

christian
aid
80
years

Abounding hope

Christian Aid Week 11–17 May



Aurelia with five of her adoring grandchildren.
(L-R) Daily, Sheny, Karla, Nestor and Andy.

**A daily
devotional**





Welcome to your week of **prayer and reflection**

Aurelia's tackling
multiple threats to
her family's survival.

Imagine planting a seed with tender care. It starts to grow. But then all too quickly the plants you've carefully nurtured wither and die before your eyes. You're dependent on those crops to feed your family. What will you do now?

That's the challenge Aurelia and her community are facing in the Alta Verapaz region of Guatemala. It's here that the livelihoods, traditions and very survival of Indigenous farming communities are threatened by deadly droughts, damaging storms and industrial plantations.

The climate crisis is causing both the dry and rainy seasons that would once arrive with predictability to intensify and shift erratically. As a result, vital crops are failing, plunging farming families into hunger and poverty.

Aurelia – who's raised eight children and now helps to take care of her beloved grandchildren – has known this land for most of her life, farming to support her family and neighbours.

She's witnessed radical changes. When Aurelia came to the forest, **'there was lots of water close to the community, and it wasn't that hot.'** Today, it's a different story. **'Our water resources are drying up. It means we can't water the crops, and there is no food production,'** she says. The situation is stark. **'Climate change has been killing our crops, and this is our food.'**

Despite this, Aurelia is abounding with hope. An inspirational and ambitious leader, she's working to transform how her community farms with specialist training from Christian Aid's partner,

Aurelia praying
in church.



Congcoop. She's using methods that work with nature and help combat the effects of the climate crisis.

In this Daily Devotional we invite you to learn more about Aurelia and her community. Together we'll reflect on the links between Bible passages and Aurelia's experience as she faces unprecedented challenges.

Across the seven days of Christian Aid Week and beyond, there are so many ways you can support people like Aurelia to protect their communities from hunger and poverty. With your fundraising, gifts, prayers and actions you could help unlock climate resilient farming methods for more people, so that their hopes can become reality.

Christian Aid has worked in Guatemala for over 48 years.

Together with our partners, we're supporting people's rights, including those of Indigenous communities. We work for climate justice, challenging the structural causes of the climate crisis, and supporting farmers to increase their resilience. We hold state institutions to account to ensure fairness for all. We're also there to offer humanitarian support when disasters strike, such as hurricanes.

Through our work with Congcoop, Christian Aid is supporting communities to use their knowledge of Indigenous farming practices, alongside training in new sustainable methods. Thanks to Congcoop, families are better able to adapt to heatwaves, droughts and storms, and grow the food they need.



Sunday

'Serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.' (1 Peter 4:10)

Read 1 Peter 4:7-11

Aurelia is dedicated to bringing hope and transformation to her community.

This is Aurelia. She's a member of the Indigenous Q'eqchi' (pronounced Co-WAY-chee) community of the Alta Verapaz region of Guatemala. Aurelia is a farmer and leader for change. She's teaching others in her community new ways to grow food crops that will help them survive the devastating impacts of the climate crisis. **'I really give my life to my neighbours, sharing my knowledge,'** Aurelia told Christian Aid.

Aurelia's words express the calling we share as Christians to give our lives in service. Our reading today urges us to love one another deeply and to demonstrate that love by using what we've received from God for the benefit of others. This calling to service isn't easy. It requires us to look outward – to give our time, our resources, and our energy. When it comes to global challenges such as the climate crisis, the problems can seem so immense we may convince ourselves that there's nothing we can do.

But like Aurelia, you can change lives with your gifts.



Christian Aid's partner, Congcoop, is supporting Indigenous communities to become more resilient in the face of the climate crisis through specialist agricultural training. With your support more people can be trained in techniques that enable them to feed their families.

Consider the gifts you've received. Pray over these with thanksgiving.

What could you offer in service to your global neighbours this Christian Aid Week? Visit caweek.org or caweek.ie to find out how to give, act and pray across the next seven days and beyond.

Loving God,

Help us to serve one another, sharing our gifts and talents. Fill us with generosity and compassion.

Amen.



Monday

'Let justice roll down like water and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.' (Amos 5:24)

Read Amos 5:11-15 and 21-24

Aurelia and other women in her community collect water twice a day from natural sinkholes called cenotes. It's a walk that can take nearly an hour each way and requires Aurelia to traverse a steep, slippery trail. Gathering water is taking up more of each day for Aurelia and her neighbours, leaving less time and energy for farming, cooking or selling produce.

It wasn't always like this. Ricardo, Aurelia's father, remembers when **'water was close by and in abundance... there was a river**

that had water all year long, even in summer.' But precious water is in short supply under the pressure of record high temperatures and large industrial plantations that monopolise resources and contaminate what little is left.

In the book of Amos we find a challenge to anyone who claims to be worshipping God while at the same time oppressing the innocent and depriving the poor of justice. God is not indifferent to how we treat one another. We're expected to take steps to ensure that 'justice rolls down like water and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.'

It's deeply unjust that the water sources closer to Aurelia's home have been dried out by heatwaves and drained by industrial operators. Will you help ensure that justice flows abundantly again for Aurelia and others like her?

Seek out water today. You could visit your local river or beach, water a plant, or go for a walk in the rain. As you do, give thanks to God for life-sustaining water and make a commitment to act for justice this Christian Aid Week.



Aurelia collects water from the cenote.

Lord, you love justice and righteousness.
As we quench our thirst for you in prayer,
refresh our commitment to doing your will.
In Jesus' name,
Amen.

Tuesday

'The earth dries up and withers... The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants for they have transgressed laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant.' (Isaiah 24:4-5)

Read Isaiah 24:4-8

Through human action, the world has been 'polluted'. In Guatemala 'the earth dries up' during deadly droughts. The climate crisis is now severely impacting countries who have done little to contribute to global emissions. Each of us needs to consider our responsibility for the damage that's been done to God's creation. **Today, reflect on the impact you have on the natural world and how your actions may affect those most vulnerable to climate emergencies.**

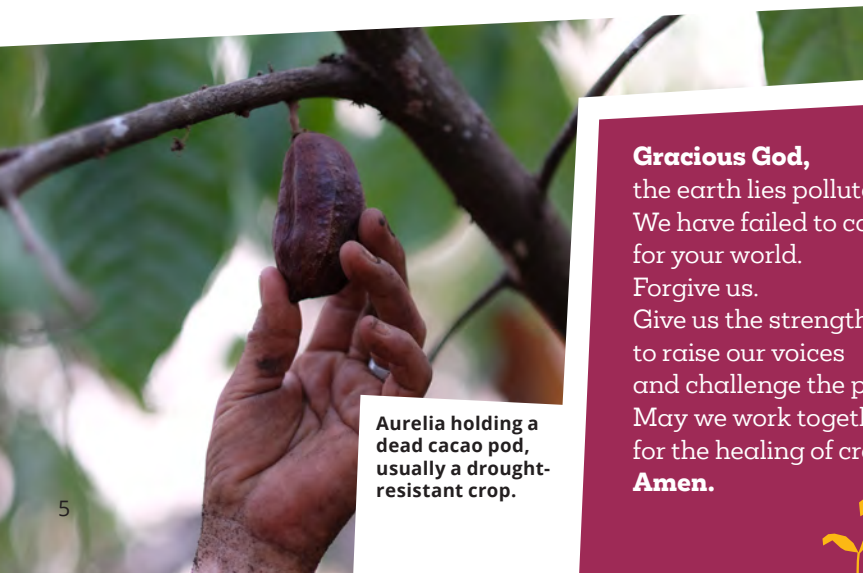
Cacao is a native plant in Guatemala. It's usually drought-resistant but even this crop is struggling with rising temperatures and changes in rainfall patterns. Indigenous communities like Aurelia's have done the least to cause the climate crisis, yet they bear the costs. But Aurelia is far from giving up.

She seized the opportunity to train with Christian Aid's partner, Congcoop, so that she's prepared for the future.

But Aurelia and her neighbours shouldn't be tackling this alone. For too long, reckless polluters and greedy lenders – backed by governments – have been pushing millions of people into poverty.

Those who've caused the climate crisis need to take responsibility. We need to make polluters pay up for the damage they've done in countries such as Guatemala. People with power must step up and help.

Will you stand with Aurelia, and others impacted by the climate crisis, by calling on the UK and Irish Governments to repair the damage caused? Find out more at caid.org.uk/CAWpetition or caid.ie/Campaigns



Aurelia holding a dead cacao pod, usually a drought-resistant crop.

Gracious God,
the earth lies polluted.
We have failed to care
for your world.
Forgive us.
Give us the strength
to raise our voices
and challenge the powerful.
May we work together
for the healing of creation.
Amen.



Wednesday

'The land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill and live on it securely.' (Leviticus 25:19)

Read Leviticus 25:1-19



Aurelia with her father, daughter-in-law and grandchildren.

The food that families like Aurelia's rely on is under threat. Aurelia has seen the accelerating impacts of climate change first-hand: **'There was a prediction this would happen in the future, but it has come earlier. This is very worrying for our kids and especially our grandkids.'**

Today's Leviticus passage speaks of sabbath years and the year of Jubilee. The Jubilee year was a time of economic restoration for the poor, a year for the cancelling of debts and for liberation. Today, these verses direct us to consider our over-exploitation of natural resources and the unjust economic systems that disadvantage communities like Aurelia's. In richer countries many of us not only 'eat our fill' but overconsume. How can we take a sabbath rest from consumption? What can we do to advance economic justice for the people of Guatemala?

Your support this Christian Aid Week can help farmers like Aurelia to restore their ability to provide food for their children and grandchildren.

Next time you're shopping in the supermarket or preparing a meal, take time to pray. Hold in mind those who are worried about where their food will come from in the future. Pray that we will see a time of Jubilee now, when the voices of the marginalised will be heard and those who are hungry will 'eat their fill'.

Holy Lord,
feed our determination,
and nourish our spirit.
Send us out to share your
proclamation of Jubilee.
Sustain us as we put our faith
into action.
Amen.

Thursday

'...let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another...' (Hebrews 10:24-25)

Read Hebrews 10:23-25

Today's reading urges us to 'hold fast' to the hope that Jesus Christ's life, death and resurrection brings (Hebrews 10:23). The writer of Hebrews reminds the early Christians of the need to come together in community and give each other encouragement as Jesus' disciples. Our hope is eternal but that doesn't mean we should have no concern for the present. Living out the hope we are given includes spurring one another on in 'good deeds' and acts of love here and now.

Aurelia's community gather in their church and in their homes to support one another. Aurelia is determined to encourage other women and show them what they can achieve together: **'I believe women have a lot of capacity.'**

With equipment provided by Congcoop Aurelia and her neighbours have been able to sell chocolate products that they make from their cacao harvest. This gives Aurelia a source of regular income that she can spend on daily essentials like soap. Longer term, this income can help keep her grandchildren in school.

'I make cocoa products with all my heart,' Aurelia says. **'Perhaps that's why they have such a good flavour!'**

Can you recall a time when you put your whole heart into something?

At Christian Aid we strive to be changemakers, following Aurelia's

example. Could you put your heart into joining our global network of volunteers and use your passion to inspire others? Whether fundraising in your local church, sharing our campaign actions, or speaking in your local community, there are many ways to turn your faith into action – and encourage others to give, act and pray for our work. To find out more, visit caid.org.uk/Volunteer or caid.ie/Volunteer



Aurelia and her friend, Sofia, pray before producing their cacao flour.

Jesus, give us tender hearts,
make us encouragers.
Fill us with compassion for
our global neighbours.
May we be inspired by passionate
changemakers.
Spur us on to do your work of love.
Amen.



Friday

'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.' (John 15:12)

Read John 15: 9-17

Jesus commands us to love one another as we are loved. In showing love for our neighbours we grow into Christlikeness.

How will you show love to those you meet today? What could you do to show love to your global neighbours?

Like Aurelia, Amelia belongs to the Q'eqchi' community. At 24 years old she's already a resourceful and determined farmer. Amelia's also the goalkeeper on the local football team. Amelia told Christian Aid: **'I have always been fascinated by planting and have loved it since I was very young.'**



Amelia with her daughter, Yakelin, aged four.

Now the plants she tends so carefully are dying due to heatwaves and issues with the water supply. Amelia has seen changes even in the short time since her childhood. The deep river she learned to swim in now drops to ankle-height at times.

Amelia has joined Congcoop's training programme to learn about native seeds and develop planting schedules that will help her to adapt to the climate crisis. She then passes on this knowledge to a group of 28 more women in her area. Her four-year-old daughter, Yakelin, loves joining Amelia for training.

Amelia is ambitious for herself and her family but she knows that there are still many threats that affect her ability to grow crops and provide food for her children. **'For the future, I don't know what to expect, it could be worse, it could be better. The only one who can tell is God.'**

Set aside some time today to pray for Amelia and her family and consider what you could do to support women like her. Explore ideas here: caid.org.uk/Get-involved or caid.ie/Get-involved

Jesus, you love us beyond measure. Help us to grow into your likeness, showing love to one another. Bless those facing an uncertain future. Open our eyes to the challenges our global neighbours face each day. **Amen.**

Saturday

'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.' (Romans 15:13)

Read Romans 15:1-13

Aurelia and Amelia's hope is unstoppable. They've withstood the impact of severe droughts, savage storms and record heatwaves.

They've also stood up for their rights and their future. Indigenous farmers are under pressure to give up their land but Congcoop has helped ensure that farmers have other options.

As Aurelia says: **'We've been courageous enough to not sell our land, and to work it to produce whatever we can.'**

Today's verse reminds us that by the power of the Spirit we can be blessed with abounding, overflowing hope. This hope is not just for the future but for the present moment. By God's grace this hope is ours to share with one another.

Aurelia is clear that **'climate change is getting worse every day.'** It's a deadly threat to her way of life. But together we can help her as she finds new ways to farm. With the right support, more crops can survive, the fertility of the soil can be restored, and Aurelia's community can pursue a sustainable and secure future, in harmony with the land.

At Christian Aid we join in Aurelia's hope that one day no family will worry about what their children and grandchildren will eat.

Today, share the words of blessing from Romans with someone who matters to you. Consider what gives you hope and how you can put the gift of hope into action.

God of justice,
Pour out your Spirit,
that we may abound with hope.
When we feel defeated,
give us courage,
and remind us that nothing
is impossible with you.
Amen.

Aurelia showing the organic fertiliser she's learned how to make.

Harnessing the power of relationships

A Christian Aid Week coffee morning or event is a great way to meet political representatives and help bring about changes that farmers like Aurelia need.



Christian Aid supporter Helen Hughes put her faith into action by speaking to her local politician about the climate crisis. For Helen, who has sadly passed away, it is part of her legacy.

She said: **‘We can do so much as individuals, but there are people in government who have the power to make a real difference.’**

Hear Helen’s reflections at caid.org.uk/Helen
Find out more at caid.org.uk/CAWpoliticians or caid.ie/Helen and caid.ie/CAWpoliticians



The Castle Cary Christian Aid Group meet their election candidate - and now MP - Sarah Dyke during their Christian Aid Week coffee morning.

More ways to pray



Sign up to Christian Aid’s monthly prayer and worship email and receive resources and prompts straight to your inbox. Find out more at caid.org.uk/Pray or caid.ie/Pray

Christian Aid and your Church

Your church community can make a difference this Christian Aid Week and beyond. Book a speaker, plan an event or find out more about how we can work with your church. Visit caid.org.uk/Church or caid.ie/BookASpeaker for details.

I hope it. **I Will it.**

Turn a lifetime of hope into the change you want to see in the world with a gift in your Will.



Aurelia is an inspirational farmer and community leader in Guatemala. She's also a grandmother who wants to protect her family.

As extreme weather kills crops on Aurelia's land, food becomes scarce, affecting her ability to provide for her loved ones. But with unstoppable hope and specialist training, Aurelia's leading her community to grow resilient crops that are better suited to the changing climate.

Aurelia and her grandchildren, father and daughter-in-law.

A gift in your Will can support communities like Aurelia's to protect their farms and futures. So, one day, no family will worry about their children going without food.

To find out more visit caid.org.uk/Legacy or caid.ie/Legacy

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