

Sunday 12 April 2026 - Easter and Christian Aid – Michael Bayley

Christian Aid week (10-16 May 226) is when Christian communities come together – across churches, communities and households – to stand alongside people living in poverty. Michael Bayley puts it in the context of the Eastertide message.

Readings:

Acts: 2: 14: 22-32. John 20: 19-30

Sermon: Easter and Christian Aid – Michael Bayley

“Compassion - love - is utterly central to the message and life of Jesus, and justice is the social form of compassion. To put the same thought in different language, love is the soul of justice, and justice is the body, the flesh, of love.

This is what Easter, the ultimate climax of Holy Week, is about. Good Friday, the penultimate climax, discloses how powerful the forces arrayed against the Kingdom of God are. (*The climax*) Easter (vindicates Jesus). It affirms, 'Jesus is Lord' and the powers of this world are not. Holy Week, Good Friday, and Easter are about the conflict between the radical love of God and the power of the domination systems (like the Roman Empire under which humankind generally lives). Jesus' last week challenges the domination systems of the world, (so evident in our day as well,) even as it also invites us on a journey through death to resurrection, journeying with the risen Jesus, the risen Christ.” (Borg and Crossan, *The Last Week*, p.215)

The Easter season gives us the chance to think further about what that means. One thing it means is that our following of Jesus cannot not just be personal but , if we are going to take account of the domination systems of our time, we cannot ignore the political.

One example of an organisation which will help us to do this is Christian Aid. Love expressed as justice has been central to the work of Christian Aid .

It started its work in 1945 founded by the British and Irish churches to help refugees following the Second World War. For eighty years it has provided humanitarian relief and long term development support to poor communities across the world while highlighting suffering, tackling injustice and championing people's rights. In the 1950s Christian Aid week was started. They supported the establishment of Voluntary Service Overseas to enable young people to make a difference and offered help to churches in countries moving from colonialism to independence to meet the needs of poor people. In the 1960s they helped to set up the World Development Movement, to encourage political campaigning on especially on the half of the third world. It is still going but it's now known as Global Justice Now. Members of Saint marks played a key role in setting up the branch in Sheffield.

In the 1970s Christian Aid provided seed money (I think in co-operation with Oxfam)to establish the New Internationalist magazine which provides a trenchant commentary on the difficult political issues which beset relations between the rich world and the poor world and the many ways in which the poor are so often exploited.

In the 1980s they help feed people during the Ethiopian famine and those experiencing drought in Mozambique. They led a mass lobby of parliament to call for more official development aid. They created the South African Coalition to demand the end to apartheid.

In the 1990s they linked their work in 54 countries to campaigns on tackling world debt, promoting fair trade and criticising the policies of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. They challenged the stigma and discrimination experienced by people living with HIV in sub Saharan Africa. They stood up for and provided food for refugees in Kosovo.

In the 2000s they reached more than half a million people with food, shelter and healthcare after the Asian tsunami. They publicised the fact that developing countries lose more money through the tax evasion practises of large corporations than they receive through official aid.

In the 2000 and 10s they became heavily involved in the campaign on climate changed and championed tax justice.

These are big large-scale political issues and they are important but the bulk of their work is very down to earth and They always work with local partners on the ground. Their work is often *very* down to earth for example they work with women in the Dalit communities in India often called the untouchables who often find that the only work which is open to them is the manual scavenging of human waste by hand. Christian Aid work with an organisation called SKA and have been doing so what over 50 years to eradicate this caste based occupation of manual scavenging of human waste.

Gaza is obviously on many people's minds. Christian Aid has been working in the region for over 60 years and supports 16 local partners across Gaza, the West Bank, Israel and Lebanon. During the famine in Gaza caused by israel's blockade and thousands of lorries full of vital aid remained stuck at border crossings, Christian Aid was able to make cash transfers to trusted partners inside the Gaza Strip who were able to respond to the needs of communities on the ground reaching those in greatest need with food, clean water, medical care, education and safe shelter. Over the past two years Christian aids partners have reached over 900,000 people. Christian Aid's partners equip local volunteers to identify and meet ongoing needs from fixing water points to constructing accessible shelters for people with disabilities. This work is more than aid. It's an act of solidarity, dignity and survival.

Economists sometimes talk about the need for 'patient capital'. This means people who are prepared to put money into a worthwhile scheme and give it time to work rather than going for a quick profit. Christian Aid is about patient giving. It works patiently and longterm with local groups and local people and builds relationships of trust. But it also takes broader political context into account. This Christian Aid week is focusing on Kenya. Diana Gichengo is the director of Christian Aid partner TISA who work tirelessly for debt justice in Kenya. She says: "My country, Kenya, spends more on paying debts than on healthcare and education combined. Hospitals lack nurses and medicines. Classrooms are overcrowded. Farmers are left without support. When debt comes first, people come last. Debt is now at its highest in the history of Kenya. To keep up with the payments the government is selling tomorrow to survive today. Many debts squeezing Kenya are owed to private lenders many of whom are in the UK and

they make vast profits while we face crisis. These debts governed by UK law. UK could limit the power of private lenders by introducing new debt justice laws that could help tackle poverty.” But alongside that they are working with a local organisation in Dagoretti near Nairobi called Beacon of Hope. One of the women with whom they work is Belinda. She and her family of five were living hand to mouth and often running out of money and food. Beacon of Hope trained her along with other women in the skills needed to set up a vertical garden in the midst of the crowded ‘informal settlement’ and now she grows all sorts of vegetables including kale, tomatoes and spinach. Now she can feed her family and sell the surplus which means she can pay school fees and cloth her family better. The short tape about Belinda finishes by her saying: “ Thank you for making me an independent woman.”

Christian Aid Week this year is from the 10th to 16th of May. It is a great opportunity to show that “love is the soul of justice, and justice is the body, the flesh, of love.” This means some very practical things. The way in which we get the greatest amount of money in Christian Aid week is by the house the house collection. We need help to make sure we deliver an envelope to every house in the parish. This now works well by just delivering the envelopes. On Saturday the 9th of May young people and families are doing a walk for Christian Aid. please sponsor them. There is a board to sponsor them at the back of church. We know from the past that these things work well. Let's make sure that they work well this year. We are in we are inheritors of a great tradition. Let's maintain it. If you have something you would like to try please let us know.

This is all part of what living the risen life with Jesus means. “Love is the soul of justice, and justice is the body, the flesh of love”.

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