



Advent and Christmas Prayer Pack

No crib for a bed... when you're fleeing violence.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), decades of conflict and political instability have fuelled one of the world's largest humanitarian crises. Violence between multiple armed groups and government forces has left millions of families with no option but to abandon their homes and livelihoods in search of safety.

As a result of conflict, the DRC is among the five poorest nations in the world. It's estimated that more than 70% of the population lived on around £1.50 a day last year. The violence has damaged infrastructure. Shops and businesses have been looted and church congregations have been subject to targeted attacks.

Chance's story

Chance is the mother of eight children and used to work as a shopkeeper.

When armed conflict swept through her community in February, Chance knew her family had to escape to survive. Clutching her newborn baby and rallying her children, Chance fled on foot. Her husband stayed behind. As fighter jets screamed overhead and bombs fell, Chance felt her recent caesarean wound open.

With great courage, Chance sought out the relative safety of Katashola Camp for displaced people and was able to receive some medical assistance. But now, her children are hungry, and at grave risk of malnutrition and malaria. Chance told us: **'Here in the camp, people need food, clothes, jerrycans, saucepans, blankets and mattresses.'**

The humanitarian emergency in the DRC is one of the largest global hunger crises, with more than 27 million people in need of food. With Christian Aid funding,

Chance and her baby.



our trusted partner, ECC-MERU, is making cash grants to those most in need of assistance – families like Chance's.

We urgently need your church's support this Christmas.

We're asking you to use this pack in your Advent or Christmas services or prayer groups to pray for families seeking refuge from war, and to raise funds that can support them to survive.

Could you take a collection for our Christmas Appeal?

Or fundraise by singing carols in your community?

Explore our Christmas fundraising resources to help you plan your service or event at: caid.org.uk/Christmas

With your support, mothers like Chance could buy nutritious food, vital medicines and hygiene products. A gift from you could fund emergency shelters, as well as cosy bedding to comfort traumatised children.

Though Chance is a brave and resourceful mother, she's running out of options – because of a situation that's heartbreakingly beyond her control. She says: **'I wish you could help me and my companions who are suffering like me. Please help us.'**



Gathering prayers

Jesus, Son of the Living God,
your birth brought together shepherds and kings.
Gather us today as one body, united in hope, joy
and peace.

Light of all people,
you were born to bring justice and mercy.
Illumine our path and lead us into the ways of
truth and compassion.

Holy child, laid in a manger,
you knew the meaning of poverty.
Make us ready to love and serve you
through loving service to one another.
Amen.

As we gather in hopeful expectation;
Light of the world, make us ready.

As we seek your transforming presence;
Dayspring from on high, renew us.

As we bring to you our griefs and fears;
God of all comfort lighten our darkness.

As we offer you our prayers and praise;
Bright morning star, fill us with your glory.
Amen.

Opening responses (based on Isaiah 9)

A child has been born for us.
How will we welcome him?

He is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
How will we welcome him?

A son has been given to us.
He brings justice and righteousness.
How will we welcome him?

In our neighbour we see his face.
How will we welcome him?

Prayer for Advent and Christmas

Prince of Peace,
as a baby you had no safe place to rest.
We pray to you today for all children
forced to flee violence.
We lift to you families and communities
enduring instability and fear.
In this season of hopeful expectation,
we pray for those who do not know what
tomorrow will bring.
Challenge us, Lord, to live out your call to
seek peace and pursue it.
Heal our divisions and inspire us to act
with justice and love.
Amen.

A prayer for a crib service

Loving God, as we gather to hear the story
of the nativity of Jesus your Son,
we give thanks for the joy and excitement
of Christmas.
We pray to you for parents,
carers and children everywhere.
Especially we pray for those who do not have
a safe place to stay.
We ask you to help those children who, like the
baby Jesus, have no crib for a bed tonight.
Show us what we can do to change our world,
so that every child will be free to play, rest,
grow and flourish.
We ask this in Jesus' name,
Amen.





Joyce's story

Joyce is a farmer and mother of four children. Her loving family includes her husband, Michel, three daughters and one son.



Joyce, her husband Michel, and their four children.

When Joyce was heavily pregnant with her daughter Emiliana, violence was spreading in the region where the family live in the DRC. Joyce was afraid that the conflict would reach their home. As she went into labour, Joyce could hear bombs falling nearby. When Emiliana was just two months old soldiers came to Joyce's village and the family were forced to hide in the nearby forest. Returning to their home meant capture or death.

The family fled to Bulengo Camp for displaced people. Joyce told Christian Aid: **'Emiliana was in a near-death state. I tied her to my chest and covered her with a blanket. The child just clung to my chest. I was scared and thinking: Will I die? Will my children die too? I was asking God, if I die, who will take care of my child?'**

Sadly, life in Bulengo Camp offered little relief. Food and drinking water were in exceptionally short supply. After two days, the family faced serious hunger and thirst. Michel risked his life returning to their home to collect whatever supplies he could salvage.

While the family have been able to return to their home full-time, the trauma stays with them. Joyce says: **'All the time I am thinking about the war. If it gets here, where will we flee to?'** She adds: **'Emiliana's whole five months of life have been very stressful. She doesn't even get enough time to play with me - her mother - due to my fear.'**

Our partners in the DRC

Working with our trusted partner, ECC-MERU, Christian Aid is delivering financial assistance to refugees, people who've been displaced, and people who are marginalised in the DRC. Called the Chronic Crisis Stream, this vital funding is a lifeline for families who've left everything behind to survive.

Offering financial assistance means people can prioritise their own specific needs and decide how to meet them. Many choose to buy ingredients that will guard their family from malnutrition. Others opt to replace left-behind bedding and blankets for their children - helping to make temporary shelters feel a little more homely. With medication beyond the budget of many households, some choose to buy lifesaving malaria treatment. ECC-MERU is also working to increase sustainable access to drinking water.

If you've been moved by Joyce and Chance's stories, please consider donating to our 2025 Christmas Appeal.

Here's what the money your church raises could help us to do:

£14

could buy a pair of solar lamps that comfort frightened children at night.



£36

could fund personal hygiene kits for a family of six.



£68

could fund pots, cups, bowls, plates and spoons for a family who've lost everything.





Prayers for our community and our world

Loving Lord, your mother gave birth in a cattle shed far from home.

We pray for mothers who have no choice except to give birth in dangerous conditions, without access to the medical care they need.

We pray for parents and carers forced to flee their homes with their children.

May you bring them peace and comfort and may they find safety.

Lord in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Loving Lord, you had no crib for a bed and slept in the straw of the manger.

We pray for children growing up without safe accommodation, reliable sources of food, or clean water.

We pray especially for Christian Aid's work with partners in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

We ask that you protect the dignity and agency of those affected by violent conflict.

May they receive the support they need to build a more secure future.

Lord in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Loving Lord, you were born among a people under occupation.

We pray for those who live with the threat of violence and the fear and uncertainty that conflict brings.

We pray especially for...

[Name here places where there is war and conflict]

God of peace, you bless peacemakers.

We pray for an end to violence and for the protection of civilians.

Lord in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Loving Lord, your family fled to Egypt to escape persecution.

We pray for all people living in temporary settlements far from their homes.

We pray for those who have lost belongings and livelihoods.

We pray that our compassion for our global neighbours would strengthen and grow, especially our compassion for displaced people and refugees.

Lord in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Loving Lord, in your birth, life and death, you

showed the depth and height of your love for us.

We pray for those in need of your love and comfort.

We pray especially for those who are ill or grieving.

[Name here anyone known to you]

Lord in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Loving Lord,

accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Closing prayer

Almighty God,

at the birth of your Son, the angels proclaimed the good news:

freedom from fear, peace on earth, joy in abundance.

Send us out to live according to this marvellous promise.

Make us your messengers,

in our words and actions,

as we work to see your kingdom come on earth.

Amen.

Prayers of blessing

Go in hope, that a fairer, more just world is not merely possible, but promised.

Go in peace, extending a hand in solidarity to neighbours near and far.

Go in love, ready to see the image of God in each face you meet.

Go in joy, anticipating the Birth that reconciles all creation.

May God's marvellous light,

be a lamp for your feet

to guide you into the path of justice.

And may the Lord of peace himself

give you peace at all times in all ways.