

St Mary's Church of Ireland Howth – Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2018

Thank you for the invitation to Tearfund Ireland to be with you this morning. We are in a season of celebration as we are 10 years old in Ireland this autumn. Over the past 10 years hundreds of thousands of lives have been reached and thousands of churches have been mobilised to reach out to their communities with the support of individuals and churches in Ireland.

Tearfund Ireland's vision is to see 'flourishing communities in partnership with local churches free from poverty and injustice'. We long to see people and communities flourishing – reaching their full potential – this resonates with what Jesus said in John 10:10 "I am come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (NIV)

At Tearfund Ireland we seek to work with churches wherever possible. This is because as a local church has a history in its community (for example St Mary's in Howth is over 200 years old), is part of the community and will be into the future. And finally, Tearfund Ireland longs to see individuals and communities free from poverty and injustice.

The first reading this morning came from Leviticus 19. Leviticus is not an easy book to read, full of rules and guidelines. The context of the book is that the Children of Israel had just come out of slavery, dependency and oppression in Egypt. God through Moses was giving the people guidelines about how to live as a new community and as the people of God. In Leviticus chapter 19 there are some guidelines about how to ensure that no one in the community who fell on hard times ever ended up in complete destitution or abject poverty.

The society was mainly agricultural at the time and they were instructed at harvest time not to cut the standing grain around the edge of their fields so that the poorest of the poor could collect the grain and feed themselves to stay alive. This was not a hand-out; it was giving the poorest of the poor the opportunity to collect grain for themselves, in a way that they could maintain their dignity.

We no longer live in an agricultural community perhaps, but the principle remains the same. What are some of the ways that we could build practices into our lives that stop others falling into abject poverty?

Dr Martin Luther King Jr was able to say in the 1960s that 'before you finish eating breakfast in the morning, you've depended on more than half the world' – that was more than 50 years ago, how much more true is it today?

We may think we are not connected to the poorest of the poor across the world, however just by looking at the labels on our clothes, we can see that we rely on people across the world for everyday items, some of whom may be paying a high price so as we can get the commodities that we take for granted.

Today's New Testament reading from Luke 10:25-37 is a familiar story about being a good neighbour. My intention however is not to tell you to be a better neighbour, but to inspire you from the work of Tearfund Ireland partner churches who are reaching

out to others, even former enemies, in some of the world's poorest and most dangerous places.

These include partners in Lebanon where Syrian forces occupied parts of the country until 2005. In less than a decade the dominant people have become the most vulnerable in the community. There are now over 1 million Syrian refugees, almost a quarter of the population, living in Lebanon. Even though there is a history of animosity, the Church is reaching out providing relief and education for Syrian refugee children who would otherwise have no schooling. Canon Brew will be visiting this work with Tearfund Ireland next month and will be able to tell you more on his return.

In Ethiopia, churches in desperately poor areas are reaching out and creating development opportunities for women and seeing remarkable transformation right where they are. Please have a look at the inspiring example of [Meker Church](#) in Ethiopia in the accompanying video.

If you would like to find out more about the work of Tearfund Ireland you can look at our website [www.tearfund.ie](http://www.tearfund.ie). We would love you to partner with us in prayer, action and giving.