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Dear CTiW members,

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the lives of all people across the globe. We, in the wealthy countries of the G20, need to recognise and take responsibility for the fact that our progress, quality and way of life is at the expense of the people of the least developed countries.

The coronavirus pandemic is not a great equaliser as some have claimed. This pandemic has reminded us that we are all connected, and that to be well and healthy we depend on others, and on our communities. In fact, unequal systems of power double down in a crisis.

The danger is that, even with a vaccine, for some time to come our focus in the UK will shift almost entirely to domestic issues and to our own recovery. This will not be a quick process but has already led to claims that we cannot afford to support the most vulnerable countries at the level we did before, thus casting them adrift.

Pope Francis has said, 'We exist only in relationships: with God the Creator, with our brothers and sisters as members of a common family, and with all of God's creatures within our common home.' As a global Christian family we need to embody Pope Francis' prophetic words as we unite to pray and take action for our common home during this season of global pandemic.

Lucy Olofinjana writes for Churches Together in England & Wales that we need to:

'Unite with Christians from all continents to ask for a coronavirus response that embraces sharing, not plundering. Learn the importance of living out Paul's words from 1 Corinthians 12, 'If one part of the body suffers, all the other parts suffer with it; if one part is praised, all the other parts share its happiness.' Let's seek to make this a reality as we go about life as part of God's family. Let's 'rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn' (Romans 12:15) – being real and honest with one another, and truly being there for each other, in the good times and the bad. Because, after all, we are family.'

This resource booklet has been prepared by Churches Together in Westminster to help our members focus on those in developing countries who are suffering from the COVID-19 Pandemic. We hope we will all encourage our congregations to engage actively with Christian organisations worldwide in their work with vulnerable communities. This should surely be a part of our response to the universal gift of God that we remember and celebrate in Christmastide.

This booklet has been arranged as a series of daily readings around key themes:

- Day One Impact of coronavirus on people in fragile countries
- Day Two Health, shelter and survival

- Day Three Poverty and livelihoods
- Day Four Education and children
- Day Five Violence against women and girls, and gender inequality
- Day Six Impact on those with disabilities
- Day Seven Loss of rights and freedoms
- Day Eight Impact on peace processes and conflict

We encourage you to make the booklet available to your congregations and consider holding a Solidarity Sunday service to introduce the booklet and encourage support for the organisations listed in the booklet's appendix. Solidarity Sunday is about reminding ourselves and each other that there is so much good we can do - through giving, through prayer and through powerful demonstrations of unity.

A celebration of solidarity organised by Farm Street Church with CTiW can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=youtu.be&v=XvJ4mE5C3AY>. The service includes a sermon preached by Revd Tricia Hillas, Chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons, testimony and readings from homeless guests of the Central London Catholic Churches service at Farm Street, and prayers from Churches Together in Westminster.

We hope you will organise your own Solidarity Sunday service and will be happy to provide any support, ideas or advice that would assist.

With all good wishes for a blessed Advent and Christmastide,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Evens', written over a large, loopy, handwritten flourish that starts on the left and loops back towards the right.

Revd Jonathan Evens (Chair)