

Christian Aid Week

10-16 May 2020

Yes, this is still happening.

With Covid-19 affecting everyone, there is an even greater need to show love for our global family neighbours. In Loughborough we still hope to raise money but events will be very different.

The Covid-19 outbreak has shown us that our futures are bound more tightly together than ever before. In times of crisis it is the poorest, most vulnerable and marginalised who are at greatest risk. Christian Aid anticipates that some of the world's poorest countries, with the weakest health systems and most vulnerable people, will suffer a crippling loss of life and the economic impact on them will be huge. So this year the outreach of Christian Aid to the poorest and marginalised communities is even more important than ever before.

Last September Anne and Martyn Speight from Loughborough had the privilege of seeing some of the work Christian Aid does through their local partners in Zambia. They visited a number of projects and came home having seen how climate change impacts on poor and weak communities. These are people who have very limited resources with nothing in reserve and no spares for when things breakdown. Many have no fixed income or ready access to health services and, particularly through HIV, have compromised immune systems.



Anne and Martyn have fond memories of the people they met in Zambia and often wonder how they are coping with Covid-19. One of their visits was to see the Grace Group at Shikombo (a rural village 125 miles north of the capital Lusaka, and 30 miles on unsurfaced roads away from the

nearest regional town). Here the villagers sang and danced a welcome and enthusiastically talked about their Credit Union saving scheme which they were using to fund various improvements. This was part of a 'Make Agriculture a Business' project sponsored by Christian Aid with the aim of growing additional crops and securing better prices for what was being taken to local markets. To do this they were installing irrigation pumps and tanks and a cold store (to hold back produce until the selling price is better).



Tomatoes, which were in season last September, were being sold in markets and on the roadside. The cost of a bag being 15 kwacha but when they are in short supply they can actually fetch as much as 250 kwacha!

Comments heard from the Grace Group included:-

- Michael: "It used to be difficult to save money before, but now it is possible to save and buy bigger items and use the money in a better way".
- Philip: "With the savings I could buy 4 bags of fertiliser, which I couldn't do before. So now I am ready to use it for the fields when the rain begins".
- Elline: "I have a child in school. I used to fail to pay her school fees before I joined this group. This does not happen now".
- Joseph: "My wife was keen on this project but I did not think it was worthwhile. I now realise that she was right and I was wrong!"

Whilst everything was so positive last September the Covid-19 situation will have a big impact. In the village water is drawn from a shared pump. The handle of which is metal! With water not coming out of a tap, safe hand washing will not be easy and social distancing virtually impossible!

During Christian Aid Week 2020 prayers and monetary gifts will be very important.

What is on offer locally is:-

- A Just Giving page specifically for Loughborough donations, see www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Lough-C-Aid
- An opportunity for all, from the comfort of your own home, to follow the route of the sponsored walk and to answer quiz questions about the places you pass.
- Join a Zoom video conference where Anne and Martyn will talk about the projects they visited in Zambia and will welcome any questions.

Further details about these and what Christian Aid is offering nationally will be provided in church notices. For quiz questions and information on how to join the video conference about Zambia contact Anne or Martyn by phone on 01509 213137 or by email at martyn.speight@ntlworld.com. Also make contact if you would like to donate by cheque.



National resources and information is on the Christian Aid Web site, see www.christianaid.org.uk

Anne and Martyn Speight

