

Christian Aid Week 2026

Notes for a sermon or talk

These notes will help you prepare your sermon or talk for Christian Aid Week 2026. They can also be used at other times of year.

This pack begins with two short stories. These come from Fridah Moraa and Belinda Kasudi, who have been working with Christian Aid's partner Beacon of Hope in Dagoretti, Nairobi. In the notes below you will see this symbol: ❤️ This indicates a good point in each talk for you to share these stories.

You could also show the Christian Aid Week film before or during your talk. This will allow your congregation or group to hear from Fridah and our partner Beacon of Hope directly. The film can be downloaded in advance from our resource pages or streamed from Christian Aid Ireland's YouTube site.

You can find the film and all the resources you need at caweek.ie/Resources

Life in Dagoretti, Nairobi

Whilst some communities in Kenya are able to live comfortably, almost half the population lives on less than \$3 a day (World Bank, 2021).



Fridah Moraa outside her home in Dagoretti, Nairobi.

In the capital, Nairobi, more than 50% of residents live in semi-permanent homes. Many of these homes are in informal settlements like Dagoretti. Here, houses made of steel sheets and concrete blocks are packed closely together. Access to clean water, sanitation and electricity is limited. With secure jobs hard to find, buying enough food is a constant struggle. Aching hunger compounds relentless stress.

Christian Aid has been working in partnership in Kenya for almost 30 years. This Christian Aid Week we are sharing the stories of two determined women who face the daily challenges of life in Dagoretti: Fridah Moraa and Belinda Kasudi.

Fridah's story

Fridah rents a corrugated metal shelter to house her children and grandson. They don't have running water inside their home and share a basic toilet with several other families. Fridah recently lost her husband in a tragic accident and feels his loss acutely. As she says: **'He's left a big gap.'**

Day-to-day life for Fridah can be precarious. She wakes every morning worrying about how to feed her family. **'But I can't give up,'** Fridah says, **'my children need to go to school. They need to eat.'**

Fridah has been trying to develop a stable income by selling vegetables, making a two-hour round trip six days a week to buy wholesale produce.



Fridah with her twin sons Eliud and Abiud and grandson Quillan.

Some days she doesn't sell enough at her market stall. On these days she goes without food, so the children can eat.

Recently Fridah has seized the opportunity offered by a project called *'Imarisha Kilimo'* – Swahili for 'Strengthen Agriculture'. Run by Christian Aid's partner Beacon of Hope, this project trains women like Fridah in urban farming.

Families learn how to grow vegetables in small spaces, using cone gardens – a form of vertical planting. They learn to conserve rainwater, make organic compost, and use dehydrators to preserve food. Now, tucked at the end of a concrete alley, Fridah tends her lush urban farm, full of kale, tomatoes and other vegetables. Her children and grandson eat fresh vegetables, and she sells her produce at market.

For Fridah, this has been transformative, as she explains: **'Now I can plan... I can help my family. Urban farming has changed my life.'**

Fridah's children are proud of their mum. Her 13-year-old son Abiud (Ab-ee-ud) declares: **'My mum is very hardworking, patient and kind. The message that I can send to her is thank you for taking care of me.'**

Belinda's story

Belinda Kasudi lives with her husband David and their five children in a wooden one-bedroom home in Dagoretti, Nairobi. David works for a building company, but his shifts are irregular. Some days there is no work – and no pay. Belinda picks up whatever jobs she can find, such as taking in laundry for neighbours.

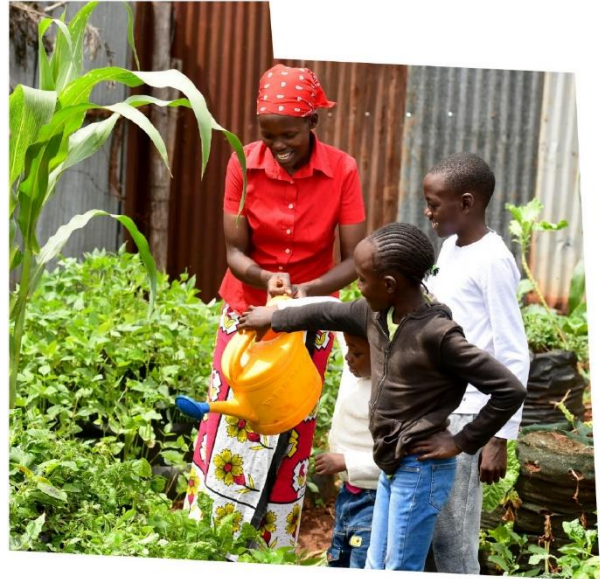
A stable income is vital for Belinda's family. As she tells us: **'Everything here has to be paid for. We even buy water... Providing enough food for the children is very difficult, because it's so tough to find a job.'**

Belinda loves learning and is excited to be part of the *Imarisha Kilimo* project. She has been able to create her own water-saving cone garden, growing spinach, beetroot and local specialities. Belinda delights in being able to feed her children fresh ingredients, and in selling any extra vegetables to help with costs like school supplies.

Belinda explains what keeps her going through her difficulties: **'When there is a challenge, most of the time, I pray.'**

In a place where hardship means hunger, Fridah and Belinda are growing hope for their families. They have put their faith into action. Fridah says the biggest difference is that now she can make plans for her family's future, rather than just surviving day by day. Belinda speaks of her satisfaction at becoming an **'independent woman'**. For hard-pressed families in Dagoretti, ongoing support is vital to allow more urban farmers to access training and resources.

This Christian Aid Week we have **seven days to make a difference**. How can we follow Fridah and Belinda and show our faith through our actions?



Belinda Kasudi with her children Wilson, Blessing and Abigail.

Contents

This pack includes notes on the following passages in the COI Sunday Lectionary:

- **For Sunday 10 May:** Acts 17:22-31 and John 14:15-21
- **For Sunday 17 May:** Acts 1:6-14 and John 17:1-11
- **Other suggested readings:** Isaiah 61:1-4, 8 and Luke 13:18-20
- **Reading chosen by Fridah:** Matthew 7:7-11
- **Reading chosen by Belinda:** Psalm 23:1-6 (suitable for a short reflection)

You are free to adapt these notes as appropriate for your context.

Notes for Sunday 10 May

Acts 17:22-31: 'In him we live and move and have our being.'

Paul's message to the Athenians

If you scan the shelves of your local supermarket, you'll probably see at least one product with 'new formula', 'new recipe' or even 'new and improved' on its packaging. The human desire for novelty goes back a long way. In Acts 17:21, immediately before our reading today, the residents of first century Athens are characterised as people who are always **'telling or hearing something new'**.

They want to hear Paul speak because they are interested in the new god he is talking about. Might this god be a contender for inclusion into their worship alongside other gods? Is Paul's god a 'new and improved' version of an idol they already worship?

Paul's answer to them is a surprise. Instead of delivering a promotional pitch for this new deity, Paul tells them that they have already encountered God without knowing it and that God is going to turn upside down all their ideas about the divine.

Paul's message to the Athenians is that the God he preaches is not just another option alongside others. God does not lack anything or need anything. God does not need to be worshipped or idolised. God is not a power to be harnessed or a force to be placated by human beings.

Instead, God is the creator of every living thing, the source of existence itself. God created human beings in God's image and is as close to them as a parent to their child.

So, the Athenians have already encountered God because it is in God that they live and move and have their being. Nothing that exists is outside of God's loving attention as creator.

The final part of Paul's message is that if those who hear him believe what he says is true, then this will change their lives. God is not served by human-made statues. Instead, service is about how we live. God **'will have the world judged in righteousness'**. To serve the righteous, just and loving creator we must embody righteousness, justice and love in our lives.

The attraction of the new

One of the sources through which we hear about the experiences of our global neighbours is news media. But as the word 'news' suggests, the stories the media report are shaped by our attraction to novelty. As quickly as one crisis appears in the headlines, another takes its place, simply because it is 'news'.

There are many communities whose stories are absent from the headlines altogether. Their situations are judged too complex, their challenges too entrenched, to grab our attention.

♥ Share stories and/or Christian Aid Week Film

How many of us knew about the difficulties faced by those living in informal settlements in Kenya before hearing Fridah and Belinda's stories? The day-to-day struggle that people face in Dagoretti will never be deemed newsworthy.

The challenge for us

Paul's message runs counter to our attraction to the new. It focuses our attention instead on the deep and constant faithfulness of God, who is present to all people as creator. This is important to Fridah. It is God who gives her strength each day, as she says: **'In God I trust.'**

Paul's message also challenges us to consider how we are serving God. Are we creating a big show of faithfulness, as shiny and impressive as an Athenian statue? Are we forgetting that what God values – and what we will be judged on – is how we reflect the image of the creator in our lives?

What can we do this Christian Aid Week in response to this challenge?

John 14:15-21: 'If you love me, you will keep my commandments.'

Love in action: our calling

In chapter 13 of John's Gospel, Jesus gives his disciples 'a new commandment': 'Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another,' Jesus says, 'By this everyone will know that you are my disciples.' (John 13:34-35).

Have you ever noticed where this commandment sits in the story of Jesus' arrest and crucifixion? It comes just after Judas leaves the Last Supper to betray Jesus. And it comes just before Jesus predicts that Simon Peter will deny knowing him.

The commandment to love is surrounded by failure to show love in action.

Yet love persists, even as the disciples fall short of what they are called to do.

The theologian and former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, says of Peter's denial: 'Peter stands for all the human characters whom Jesus confronts – the apostles, the witnesses, the Church, ourselves.' His failure is our failure. And yet like him we are continually 'called afresh' to try again in our service of the God of love. [Rowan Williams, *Meeting God in Mark*, 2014].

You may have heard the saying: 'Love conquers all'. What Jesus offers is not a conquering love that pushes past and ignores what we get wrong. Instead, he gives us a love that endures. This love will be offered to us precisely in those moments when we feel we least deserve it.

In our reading today, Jesus expresses this unfailing care. He tells the disciples that they will never be alone, or 'orphaned'. The Spirit is coming and they can be assured of God's faithful, constant presence forever.

And Jesus tells the disciples too that the love he has given to them is theirs to share.

If we love Jesus, then we will keep his command to love one another. This love does not have neat boundaries. We are not asked to love only those whom we like or only those who have never wronged us, or only those who offer us something in return.

If we are to love Jesus by loving as he does, we must love abundantly and radically. We must love in action. We must transform the world with our love. This is what marks out the followers of Jesus.

We will make mistakes. We will fall short. But we will be called again and again to the work of love.

Love in action: Dagoretti

♥ Share stories and/or Christian Aid Week Film

Fridah and Belinda are leading the way for us in putting their faith, hope and love into action. They are led by love for their families and neighbours. They find strength in their trust in God. And they are unstoppable in their hope for a better future for themselves and their communities.

For Belinda the connection between neighbours in Dagoretti is vitally important. She says: **'we all live in this environment, we have the same struggles. We help each other in everything. It is very important, so that there is no one who carries too much themselves.'**

Belinda tells Christian Aid that there are two things she does when she faces a challenge. She says: **'most of the time, I pray. Then, also I have a friend who I share with. She gives me advice, and I become strong.'**

'If you love me, you will keep my commandments,' Jesus says. And that includes the commandment to keep loving and to keep putting our love into action. This Christian Aid Week if you feel that you don't have much to offer, then why not follow Belinda's example? First, talk to God in prayer. Talk about the mistakes you have made and the challenges you face. Ask God to show you that you are loved. Then talk to a friend about what you can do. You might be surprised by just how much of a difference you can make. Love in action can change the world.

Notes for Sunday 17 May

Acts 1:6-14: 'You will be my witnesses'

Is this the time?

As we reflect on today's reading from Acts, let's think together about the journey the disciples have taken to this point. The disciples were called to step away from the normal pattern of their lives and dedicate themselves to following Jesus. They have accompanied Jesus throughout his ministry; they've heard him preach and seen him heal. They've seen his arrest and crucifixion. They lived through that terrible moment when all seemed truly lost. They've met Jesus in his risen body.

And throughout this process of discipleship they've made mistakes. The disciples have stumbled, taken wrong turns, and got themselves lost. They've misunderstood Jesus and his mission. They've turned their attention inward rather than outward, placing themselves before others

Even at this point in Acts - the moment of Jesus' Ascension- they still have questions about what exactly Jesus' plan is. 'Is this the time?,' the disciples ask. It's almost as though they were children on a long car journey. 'Are we nearly there yet?,' they ask, 'Is this the time?'

Time to act

In his response, Jesus redirects the disciples' attention. Instead of offering a neat and definitive answer about God's plans, he points towards a set of actions they need to take. 'Is this the time the kingdom will come?,' the disciples ask. Jesus responds with a commission: receive the power of the Holy Spirit; be my witnesses; go to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, 'and to the ends of the earth'.

We can compare this moment with Jesus' response to another question in Matthew, chapter 18. There the disciples ask, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' Jesus calls over a child and responds, 'unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven'. The disciples look for an answer they can understand. Jesus offers them an action they must undertake. Be transformed, become like this child.

The promise of the Spirit

We too are Jesus' disciples. Our journey of faith is also likely to be full of questions, as well as mistakes, misunderstandings and wrong turns. Jesus' focus on action can guide us too.

What questions are you asking at the moment? One question you might have is: 'How can I make a difference?' It can be hard to believe that we are able to make a significant impact when faced with some of the biggest challenges of our time - poverty, armed conflict, the climate crisis.

Have you ever asked God this question: 'How can I make a difference?' It's worthwhile making this question a regular part of our prayer life. It's a way of

reminding ourselves to listen to God's voice and attend to what God is calling us to do. Just as Jesus answered the disciples' question in Acts with a commission, so God may be answering our question in a similar way: 'go, do, be my witnesses'.

This answer seems to leave us with quite a lot still to figure out. But it's worth noting one more detail in our reading from Acts. Jesus doesn't just say 'receive the power' of the Spirit; he says 'you *will* receive the power,' or in other translations 'you *shall* receive the power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you'. This isn't just a commission or a call to action, it's a promise.

Far from leaving the disciples entirely alone to work out how to be witnesses, Jesus promises them that God will be with them. The Spirit *will* come to them and they *will* be witnesses through the Spirit's power.

God's faithfulness

♥ Share stories and/or Christian Aid Week Film

Fridah and Belinda draw strength from their faith and from their conviction that God is faithful.

Where does Fridah see God's faithfulness in the challenging situation she faces? She says that God is working through the people around her. She believes that the guidance and support from Christian Aid's partner, Beacon of Hope, is a gift. Fridah says, **'There are many who are willing to learn, and they have the desire to learn but they don't get opportunities. I got a chance from God. I would like to encourage all those women who are going through challenges similar to mine and say to them that it's not the end of the road.'**

Putting our faith into action

Today's scripture offers us one answer to the question 'How can I make a difference?' Jesus tells us, 'go, do, be my witnesses, and the power of the Spirit will be with you'. It is through taking action that we will discover the impact we can have.

Can we follow Fridah and Belinda's example and take action, trusting that God is faithful and will be with us?

This Christian Aid Week consider what you can go and do. Whether it's making cakes, cycling, singing, shaking a bucket, hosting a quiz, organising a prayer meeting, serving coffee, or something else, it's one way in which you can bear witness to God's kingdom come. And whatever you do, may the power of the Spirit be with you.

John 17:1-11: 'So that they may be one, as we are one.'

Unity and diversity

Christian Aid was founded in 1945 in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. After this cataclysmic conflict, the question of what unites human beings was more pressing than ever. For those involved in the development of Christian Aid, unity was rooted in compassion and in Jesus's call to love our neighbours as ourselves. Churches of different denominations came together to respond to urgent humanitarian needs, first across Europe and then around the world. Their efforts were a visible sign of unity – both ecumenical unity and human connection across borders and geographical distances.

Today Christian Aid operates through local partnerships in dozens of countries. Christian Aid works with organisations who have a deep understanding of their local context and of the strengths and needs of their communities. There is diversity in this unity. Different churches in the UK are working together to support diverse partners in different contexts, all motivated by love and care for one another.

Unity in diversity is a form of life that the Christian church is called to embody in all we do. As Paul says in his letter to the Romans, 'in one body we have many members and not all members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members of one another' (Romans 12:4-5).

In today's reading from John's Gospel, we are reminded of what makes that unity in diversity possible. We love and value one another in all our diversity because God first loved us. Notice the tenderness with which Jesus prays for his followers. They

are treasured and protected. Jesus asks for them a unity, a oneness, like the oneness between the Father and the Son.

Unity and community

This Christian Aid Week we are guided by the stories of two women – Belinda and Fridah – whose experiences show us a community united by determination and love.

♥ Share stories and/or Christian Aid Week Film

If you have ever been to somewhere like the informal settlement of Dagoretti in Nairobi, you will have seen human closeness expressed in multiple ways. There is of course physical proximity. The informal settlements are packed with families occupying one or two rooms in buildings that squeeze up against one another. But there is a closeness and oneness of community too.

Belinda says this of her neighbours: **'Because we all live in this environment, we have the same struggles. There is no one who is above us, and no one who is on the lower level. We help each other in everything. It is very important, so that there is no one who carries too much themselves.'**

Christian Aid's partner Beacon of Hope takes a strength-based approach in their work in Dagoretti. This approach focuses on the strengths within the community that are already present; the resources and talents that people already have. As James Omwanda from Beacon of Hope tells Christian Aid, **'We are only facilitators. I support communities to understand that *they* have the power.'**

The unity in diversity in Dagoretti is creating change. Neighbours and family members support and value one another and through Beacon of Hope's work individuals and communities can develop their diverse gifts and talents.

What are our strengths? What unites us?

This Christian Aid Week let's consider the strengths in our community. What are each of us good at? What do we do well when we come together? What are the barriers holding us back?

Understanding our diverse strengths and what unites us allows us to see more clearly how we can make a difference.

How can we live out the oneness of love and that combination of diversity and unity that God wants for us? One way that we see this very powerfully during Christian Aid Week is through all the small actions that churches, groups and individuals are taking across the UK and Ireland to fundraise in support of their global neighbours. From cake sales, to running challenges, quizzes to coffee mornings, communities are using their strengths to show love, unity and solidarity in action.

Whatever you are doing this Christian Aid Week may God bless you and show you that you are valued for who you are.

Other suggested readings

Isaiah 61:1-4 and 8: 'He has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed.'

Can we handle the truth?

What makes someone a prophet?

A prophet, we might say, is someone who speaks the truth. Their message of truth is received from God and their act of speaking that truth is often costly. The truth can be unwelcome. Many of the prophets of scripture, and some who we might regard as prophets in the modern world, have suffered and even died because they spoke truth to power.

But why should this be so? As Jesus says in John's Gospel, the truth will set us free. Who would not want to hear the truth?

The reality is that all of us here will have known times in our life when we would rather not look the truth in the face. Think of those times when you have broken a promise or let someone down. It's much easier in such moments to tell ourselves that we haven't really done anything wrong than it is to confront the truth. Maybe there's a truth about yourself that you know you should act on but you continue ignoring. Do you have a true understanding of your own power and the ways you

might be benefitting from the unjust treatment of others around the world? It's an uncomfortable thought, isn't it?

Theologians have a term for the ways in which we are all collectively caught up in systems that make telling the truth and doing justice more difficult: they call this structural sin. Our human-made structures of economics and politics can make truth-telling and doing right by one another harder.

Restore Campaign

This Christian Aid Week, we are asked to pay attention to the structural injustices affecting the people of Kenya. Christian Aid's Restore Campaign, which is running alongside Christian Aid Week, is asking people in Northern Ireland to learn more about the connections between debt justice and the impacts of the climate crisis for Kenya. Today, Kenya spends more paying back debt than it does on public services like health and education. Much of this debt is owed to private lenders who can be held responsible under UK law for unjust lending agreements that take advantage of lower income countries. At the same time, Kenya is among those bearing the brunt of the unpredictable weather conditions created by the climate crisis.

Without the funds to invest in public services or to respond to the climate challenge, many communities in Kenya are surviving with limited access to essentials such as running water and affordable medical care.

♥ Share stories and/or Christian Aid Week Film

Overcoming unjust structures

In Isaiah chapter 58, the prophet delivers God's judgement on unjust human-made structures, calling out those with power who 'serve your own interest ... and oppress all your workers' (v. 3). By contrast, God is calling us to 'loose the bonds of injustice,' to 'offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted' (vv. 6 and 10).

In our reading today from chapter 61, this theme continues. The Lord has sent one who is anointed to 'bring good news to the oppressed' (v.1). The unjust structures will be overcome, God promises, 'For I, the Lord, love justice' and 'hate robbery and wrongdoing' (v. 8).

Part of this reading from Isaiah also appears in the Gospel of Luke. There, Jesus has returned from forty days in the wilderness, where he has faced temptations. He comes to the synagogue in Nazareth and reads the first few verses of the Isaiah text to those assembled before announcing, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.' (Luke 4:21). Amongst the temptations Jesus has faced is the prospect that he could be ruler of 'all the kingdoms of the world'. All he has to do is turn away from God the Father and worship the one who tempts him instead.

Jesus is offered a certain kind of power. This is the power that comes through ruling, controlling and dominating others.

But Jesus comes out of the wilderness with a mission: to show *God's* power. In contrast to the tempter's idea that power is about having authority over people, Isaiah's words tell us that God's power is directed towards the liberation and healing of people who are oppressed and suffering.

Jesus tells his listeners that Isaiah is describing what Jesus is here to do. In fact, it's not just what Jesus will do; it is who Jesus is. Jesus is the living embodiment of justice, love and mercy. This is the Good News.

Your kingdom come

If we are to follow Jesus and proclaim him as the Good News, then our actions must be guided by the vision of God's power that we find in Isaiah. We must become part of the work of liberation and healing that God is carrying out.

We will face injustice as we do this. There will be barriers and structures that make it hard for us to see progress. But nonetheless we must hold on to the promise of God's kingdom come, the coming of the 'good news to the oppressed'.

Luke 13:18-20: 'What is the kingdom of God like?... It is like a mustard seed.'

The mustard seed

One way of reading these verses is that great change can come from small beginnings. There's no single agreed interpretation of which seed Jesus was referring to here. It may have been a Black Mustard seed. This would be unlikely to grow into a tree big enough for birds to nest in, but the minuteness of this seed

underlines the idea that what may seem insignificant can undergo a great transformation.

Notice how the plant that Jesus speaks of grows to become a hospitable place for the non-human world – it is a home for birds and their young. This parable indicates that the kingdom of God has to do not just with growth but with making room and offering new possibilities. The connection with the birds also suggests a link between the kingdom and caring for creation.

God's kingdom

The theologian James H. Cone suggests that the kingdom is 'what God does.' It is God's action of liberation in places 'where people are suffering and dying for want of human dignity'. He goes on: 'That is why Jesus compared the kingdom with a mustard seed and with yeast in dough. Both show a small, apparently insignificant beginning but a radical, revolutionary ending.' (James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 1970.)

Other commentators have pointed to the parallel between Jesus' words here and this passage from the prophet Ezekiel:

'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I myself will take a shoot from the very top of a cedar and plant it; I will break off a tender sprig from its topmost shoots and plant it on a high and lofty mountain. On the mountain heights of Israel I will plant it; it will produce branches and bear fruit and become a splendid cedar. Birds of every kind will nest in it; they will find shelter in the shade of its branches. All the trees of the forest will know that I the Lord bring down the tall tree and make the low tree grow tall. I dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish.' (Ezekiel 17:22-24)

Here the Lord not only speaks of a great and hospitable tree growing from a small and 'tender sprig' but also of a reversal of status. The tall tree will be brought down and the low tree grow tall. This might remind us of the words of Mary:

'He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty.' (Luke 1:52-53)

As Cone says, the kingdom offers a radical vision of transformation, where what is small grows to unexpected heights, where the margins become the centre, and those excluded from power are uplifted. In the Lord's Prayer, we say: 'Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.' This expresses the belief that the kingdom is not just a future reality, but something we seek to bring about in the world here and now.

Beacon of Hope

♥ Share stories and/or Christian Aid Week Film

Urban farming has a transformative impact in Dagoretti, creating opportunities for growth in small spaces. When Christian Aid spoke to James Omwanda, a Project Officer with their partner Beacon of Hope, he talked about the connection he sees between the parable of the mustard seed and his work:

'We know the story of the mustard seed – a very small seed that became a very big tree that everybody looked up at. My work is really to help people understand that their mustard seed can grow into a very big tree that can support multiples of people through many, many years.'

James says that Beacon of Hope takes a **'strength-based approach'**, encouraging communities to look at the resources and skills they already have and grow from there.

Fridah and Belinda are among those confronting the daily challenges of life in Dagoretti and taking the opportunity to grow. Their commitment to urban farming has produced not just crops but greater security, independence and more options for them and their families. Even in the very small spaces available to them, they are making transformative changes.

What small steps could we take, following Fridah and Belinda's example? We may not think there is a great value in what we have to offer, but this parable reminds us that extraordinary change can come through small steps. What can we do together to make God's kingdom a reality here and now?

Matthew 7:7-11: 'Ask, and it will be given to you.'

♥ Share stories and/or Christian Aid Week Film

Fridah's faith

What lessons do you draw from your favourite Bible readings? Perhaps they inspire you, comfort you, or remind you of something important about God or yourself.

Fridah has chosen a verse from the Sermon on the Mount as one of her favourite Bible passages. Here is that verse in Fridah's own words:

'God said, your child cannot ask you for bread and you give them a stone. And he cannot ask you to give him fish, but you give him a snake. He gives you what you asked for. That is what God gives us.'

Fridah's belief in God's faithfulness and steadfast presence sustains her. **'I don't have easy or difficult days,'** she says, **'I just believe in my God'.**

God's steadfast love

The reading Fridah has chosen speaks to us both about human love and generosity and how God's outpouring of love exceeds what we can imagine. Jesus tells his listeners to think of how much they love their children, their family, those dear to them. Think of how eager you are to respond to them and support them, he says. If your child asked you for something nourishing, you would not give them something harmful.

Then Jesus draws a striking conclusion. He says: **'If you then... know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!'** (Matthew 7:11).

It's tempting, isn't it, to fall into thinking of our relationship with God as a kind of exchange. We do our bit, and then God responds, as though everything depends on us ticking all the right boxes before God is willing to act. Yet Jesus turns this notion upside down. He reminds us that even the deepest love and care shown by the most devoted parent is just a faint reflection of the boundless generosity, love and faithfulness of God. God already knows what we need, and delights to provide for us. It's not a quid pro quo – it's an outpouring of abundant love.

Our loving God will be faithful to us, Jesus promises. God never gives up on us or turns away from us, even when we fall short.

Faithfulness

The contemporary theologian Selina Stone has written about the importance of God's faithfulness in the spirituality of Black communities who experience marginalisation. Where human beings can fail to love one another, God's love is steadfast and unending. Where human beings speak over others so that their requests cannot be heard, God listens to every word and responds.

'God's words,' Stone says, 'have the power to drown out the words and action of those who undermine our humanity and right to exist.' (Selina Stone, *Tarry Awhile: Wisdom from Black Spirituality for People of Faith*, 2023).

Where does Fridah see God's faithfulness in the challenging situation she faces? She says that God is working through the people around her. The guidance and support from Christian Aid's partner, Beacon of Hope is a gift.

Fridah says, **'There are many who are willing to learn, and they have the desire to learn but they don't get opportunities. I got a chance from God. I would like to encourage all those women who are going through challenges similar to mine and say to them that it's not the end of the road.'**

Ask and it will be given

In our discipleship, we are called to imitate to God's steadfast love and faithfulness in our own lives. This may seem daunting at times; we are only human after all. Yet it is often in recognising our own frailty that we become most open to God's grace. In those very moments, God generously provides the strength and resources we need, enabling us to extend generosity and kindness to others in turn.

This Christian Aid Week, consider what you are being asked to do. Whose voices and whose requests are you listening to? And how are you responding?

It's all too easy for us to draw boundaries around our generosity and compassion, as though love were a scarce resource that can only be spread so far. Jesus' words tell us that God's love is greater than this and that it is offered to us freely. We don't need to rely on our own limited reserves of love and compassion, instead we can draw on God's limitless supply and allow it flow out into our world.

What will we do with that gift of love and how will we allow it to shape our lives and actions?

Short Reflection - Psalm 23:1-6: 'I shall not want'

♥ Share stories or Christian Aid Week Film

What does it mean to say, 'I shall not want', when you have experienced living in extreme poverty? For Belinda, her family's material wants and needs are a constant concern. She is determined to ensure that her children are fed and that they can attend school with a full stomach and all the supplies they need to help them learn. She wants her family and her neighbours to have the chance to thrive.

Belinda says: **'The Bible verse that affects me the most is, 'The Lord is my shepherd. I will lack nothing.'**

This psalm speaks of God's faithfulness. God watches over and accompanies the psalmist on their journey. Difficulty and danger are close at hand in the 'darkest valley'. But the presence of the Lord is a constant and unfailing comfort.



For Belinda, it's not that our material needs and the lived experience of poverty are irrelevant to God. Quite the opposite. God's faithfulness is marked by being with us, in solidarity with people living in poverty and in times of challenge, traversing that dangerous valley. Whatever injustices Belinda faces, the God of justice is with her.

Belinda reading her Bible in her home in Dagoretti