

We can give dignity to those in real need

YOUR generous donations will help the same three charities over the next three years as those we supported last year.

The Bishop's Lent Appeals for 2026, 2027 and 2028 will raise money for global mission agency USPG, development charity Tearfund, and local church charity Vista. Bishop Jonathan made the announcement as he presented cheques to each of those charities in December.

Generous churchgoers raised £9,000 last year from sacrificial giving and fundraising during Lent. So the bishop was able to hand over £3,000 each to representatives from each charity. And the continued support for each of them will allow us to build ongoing relationships.

Carol Miller, USPG's church engagement manager, said: "We partner with brothers and sisters in Anglican dioceses and provinces to be the heartbeat of Jesus in their communities. This will make such a difference to them. The key thing we ask is what do they want to do to make people flourish in their area. And then we ask how we can help them."

Simon Mitchell, a volunteer Tearfund speaker and also a worshipper at Christ Church, Portsdown, said: "In a broken world, we try to be God's hands and feet and mouth. In places like Gaza and Ethiopia and the Sudan, God is building people up. One of the ways in which we see communities changed is by offering people Bible studies that help them to realise their worth, and realise what they



The bishop with recipients of his Lent Appeal (l to r): Miriam Hargreaves from Vista, Simon Mitchell from Tearfund, Carol Miller from USPG and Liz Hurrell from Vista

can do to help themselves."

And Miriam Hargreaves, women's project manager for Vista, based at Harbour Church, Portsmouth, said: "We support women who have been sexually exploited - in their country of origin, on their journey here, and once they arrive here. We have a paid team of four, and around 12 volunteers who go into massage parlours and strip clubs and offer those women a confidential listening ear, and a chance to live a safer life. Funding is always a challenge, so these funds will really help."

We hope to enhance our understanding of specific projects by allowing Tearfund to fund a trip to Rwanda for our Head of Safeguarding Emily Hassan - for a week from May 31 to June 5. The trip allows partners in the UK to meet individuals who will benefit

from their donations, and to share experiences with those back home.

Emily expects to see the work of Tearfund partner Eglise Anglicane du Rwanda (EAR) with local church leaders, who are offered training in 'church and community transformation' (CCT). This holistic programme encourages church leaders to link their Bible studies with practical ways to help people out of poverty.

Those church leaders can bring individuals together in self-help groups, to support each other financially, practically, in prayer, and in community. It allows farmers to invest in crops they can sell, rather than living hand-to-mouth, thus giving them the dignity of not relying on handouts.

Among those helped recently was Rahurensiya (pictured right), who

had experienced challenges with alcohol while her husband was in prison and struggled to care for three children by herself. Food, clothing and school fees became a constant worry.

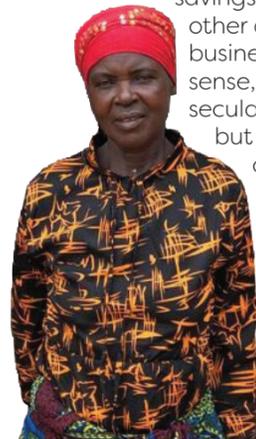
But after attending Bible studies which reminded her of God's love, she was introduced to a self-help group called Twisungane. She received training and a small loan (around £50), bought bags of millet to sell and soon made a small profit.

A second loan allowed her to buy a small piece of land, where she planted rice. She even started a small business making and selling millet juice. Ultimately she was able to employ others. She is grateful she has walked this journey with Jesus, as well as for the practical support that has given her financial independence and a renewed sense of purpose.

Serena Dalton, Tearfund's church partnerships manager, said: "Poverty isn't just a lack of money. It's a lack of relationship. A lack of connection to others, to God. Poverty is painful. It's draining. It steals dreams and the ability to imagine a different future.

"The church and community transformation programme changes attitudes and helps people to have a sense of dignity and self-worth. Typically the self-help group meeting will involve worship, prayer, and how to use savings to support each other and start small businesses. In that sense, it's not like a secular savings group, but something based on authentic relationships.

"Kigali is one of the biggest Anglican dioceses in Rwanda, and their bishop is excited about



The Vista team work with people such as Bianca

How one client escaped from abuse and alcohol

WHEN the team from Vista met Bianca*, she was in a relationship with a man who was sexually exploiting and abusing her.

She had moved to the UK seeking new opportunities, but she had become reliant on alcohol to ease the pain of the abuse she was experiencing. She seemed trapped in a web of addiction and abuse. Then she became pregnant.

A few days after he was born, Bianca's son was taken into care. This painful event added another layer to her experience of trauma and after a short time of sobriety, Bianca started drinking heavily. The team continued to pray for her and with her.

During this time, Bianca was able to get away from the abusive relationship and into temporary accommodation which provided more support than before. She felt angry with the lack of housing options available and angry with a system that had taken away her baby.

After a couple of years of praying and being around to hold out hope when Bianca felt none, the Vista team had the enormous privilege of being in her life when she got to the point of saying: "God, I am going to trust you to get me off the drink and change my life."

The staff at her hostel couldn't believe the change in her. She started attending church, got a job and has stayed safe over the past year. It was Bianca's decision to trust God with her life, and to keep away from alcohol with the strength Jesus gives.

Bianca's life is now so different that the court ordered a reassessment by Children's Services. As a result, she now sees her son regularly and is praying that this will lead to having custody of him in the future.

Bianca said: "It puts a smile on my face when I look at how far God has brought me and still going!"

* Bianca's name has been changed to protect her. Photo posed by model

CCT and wants all his churches to offer it. Currently 161 churches are involved, so that's a big leap. It's also offered in two other dioceses - Shyira and Kigeme. It empowers local churches to drive change within their communities. It involves a change of mindset - a shift towards utilising the God-given resources already present within the community to build better lives."

Tearfund aims to invest more than £30,000 during 2026 in this

training, which includes selecting leaders, establishing self-help groups, addressing healthcare and sanitation issues, tackling gender-based violence, making farming sustainable, and training church leaders in disaster management.

The charity is challenging our diocese to provide more than £5,000 towards that. You can find out more information or make a donation via www.portsmouth.anglican.org/lentappeal.