, so that we may work for justice, freedom, and peace.

May God bless us with tears to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation and war so that we may reach out hands to comfort them and turn their pain into joy.

And may God bless us with enough foolishness to believe that we can make a difference in this world, so that we can do what others claim cannot be done.

Amen.