QUOTES

‘I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do something that I can do.’
Helen Keller

‘If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality.’
Desmond Tutu

‘All Christians are political, whether they realise it or not. But especially when they don’t realise it.’
Ken Leech

“When we engage in struggle on behalf of others, especially when both we and the other are both empty-handed, then we become party to a cascade of grace.”
Ann Morisy

‘Society will change, not by lots of individuals becoming nicer, but by people recognising and more and more deeply, how much they depend on one another and how much they are impoverished by the poverty of their neighbour.’
Rowan Williams

The greatest challenge of the day is: how to bring about a revolution of the heart, a revolution which has to start with each one of us.”
Dorothy Day

“It is incumbent upon every Christian congregation to ask: Who uses these buildings? Are they used to express the acceptance of Christ for the marginalised and alienated impoverished by the poverty of their neighbour?’
Dorothy Day

‘Jesus did not say that the whole world should go to church. Essentially He said that the whole world should go to the whole world.’
Greg Laurie

RESOURCES

A question for your church: How is your church and its members a blessing to the wider community, and how do you support and inspire one another? See www.amonthofsundays.org.uk for ideas.

The Mission in the World group of the Diocese of Oxford is part of the Board of Mission. It has within it staff and volunteers with skills and experience in a range of issues: rural, urban, work and economic life, disability, the spiritual care of older people, mental health and wellbeing, environment, pastoral care, community development, care for families, international relations and world development. For support on any of these issues contact alison.webster@oxford.anglican.org.

BOOKS

• Journeying Out: A New Approach to Christian Mission

• God Has A Dream: A Vision of Hope for Our Times
  Desmond Tutu, Rider, 2005

• You Are Mine: Reflections on Who We Are
  Alison Webster, SPCK, 2009

• Jesus and Politics: Confronting the Powers

• Making a World of Difference: Christian Reflections on Disability

• Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger

• God-shaped Mission: Theological and Practical Perspectives from the Rural Church
  Alan Smith, SPCK, 2002.

• For Creed and Creation: A Simple Guide to Greening your Church

MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD

A SIMPLE GUIDE

Being part of God’s story means being part of a process that is beyond us and much bigger than we are. It is to be part of the transformation of all things under God, part of God’s mission. In the Bible, we are shown what this process is. It’s about liberation for those who are oppressed, healing for those hurt and in pain, and release from the many things that hold us captive and prevent us from embracing life in all its fullness. That’s why Christians are a community of communities called to work tirelessly to make the world a better place.

PRAYER

God of passion,
You sent the one you love most to be wholly with us.
To feel all that we feel: joy, pain, hunger, thirst, desire, love, anger
And a compassion that broke his heart again and again
And he, in turn, sends us – in partnership with the Holy Spirit –
To do even greater things.
Help us to give ourselves wholly to what you require:
To act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with you.

Amen

Alison Webster
Social Responsibility Adviser
Diocese of Oxford
**WHY SHOULD WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE?**

The Hebrew Scriptures, foundational to Christianity, show God working through his prophets to defend the vulnerable (those who are poor, indebted, widows and orphans) against the powerful. There is a biblical imperative to work for social justice and to ask why such injustice exists. Christians believe that all human beings are made in the image of God, and are equal before God. All forms of discrimination and oppression are to be combated.

Jesus taught that his Jewish heritage could be summed up in one commandment: to love God and to love one’s neighbour as oneself (see Luke 10: 25 – 37). He also said that when we meet the needs of others (e.g. those who need food, clothing, or visiting in prison), we are doing it for him.

Jesus met people in their pain, and offered them what they needed (such as physical healing, social acceptance). This was how he communicated what God is like. He prioritised those that respectable members of society rejected – women, tax collectors, and those affected by physical and mental ill health. Christians aim to emulate Jesus.

The earliest Christians lived as a community where none were in need because they shared all things in common. This was the reason for the faith’s numerical growth (Acts 2: 44 – 47).

**HOW CAN WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE?**

Throughout history, Christians have tried to meet needs in their communities. Here are just a few examples from our contemporary world of how we can and do Make a Difference:

- **Raising funds** to combat poverty, and promote health and education at home and abroad
- **Listening** to those in distress and offering emotional support through confidential helplines like the Samaritans
- **Supporting** those who need food and shelter, especially in the cold winter months, by making church buildings available as night shelters, and setting up food banks
- **Protecting children** from the potentially damaging effects of family breakdown, by running drop-in centres and mediation facilities (e.g. Parents and Children Together (PACT))
- **Initiating projects** to mitigate the effects of global warming by cutting carbon footprints
- **Being on city streets late at night**, preventing alcohol-fuelled violence and physical injury (e.g. street pastors)
- **Working with those impoverished** by unemployment, refugee status, sexual exploitation and addictions (e.g. Christians Against Poverty, credit unions)
- **Volunteering knowledge and skills** to assist others – e.g. advising with debt and legal issues (e.g. Citizens Advice)
- **Participating in citizens’ movements for change**, and in local and national politics (e.g. Make Poverty History, Fairtrade campaigns).

**ADDRESSING INJUSTICE**

Helder Camara famously said, ‘When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why they are poor, they call me a communist.’ Hand in hand with meeting human need in the world, Christians also believe in discovering the structural causes of that need. Injustice is not accidental, but has human causes that must be understood and addressed.

For instance, billions of people across the world live on less than a dollar a day, and are killed by lack of clean water, basic healthcare and education. What’s wrong with the global economic system so that this is the case, and how can we change it?

The poorest and most vulnerable people in the world are those most likely to suffer the effects of environmental catastrophe, such as through ‘freak’ weather events, but they have done least to cause them. How can this unfairness be rectified?

Fear of difference and otherness enables powerful people to define those with less power. So white people have defined black, and men have defined women. Racism and sexism are therefore structured into many human institutions (e.g. politics, policing, the Church). How can we better understand this, and undermine it?

In a world where wars are fought to promote the interests of its most powerful countries, how can we work for peace and security?