

Christmas 2023 Prayer and Worship



Time to Shine

Every girl has talents she'd love to pursue – if she just gets the chance. But poverty is pushing some girls into early marriage and often (if they survive childbirth) into very young motherhood. When they are able to get jobs, this can mean unsafe work outside the home, where sexual violence is a terrible reality.

The good news is that girls and women themselves hold the power to change this. With support they can learn the skills to run a business from home online. They gain safety, independence and the power to transform the future, not just for themselves, but for their families and communities.

This Christmas, Christian Aid is shining a light on a group of gifted young women in one of the poorest, most disaster-prone areas of Bangladesh. They're working together to run internet businesses and open up a world of choices for themselves and others.

We are asking you and your church to pray with us and share the stories of these remarkable young women.

Join us as we celebrate the arrival of the Light of the World and help us to ensure women and girls living in poverty get their time to shine.

Gathering Prayer

As we gather together in hopeful expectation;
Light of the world, make us ready.
As we seek your transforming presence;
Heavenly Father, renew us.
As we bring to you our pain and fear;
God of all comfort, lighten the darkness.
As we offer you our prayers and praise;
Abba Father, fill us with your glory.

Amen.

Hymns and Songs

- Advent Candles Tell Their Story (Mark Earey)
- Christ Be Our Light (Bernadette Farrell)
- Christ is the World's Light (Fred Pratt Green)
- Light a Candle (Clare Stainsby)
- Jesus, the Light of the World (George D. Elderkin)
- O Holy Night! (Placide Cappeau)

Christian Aid's Christmas Carol:

When Out of Poverty is Born (Kathy Galloway)

Find more resources to help your church sing carols for Christian Aid on our website.

Christian Aid's Prayer for Christmas 2023

Jesus Messiah, you are the light that shines in the darkness, and the darkness has no power to overcome it.

Today, we lift to you women and girls in Bangladesh with incredible talent, determination, and potential.

Economic barriers hinder their access to education. Injustice holds them back from pursuing their goals.

We pray for the women and girls of Bangladesh. We pray for their emotional and mental well-being.

May they be surrounded with a support system that encourages and uplifts them. May they have mentors and role models who will inspire and guide them.

We pray that the wounds caused by discrimination and inequality would be healed. Fill the hearts of those who face exclusion with confidence and self-belief.

Let their lights shine brightly, inspiring others and igniting movements for change.

In Jesus' name, we pray.
Amen.

(Written by the Reverend Suchitra Behera, Church of Bangladesh)



Kakoli Khatun, 21, is studying arts and has a keen interest in the traditional craft of Nakshi kantha.

Kakoli's Story

Kakoli Khatun is 21 years old and lives in Kurigram in Bangladesh. In her local area, most people are dependent on farming, which can be heavily affected by annual floods. As Kakoli told Christian Aid: **"Flooding destroys our croplands; we suffer a huge loss."** There is little scope for women and girls to stay in education where Kakoli lives, with most girls married under the age of 18.

Building on training and support from Christian Aid's partners, Kakoli set up a Nakshi kantha-making business with other young women. **Nakshi kantha is a type of embroidered quilt, and a centuries-old Bengali art tradition.** Kakoli is passionate about preserving and reinvigorating this traditional craft. She is also studying for an arts degree.



Kakoli told us: "Girls in my locality need education. If they get married at an early age they don't understand the value of education. I didn't have any dreams a few years ago. I didn't have any money to do anything. To do something I had to ask for money from my brothers and father. I started the Nakshi Kantha business with 10 members this year, and I want to make this successful. **I have a dream to make this business bigger, and more people could support their families through this.** I wish to support my parents, that's my dream. I want to thank those who supported us. Without their support, we couldn't do this."

Intercession Prayer for Our World

Let us pray to the Lord.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

We pray for our church community. May we be ready to answer your call, Lord. Help us to share the light of your love and proclaim your message of justice, mercy and peace.

We pray for those who hold power that they may act with wisdom and compassion. We pray for the voices of the marginalised to be heard and acted upon. Help us to nurture leaders and decision-makers who seek peace and recognise the dignity of every person. Raise up a generation of leader, both here at home and in Bangladesh, who will bring light to those trapped in darkness.

We pray for all the people of Bangladesh impacted unjustly by poverty and the climate crisis. We pray that your light will fill all places where women and girls face inequality, violence and oppression. Inspire us to action that together we may tear down barriers created by poverty and injustice in Jesus' name.

Loving God, we pray all this in the name of Jesus, the Light of the World.

Amen.

Closing Prayer

Father God, you sent your Son, the Light of the World, to shine through darkness.

You call each one of us to shine brightly, filled with the love of your Son. As we leave this place, may the spark of your Spirit ignite in us energy and passion to serve you and build your just kingdom on earth.

Amen.

You can find more resources for Advent and Christmas on our website.