

Side by Side

The CAFOD magazine
Spring 2026



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We are the official aid agency of the Catholic Church in England and Wales.

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Front cover photograph:

Rejoice harvesting crops on floating gardens, South Sudan.

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Hello and welcome to the spring issue of CAFOD's Side by Side magazine.

As Easter approaches, I'm filled with deep joy and hope for new beginnings. I remind myself of how your support shares this hope with our neighbours all around the world.

When I visited South Sudan last year, I saw firsthand the incredible impact your donations make to our neighbours. Families who had fled conflict in Sudan are now facing severe floods in South Sudan. Yet, they have found an incredible solution – gardens that float on water! Thanks to your generous support, families have the tools to build these gardens and grow food even during floods. These special gardens are now being used in other countries affected by floods like Bangladesh. You can go to the centre page to see what they look like.

As we approach the joyful celebration of Jesus' resurrection at Easter, I want to share my love and hope for the time ahead. Whether you're spending Easter with family, friends or your parish community, I hope you find time to rest and celebrate.

Inside this issue, you'll discover how families celebrate Easter in Bangladesh, how Maria's family from Ukraine have a new beginning in Bulgaria, and how our community here in the UK are making a difference together from The Big Lent Walk to the London Marathon.

This season of new beginnings reminds us to renew our hope and feel inspired by the incredible, life-changing work we see all around the world.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christine". Below the signature is a horizontal line that ends in an arrow pointing to the right.

Christine Allen
CAFOD Director

Thank you for going **BIG this Lent**

Thank you to the thousands who laced up your trainers (or pulled on your wellies!) and got out there come rain or shine to take on The Big Lent Walk. Throughout Lent so many of you strode across England and Wales to raise vital funds and help give poverty the boot – from parish priests to primary school pupils, dogwalkers, grandmothers, and even celebrities like TV's Harry Clark cheered you on!

“Everyone has been so enthusiastic about stepping outside and doing their bit,” said Neil Roper, who leads CAFOD's fundraising events. “I'd like to say a big ‘thank you’ to all of you, you've really made a difference!”

Whether you walked yourself, organised a team or sponsored

a walker, thank you so much for supporting The Big Lent Walk. Next year we want to go even bigger!

But for now, put your feet up and enjoy a well-earned rest, safe in the knowledge that you've helped our neighbours who need life-saving water all around the world. And we'll see you next year!

Thanks to the money that walkers have raised, our neighbours like Waré have safe water to drink. See how Waré is thriving with support from you on page 21.



Thank you!

You've raised
£98,000
so far!



“To stay warm here you need a river of fuel.”

Mariam, Lebanon.

Last Advent, you listened to Mariam's words from Lebanon. A place that gets bitingly cold in winter, forcing families like Mariam's to choose between food or heating. And you acted with incredible kindness.

Thank you for giving with compassion to your neighbours. Your donations have helped heat homes in Lebanon and beyond through the freezing winter weather. The warmth of your gifts makes a lasting impact on your neighbours.



This page: Mariam heating her home

World Gifts: With you the season of joy continues



When many gifts from Christmas are sadly now in landfills, yours are out there making a real difference to your neighbours' lives!

Thank you to everyone who bought a World Gift at Christmas. Whether you bought a gift of life-saving water or a flourishing vegetable garden – each and every one of them are now helping families thrive.

Thank you for continuing to choose hope.

“Help is not only material – but it can also be spiritual.” **How you shared warmth with Maria in Ukraine**

Imagine your family home – a place of laughter and love – becoming a place of fear and danger. This is Maria's story.

In the winter of 2024, Maria from Ukraine shared her story with us. She told us about the difficulties her young family faced when they were forced to move twice due to conflict.

“For the second time, we left our home and went. There were 23 checkpoints, we were made to strip to

our underwear, put our hands behind our heads at gunpoint while they checked us. It was distressing,” she told us.

After a long journey, her family arrived safely in a new town for a new beginning. The community there welcomed them and helped them find a house. Together, they helped make the house into a liveable home. The stove was under rubble, so they built this from scratch, the ceiling was crumbling so they restored it with help from neighbours.

You were also there as a good neighbour – helping Maria’s family

Left: Maria and her daughter, Yuliia, are now safe in Bulgaria

Below: Maria in Ukraine



survive the harsh winter. With your support, our local Church partner supplied firewood to keep Maria's family warm.

“Thanks to that support, we were able not only to stay warm but also to cook our food. It was a comfort to hear the fire crackling in the stove – and to feel the warmth of the people who made it possible for us to feel physical warmth again. But even more than that, we felt emotional warmth, and we are deeply grateful for that,” Maria recalls.

Now Maria and her family have moved once again for safety to live with relatives in Bulgaria. Here they can start a new beginning away from the conflict.

Starting again in a new place is not easy. Maria tells us, “Right now, we are

facing challenges with integration: new people, a new language, a new culture. It's always hard to adjust.”

She has been working with our local Church partner and community for support and has joined in groups where she can meet people and talk over any issues. “These gatherings were important not only for the children but also for us adults. They gave us a sense of connection, a space to feel free, to draw the world we carry inside.” she tells us.

A better world needs all of us, and you play a crucial part in Maria's journey. You have shown her that she's not alone. “Help is not only material – but it can also be spiritual, too. And for that, I am especially grateful,” Maria recalls.

One day, Maria hopes that her family will be able to safely return home.

CAFOD'S WORLD GIFTS



Hop into Easter with gifts that give back!

This Easter fill hearts – not just baskets. Celebrate with thoughtful gifts that bring joy to your loved ones and change lives around the world.

Choose an e-card or print at home when ordering online to receive your gift immediately.



Explore our full range today.
cafod.org.uk/worldgifts



Five reasons to campaign

Campaigning is about using your voice to ask for change. That can be signing a petition, sending a message to your MP or speaking to your parish about issues you care about. So, whether you're an avid campaigner or new to it, we have some inspiration to help you speak up for what's right.

Campaigning has changed the world before – and it can again

In the 2000s campaigners against global poverty really felt we might be reaching a mountain-top moment. People had strong confidence that world leaders were ready to tackle poverty and injustice across the Global South.

Jubilee 2000 had caught the attention of the world's most powerful figures especially when the G8 in Birmingham in 1998 put

unpayable debts in low-income countries on their agenda after an incredible 70,000 people gathered in the city.

Thanks to support from campaigners and collective activism across the Global South, \$130 billion of unfair debt on countries was cancelled. This freed money to be spent on schools, hospitals and roads in low-income countries.



Speak up!



2 Global challenges have grown but so has our responsibility to respond

Nowadays, it can be harder to know who and what to trust. There is so much information everywhere, and many of us feel bombarded - in our inboxes, via social media, podcasts and more. As campaigners, how can we be heard?

Campaigning through a charity that shares your values can help your voice be heard through a trusted source. You will also be adding your voice to people who believe in what we do. Many choose to campaign with CAFOD because we are people of hope and faith.

3 Hope moves us to action

Campaigning for change has been a vital part of our mission for 40 years. Since our first campaigns in the 1980s we've committed to challenging the structures that cause poverty.

And we've had many mountain-top moments! These include persuading governments to invest in safe water, helping to shift climate legislation, supporting local partners as they lobby for better rights and calling successfully for debt relief.

4 Every action, every voice raised helps

Many of the best victories throughout history have taken years. A better world is always within reach, and each of us has power and agency to influence real change.

When the struggle feels too much, we focus on the specific challenges

we can change. The global food system may be run by money and power... but we can fight for farmers' rights to choose, manage and share their own seeds. 54 countries may be in a debt crisis while private banks profit... but we can push for legislation to limit those profits. Low-income countries may be disproportionately suffering from climate change... but we can campaign for the funding they need to protect themselves and prepare for the future.

5 Small steps create big changes

This year we're focusing on the big issues of debt, food and climate. These major drivers of poverty are connected, and they're why your voice matters. Look out for messages from us inviting you to take small but meaningful actions.

You could sign a petition in church, tell your MP about global poverty and ask for policy change, or you could come to an event with us - we'll invite you a few times a year by email. So, sign up if you're interested!

Campaigning is about adding your voice to others who believe in change. Despite the challenges, it's a beautiful movement to be part of, because a better world needs all of us.



Act



Sign up to hear about how you can make change happen.

Mother of mercy



This May, in collective intercessions and private prayers, we Catholics look to Mary, the Mother of our Lord. Drawing inspiration from the mother's care she embodies, we are also inspired by her own prayerfulness and purity of heart.

All around the world, you walk alongside mothers and babies at their most vulnerable moments. In both tangible giving and through prayer, the friendship of people they've never met surrounds them – the practical friendship of kindness.

Motherhood in hardship

Imagine you're having your first baby, and your intense labour pains start. But instead of going to hospital, you trek a rocky path to fetch litres of water. Finally, you arrive at the clinic carrying the heavy load, to only find there's no electricity. Sadly, you must give birth in the dark by the flicker of candlelight.

This is how Yeukai, a health worker, became a mother in rural Zimbabwe.

"We used to fetch water during labour pains, so that at least we would have water to drink and water to wash our linen even after delivery," Yeukai tells me.

"Just imagine, with labour pains, trying to look for water." Yeukai

Although she loves being a mother, the memory of her first birth is painful:

“We also used to go to the clinic with candles...it was very difficult for nurses to carry out delivery procedures using torches and candles. I don't want to remember those experiences.”

“In remembrance of his mercies”

What Yeukayi’s clinic needed, for both water and lighting, was power. Your generous donations funded the installation of solar panels for electricity, and a solar-powered water pump. Now, staff and patients have water through taps in the clinic itself.

“But now, the situation is different,” Yeukayi says. “Thanks to you for installing that solar water pump, and the solar panels for the clinic’s lighting. It means we have water at any

convenient time to wash the linen, for mothers to clean themselves, and also during the delivery.

“It’s now very easy for the nurses, due to your support.”

Like Our Lady, every mother longs for the same things: a safe birth, drinkable water, nourishing food, and hope for her child’s future. Your support helps make life-saving work possible with mothers and babies.



Give



Support mothers and babies with a donation to our Marian Appeal.

cafod.org.uk/Mary

Opposite: Yeukayi, health worker, Zimbabwe
Below: Mother and baby in Zimbabwe

Full of grace

Inspired by Mary, full of grace, we pray for the courage to seek God's grace working in our lives;

the strength to be attentive to the radical truth of the Gospel;

the persistence to put our faith, hope and love into action daily in the world.

Holy Mary, Mother of God and full of grace, pray for us.

Stephen Davies/CAFOD

You can find more Marian prayers like this one at cafod.org.uk/marian-prayers



Celebrity voices: Who's speaking up?

We are incredibly grateful to our high-profile supporters who fundraise and encourage others to do so – committing to a better world. Here are some of the highlights they helped make possible.



Unmasking Injustice

CAFOD Ambassador and actor Alex Macqueen starred in *Meet the World's Loan Sharks*, a 90-second satirical film made with Richard Curtis' *Project Everyone* to shed light on the global debt crisis ahead of the G20 summit.

Standing Up for Sudan

In June 2025, CAFOD Ambassador Delia Smith joined actors Joanne Froggatt, Will Poulter and 50 other high-profile figures to call on the government to maintain its commitments and stand with those hit hardest by the worsening humanitarian crisis in Sudan.



Left to right:
Alex Macqueen,
Delia Smith,
Adeniké Adewale,
Harry Clark.

Running and Singing to Raise Hope

Adeniké Adewale, singer and star of *Whitney Houston: Queen of the Night*, ran her first London Marathon in support of CAFOD. “CAFOD is always there in a crisis,” she said, “and I’m so proud to be part of that.”*

Then in October, at the Raising Hope Conference in Rome, Adeniké took to the stage once more, this time singing in front of Pope Leo XIV to celebrate ten years since *Laudato Si’*.

*Watch out for this year's star runner – Love is Blind UK contestant Benaiah Grunewald-Brydie!

The Big Lent Walk

This Lent, Series 2 *Traitors* winner, Harry Clark, encouraged thousands of you to take on The Big Lent Walk!

“Walking does definitely help you deepen your faith,” he tells us.

Thank You

Our high-profile ambassadors are committing to real and lasting change! Together, we are achieving a better world for all.



Find out more about our celebrities.





Easter growth and abundance

By Caroline Stanton, Theology Team

In my grandma's house was a framed cross stitch design with the words of the poet Dorothy Frances Gurney, 'One is nearer God's heart in a garden, than anywhere else on earth.' It was a saying that made sense when you saw the care and love my grandma had poured into the earth. As a child, I loved to spend time in her garden; it was full of life, abundance and peace.

Sadly, I never inherited my grandma's green fingers, but I have been inspired by the flourishing gardens featured in our Lent appeal. Planted by our neighbours around the world, these communities are finding innovative, sustainable ways of growing food even in the harshest conditions.

"Supposing him to be the gardener..."

In the season of Easter, we hear the story of Mary Magdalene's encounter with the risen Jesus, who she at first believes to be the gardener.

It seems at first like a simple case of mistaken identity but perhaps, in fact, she is not wrong.

There are echoes of Eden here in the resurrection garden. In the beginning,

God invites Adam and Eve to nurture the garden he has created. Jesus is the new Adam tending a new creation. Just as Mary recognises Jesus when he calls her by name, Jesus is calling our names and inviting us to join him.

Dig deep

In this Easter season, let's trust that the risen Jesus is at work in us too, planting seeds and lovingly nurturing us as he creates space for us to grow.

And let's respond to his invitation to dig deep and commit ourselves to treasuring our world, sharing our gifts generously and witnessing to the new life, joy and peace of the resurrection.



Give



This Easter, please share your joy with our sisters and brothers around the world – you can scan the QR code to give.

Above: Cross stitch design in Caroline's grandma's house

Keeping hope afloat

This Lent, you've heard about our global neighbours who are suffering from climate change. From relentless floods to devastating droughts, extreme weather is destroying crops. The challenges may be different, but sadly, the result is the same – families go hungry.

Thanks to your support, families around the world can grow enough food to eat.

South Sudan

Rejoice fled Sudan's conflict with her family, only to face extreme flooding that destroyed her farmland and farm animals. But with your support, she's growing food once again with floating gardens that survive rising waters.

“I was able to plant some vegetables, which I sold. It helped support my family during the flood.”

Rejoice, South Sudan.

Zimbabwe

Near the border of Mozambique, farmers face hunger but for a very different reason: drought. No water, no crops, no food to give your family. Farmers are overcoming this challenge

with your support using smart water systems in vegetable gardens.

Hamunyare, a grandmother and farmer in Zimbabwe, shares the importance of the gardens:

“The garden has helped me because when I sell my produce, I can pay for my grandchildren's school fees.”

Bangladesh

Here support like yours helps families farm despite the floods. With floating gardens, our neighbours are now growing food to eat and sell.

“My parents work on this floating bed, and I also help them alongside my studies.” Bayezid, Bangladesh.

What do floating gardens look like? Turn over to find out!

Left to right: Rejoice, Hamunyare, Bayezid.



Picture this



This page: Floating gardens, Bangladesh, growing vegetables on water. This Lent, you helped make projects like these possible.



A year on: How you have helped Lokho in Kenya

This Lent, you supported parents in growing food for their families in special gardens. But how does your support help long term? One year on, see how last year's Lent donations continue to help Lokho's family.

This Lent, you are stepping up once again to help your neighbours thrive.

But how did you help your neighbours in Lent 2025? And where are they now? Let's take a look back at the extraordinary work that you made happen.

Who shared their story last year?

Lokho shared her story of resilience with you from Marsabit, Kenya. You heard about the devastating drought where she lost everything including her

cattle. It became hard for her to feed her young children.

But despite losing everything she still had hope.

So, with the support of local experts whose work you fund, she and her community found an incredible solution: shade nets. These work as the opposite to greenhouses – they protect growing vegetables from the hot sun.

A better world needs all of us. And when Lokho shared her story with you, you listened. Your generous Lenten



This page: Lokho and her child thriving in Kenya with support from neighbours like you

donations are at work right now, helping our neighbours like Lokho to feed their families today and tomorrow.

One year on, where is Lokho now?

Lokho is still growing kale and other vegetables in her garden using the shade nets. The local experts like Wakare, that your donations have supported, are continuing to work closely with Lokho's community. A year later, Lokho can now afford to pay for her child's transport to school:

"At the peak of the drought, I could not take them to school. From the income generated through poultry and shade nets, my child can now access education," she tells us.

Her community continues to grow vegetables, save money and support one another. Isacko, director of our Church partner in Marsabit, shares:

"They've grown quite a substantial harvest to feed the families and were able to sell some vegetables to the nearby market."

The road to recovery will be long after this community lost everything to the drought in 2023. But with your support, they are not walking it alone – you are walking alongside them.

You can step up once again

You can work with families across Bangladesh, Zimbabwe and South Sudan as they build gardens resilient to climate change.

It's not too late to support farmers like Rejoice in South Sudan

who lost everything. Your donation can help her build a floating garden – that floats on water – so she can grow enough food for her family even during floods.



Give



Scan the QR code to make your Lenten donation today.

Your Harvest update

At Harvest, you heard Waré's story. She had to walk miles each day to find water – spending an exhausting five hours walking. But you were a good neighbour to Waré, and your donations mean she was able to build a water tank in her village. These tanks collect rainwater and filter it into safe drinking water.

Her tank is starting to fill up. Now Waré can collect safe drinking water for her and her family. Together, you helped Waré lead a life not just about survival but one where her family can thrive.

Thank you for donating to build a better world for our neighbours.



Right: Waré

Easter in Bangladesh

By Bristi Suzan Gomes, wife of our incredible volunteer Amit



Living as a citizen of a minority faith in Bangladesh has given me a unique perspective on religious celebrations. In a Muslim-majority country, Christian

festivals like Christmas and Easter draw curiosity and respect from people of other faiths. Easter is a quieter, more personal celebration with deep spiritual meaning. Bangladesh is a land of many traditions, and each region expresses its faith through local customs.

I remember my childhood Ash Wednesdays, when our school took us to church to receive ashes on our foreheads. Those ashes remind Christians that we come from dust and will one day return to dust. Afterwards, I would explain to friends from other religions what the mark meant, feeling proud.

The 40 days of Lent were a time for restraint, kindness, and self-discipline. Every Friday, I went to church to take part in the “Way of the Cross,” reflecting on Jesus’ pain and sacrifice. During these days, we avoided meat and lived simply. Palm Sunday brought quiet excitement. The final week, from Holy Thursday to Easter Sunday, was filled with prayers, family gatherings, and local tradition

In our village, people prepared sweet rice cakes with molasses and

milk, prayed together, and shared food with neighbours. On Holy Thursday, we stayed up late under the moonlight, playing and talking with friends, enjoying freedom and joy. Good Friday was solemn, as we listened to Christ’s suffering and felt the weight of sacrifice and faith. Holy Saturday carried a gentle feeling of waiting and hope. Early in the morning, homes were cleaned for Easter, and that evening, during the vigil, the priest blessed water and fire. We took a few drops home. Holding candles lit from the sacred flame, we walked through the cool night air, feeling peace and renewal.

Easter in Bangladesh comes with the warmth of summer. Simple foods like yogurt, flattened rice, and puffed rice are shared among families and neighbours. Though not a national holiday, the day carries great meaning. Easter is both a celebration and a moment of reflection. It reminds us of sacrifice, resurrection, and new beginnings. It also gives us a chance to meet family and friends and be thankful for each other.



Set up a Candlelight Fund in memory of a loved one

Candlelight Funds are a beautiful way to create a loving and lasting tribute.

If you would like a thoughtful way to celebrate the life of a loved one – you can set up a Candlelight Fund.

Through a personalised Candlelight Fund, you can give in memory of your loved one to help create a better world.



To find out more about Candlelight Funds you can contact me, Maggie by phone on **020 7095 5348** or email **candlelight@cafod.org.uk**



cafod.org.uk/candlelight



The Bareham family have a Candlelight Fund for husband and father Leslie, who was a CAFOD parish volunteer.

His daughter Bernadette shared: “Dad taught us that giving is not just about making a donation, it’s about making a difference. His Candlelight Fund is a wonderful way to perpetuate Dad’s involvement in the work he cared so deeply about, structures that cause poverty.”



Above: Leslie and his show-stopping dahlias

A Gift for a better future

By Abigail McMillan, Legacies team



I spoke to Ann who has supported CAFOD for many years and is an active volunteer in her parish in Milton Keynes. When I asked why she chose to leave a gift in her Will, she reflected on what matters most to her.

“I give what I can now, but the gift in my Will is a chance for me to give a larger sum for CAFOD to use in the way that is most needed at the time. I believe it’s a way of investing in a better future.”

Like you, Ann wants to make a lasting difference. She shares a belief we all hold: that every person has the right to live with dignity and respect. This conviction shaped her decision. Through a gift to her global neighbours pledged in her Will, she is helping to build a fairer world.

Did you know that gifts in Wills fund over a third of the support CAFOD provides to communities facing the injustice of poverty?

This Eastertide, you too can make a gift that lasts for generations. Our Free Will Offer allows you to write or update your Will at no cost, helping you care

for the people and causes closest to your heart.

“It’s about dignity and respect for everyone. It’s about justice and equality – about not only alleviating poverty but questioning and challenging the causes of poverty and injustice.”

We are deeply grateful to the many supporters like Ann who have chosen to include a gift to CAFOD in their Will, enabling us to continue supporting communities in building a better world.

To take up our Free Will Offer or learn more about leaving a gift in your Will, please visit cafod.org.uk/Gift-in-Will or call **020 7095 5367**.



Above: Ann with other parish volunteers in Milton Keynes. Pictured left to right: Rachel, Deacon Oliver, Ann, Deborah, Queen Elizabeth, Obi and Ermin.

Top left: Abigail from Legacies team

Celebrating a remarkable Jubilee Year for Catholic schools



A powerful moment of renewal for children and young people

The Jubilee Year was a powerful moment of renewal for Catholic education in England and Wales.

Throughout 2025, hundreds of thousands of children and young people boldly embraced the call from Pope Francis to become 'Pilgrims of Hope'. 1,860 Jubilee banners were displayed on school railings across England and Wales, declaring pupils were "working together for a better world," and over 1,000 schools took the Jubilee Pledge, making a long-term commitment to building a better world.

The Jubilee Year empowered young people to see themselves as global citizens and change-makers, rooted in Gospel values with over 400 schools opting to learn about the global debt crisis and how to advocate for change.

The Vatican recognised the extraordinary response of children and young people in England and Wales

CAFOD, alongside a group of pupils and educators, were proud to be invited to Rome to share the amazing response to the Jubilee Year with educators from

around the world, at the Vatican Jubilee of Education celebration.

Schools came together on 21 November to celebrate all that was achieved. They joined the World Youth Sunday livestream, taking part in moments of thanksgiving, reflection, and encounter.

The impact of a phenomenal year of action

The impact of the Jubilee Year is ongoing, serving as a launchpad for long-term transformation in how Catholic schools live out their mission. Already, hundreds of schools are putting Catholic Social Teaching into action and fundraising as part of The Big Lent Walk to support communities around the world.

We're excited to join schools as they continue to build a legacy of hope beyond the Jubilee Year.

Jubilee for Schools was supported by the Catholic Education Service, CAFOD, Caritas Social Action Network and the Catholic Youth Ministry Federation.

Above: Young people from All Saints Catholic Academy Mansfield



This page: Bernadette with the mushrooms she's grown thanks to projects you support

Democratic Republic of Congo: Church workers hold on to hope

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), our neighbours are facing desperate shortages of food, shelter and medicine as global aid cuts take their toll. More than 21 million people in the DRC – over seven times the population of Wales – urgently need life-saving essentials such as food, according to the UN.

With your generous donations, our local Church partners continue to support families, even when many other international agencies have been forced to withdraw.

The Church remains a lifeline

Despite the enormous challenges, the Catholic Church remains a lifeline,

present in every province of the country. Through our local Church partner Caritas Congo and diocesan Caritas, and alongside other church networks, families are getting the help they need. With your support, they run health centres, schools food, non-food items and emergency shelters.

“We have not left the DRC, and we will not do so. We risk our lives every day to bring aid and protection to our communities,” said Abbé Edouard Makimba Milambo, executive secretary of Caritas Congo and one of CAFOD partner in DRC.

Never giving up hope – Bernadette's story

At the heart of this devastating crisis are people fighting to survive. Bernadette and her family once made their living farming in their village. But when conflict reached her community, they lost everything.

"They burned a lot of houses. They killed a lot of people, and so we ran away," she told us.

Pregnant at the time, Bernadette walked for six days before reaching the city of Goma. Life there was full of difficult challenges, yet she never gave up hope.

"I persevered and continued with the struggle, so that my children can have a better life," she told us.

With your donations, Bernadette began growing mushrooms to eat and sell. The income helped her rebuild her life and support her children.

Now, she makes charcoal pots – a small business she started with the earnings from her mushroom harvests. And thanks to your donations, training courses like the one Bernadette attended, in mushroom farming, sewing and carpentry, are back up and running.

Working together in the face of aid cuts

"While aid budgets may be shrinking, the scale of human suffering is growing. We cannot turn our backs while millions go hungry. The Church is there, on the frontlines, and we must stand with them," said Christine Allen, CAFOD's Director.

DRC is facing one of its worst crises in years and critical funding gaps are

severely hampering humanitarian efforts. Help is needed urgently.

You are doing just that – your donations are with local Church partners helping families through the crisis.



"Words must now turn into action, into funding that reaches local organisations saving lives every day." Bernard Balibuno, CAFOD's country director in Kinshasa.

A better world needs all of us

Join Abbé, Christine and Bernard in calling on governments not to overlook the crisis in DRC. Let's make sure support flows directly to local community groups who know their people best.

Above: Bernard Balibuno



Act



Scan to tell your MP that you oppose aid cuts.

Running with purpose: **#TeamCAFOD takes on the London Marathon**

On Sunday 26 April, 35 extraordinary **#TeamCAFOD** runners will line up at the start of the London Marathon. Our vibrant team, coming from different parts of England and Wales, share one powerful thing in common: a commitment to show solidarity with our global neighbours facing poverty, conflict, and the climate crisis.

Training for transformation

#TeamCAFOD runner Maria, from Plymouth, captures why this matters: "Running the London Marathon for CAFOD isn't just about finishing the race – it's about making a difference to people's lives along the way. Every mile helps bring hope and change to those who need it most."

The dedication of our marathon team is inspiring. Some are experienced marathon runners, while others have never run further than a 5K. Our team includes teachers and students, parents squeezing training around school runs, and we're especially thrilled to welcome Benaiah Grunewald-Brydie from Love is Blind UK! We're also delighted that our corporate partner CPL Aromas is returning once again – they've been running with CAFOD for over 20 years.

Together, **#TeamCAFOD** has set an ambitious fundraising target of £130,000.



Above: Chloe and Kellie from CPL Aromas

Join us on the journey

As our runners enter the final weeks of training, please keep them in your prayers. Applications for London Marathon 2027 open on 26 April – marathon day itself!



Act



Scan the QR code to discover how you can join **#TeamCAFOD**

Signs of life in spring

Just as Easter is when we celebrate new life and resurrection, one of the greatest joys of spring is watching the world around us come back to life after the long, cold winter. Here are some of our favourite things to look out for (and point out to little ones!) on your spring walks.

Eggs (not chocolate ones!)

Lots of animals are born in spring, when the weather's mild and food is plentiful. Keep an eye out on the ground for broken eggshells from newly hatched chicks or in ponds for bubbly frogspawn.

Blossom

Not only is blossom beautiful, transforming the world we see every day with its beautiful colours and scents, but it is a reminder to cherish every moment. Like the cherry blossom, whose beauty lasts only a few

weeks, we must seize every day and cherish it as a gift from God.

Nature's bounty

Spring is also the start of foraging season! Keep a nose out for the scent of fresh cut onions or garlic in the air, then look for clusters of small, white, star-shaped flowers. You might find wild garlic! The leaves can be used to make a tasty pesto, but take care – it looks very similar to the poisonous *Lords and Ladies* plant. Never eat a wild plant unless you're 100 per cent sure of its identity.



Schools thrive alongside traditional pot making in Nigeria

Clay pot making has long been a tradition in Kwara State, Nigeria. For generations, potters have passed their skills and knowledge to the next generation.

Each pot is crafted by hand using local materials. These businesses play a vital role in the community – providing essential pots in homes across the region – and are often run by women.

A potter here works around 15 hours a day, crafting up to 12 pots, which brings in the equivalent of £3. The skill, time and effort that the potters put into their craft often leave them with an income that just covers food costs. This forces many parents to make the difficult decision between putting dinner on the table and paying for school fees.

Within the community, teachers run lessons in 12 primary and secondary schools, yet 1,960 children are unable to attend. This is partly due to parents being unable to afford school fees despite working exhausting hours. But they also face the problem of classrooms being unsuitable to teach in dilapidated buildings lacking desks, boards and chairs.

The community were working towards getting children to school when they met a supporter like you, Emmanuel. Emmanuel lives in Hallam but was working in Nigeria at the time. He spoke to the potters about the difficulties they faced. Then, in his local parish here in the UK, he met our team, who joined the community in supporting the changes they were making.

With your support, the community are now working alongside Emmanuel to make real and lasting change.

“The families are leading locally rooted responses to the challenges they face, by coming up with a project to renovate the classrooms so their children can study.”

Emmanuel

The community have brought in local experts to work with them on renovating the classrooms, provide safe drinking water at schools and

support with school essentials like books and uniforms. This supports teachers and parents in getting children to school to learn.

“This integrated strategy will empower the community to build a resilient, self-sustaining future where everyone has the chance to thrive.”

Kayode, CAFOD’s Head of Region.

Alongside Emmanuel, we believe in the dignity of every person and in the right of our sisters and brothers to shape their own lives and futures. Your support stands with communities as they lead their own work – recognising local resourcefulness and supporting lasting change that grows from shared effort, care, and commitment.

With your support, these potters and mothers can now continue their hard work whilst their children get the vital education every child deserves, because a better world needs all of us.



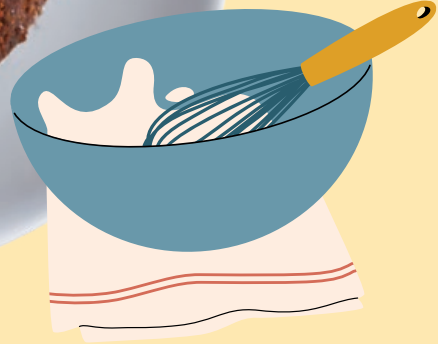
Become an ambassador



Scan to find out how you can become an Empowering Futures ambassador to help

communities like this one.

Left to right: Jimoh Busari, Abdulraman Jamiu, Uko, David Omotosho, Mary, Hon. Suleiman Abdulahi



Make your own Easter Simnel Cake!

Nutritional information

per 100g

410kcal

Energy

17g

Fat

6.6g

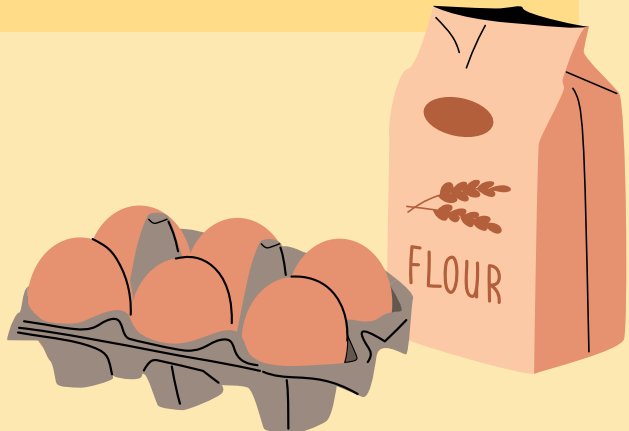
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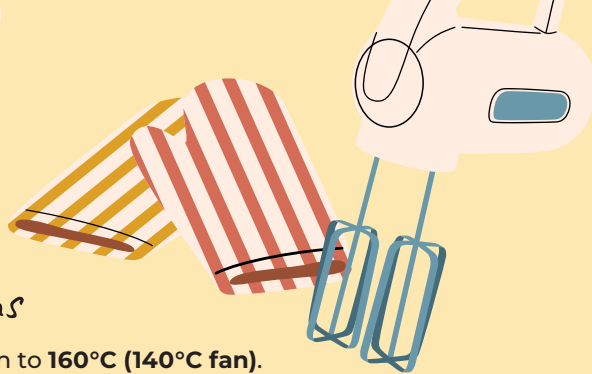
55g

Carbohydrates

Ingredients

- 150g soft butter
- 150g sugar
- 3 eggs
- 150g self-raising flour
- 1 tsp mixed spices (optional)
- 300g mixed dried fruit
- 200g ready-made marzipan
- 2 tbsp apricot jam

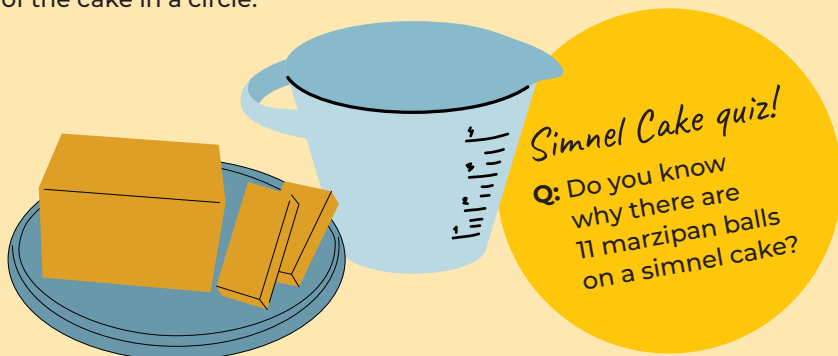




Instructions

- 1 Heat your oven to **160°C (140°C fan)**.
- 2 Grease a cake tin and line the bottom with baking paper.
- 3 In a large bowl, beat the butter and sugar together until creamy.
- 4 Add the eggs, one at a time, mixing well.
- 5 Stir in the flour and mixed spices. Then add the dried fruit and mix.

Top baker's tip: If the mixture feels too thick, try adding a tablespoon of milk!
- 6 Scoop half the cake mix into the tin.
- 7 Take half of the marzipan and roll it into a circle about the size of the cake tin. Lay this on top of the cake mix already in the tin.
- 8 Add the rest of the cake mix to the tin and smooth the surface.
- 9 Bake for 45–60 minutes, until the top is golden. You can poke a stick into it to see if the middle is cooked – some melted marzipan might come out, but that's fine (and tasty!)
- 10 After the cake is cool, spread the apricot jam over the top.
- 11 Roll the remaining marzipan into a circle and place it on top.
- 12 Use leftover scraps to make 11 small marzipan balls and stick these to the top of the cake in a circle.



Simnel Cake quiz!
Q: Do you know why there are 11 marzipan balls on a simnel cake?

A: The marzipan balls symbolise Jesus' 11 loyal disciples – one ball for each!

Resurrection light

Risen Christ, when darkness overwhelms us
may your dawn beckon.

When fear paralyses us
may your touch release us.

When grief torments us
may your peace enfold us.

When memories haunt us
may your presence heal us.

When justice fails us
may your anger ignite us.

When apathy stagnates us
may your challenge renew us.

When courage leaves us
may your spirit inspire us.

When despair grips us
may your hope restore us.

And when death threatens us
may your resurrection light lead us.

Amen.

Annabel Shilson-Thomas/CAFOD



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A better world needs all of us