



Village scene,
Rwanda



2024 Prayer Guide

“Devote yourselves to prayer”

Colossians 4:2



Opportunity to reflect

The start of a new year brings an opportunity to reflect on what has been, and to think about what may come. It is easier to look back and consider the joys and challenges of 2023 but harder to predict what will take place in the year ahead. We can, however, take confidence in a God that cares for us. While that doesn't mean tough times won't come our way, it does mean we go through them with a loving God by our side.

1 Peter 5:7 urges us to **'cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you'**. God spoke to Jeremiah and said **'Call to me, and I will answer you.'** (Jeremiah 33:3)

We have a God that wants to hear from us – and we believe that prayer is powerful and integral to the success of SCIAF's work through our amazing partners.

With this prayer guide, we are asking you to take time each month to pray for the work of SCIAF.

Please sign up for our prayer emails that provide longer reflections at the start of each month connected to the monthly focus provided in this guide.

Sign up for monthly prayer resources at sciaf.org.uk/pray

“One of the most effective ways we have to help is that of prayer. Prayer unites us; it makes us brothers and sisters.”

Pope Francis



Let's pray

Loving God, we thank you for your faithfulness.

We thank you for your goodness to us, and we pray for patience and perseverance for the challenges that will come our way this year.

Help us to look to Jesus as our example as we seek to follow your ways, O Lord.

We pray for our partners who work tirelessly and for those we serve.

May their lives be filled with peace and a hope for the future.

Thank you that the Church is reaching out and transforming lives.

Help us to love our neighbour and to seek justice in a world that is broken.

Forgive us for our collective mistreatment of our Common Home

and help us to see your beauty within creation.

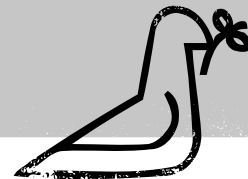
The injustices that we see in the world are big, but you, heavenly Father, are bigger!

We call out to you because you care for your people.

We pray these things in the name of Jesus. Amen.



Rev Ferdinand Rukundo,
Rwanda



Hope

What our hope is in, what it is built on and where it comes from is more important than what we hope for. If what we hope for is built on a fluffly ideal or a 'wish', then there is limited comfort and peace on offer. But if our hope is in God, then we have a firm foundation through Scripture, the life and death and resurrection of Jesus, and in the life of all the Saints. These things are a testimony to the faithfulness of God and bring hope to us today. We hope for a world where peace prevails. We hope for a world where justice is for all. We hope for a world where everyone has enough food to eat and clean water to drink.

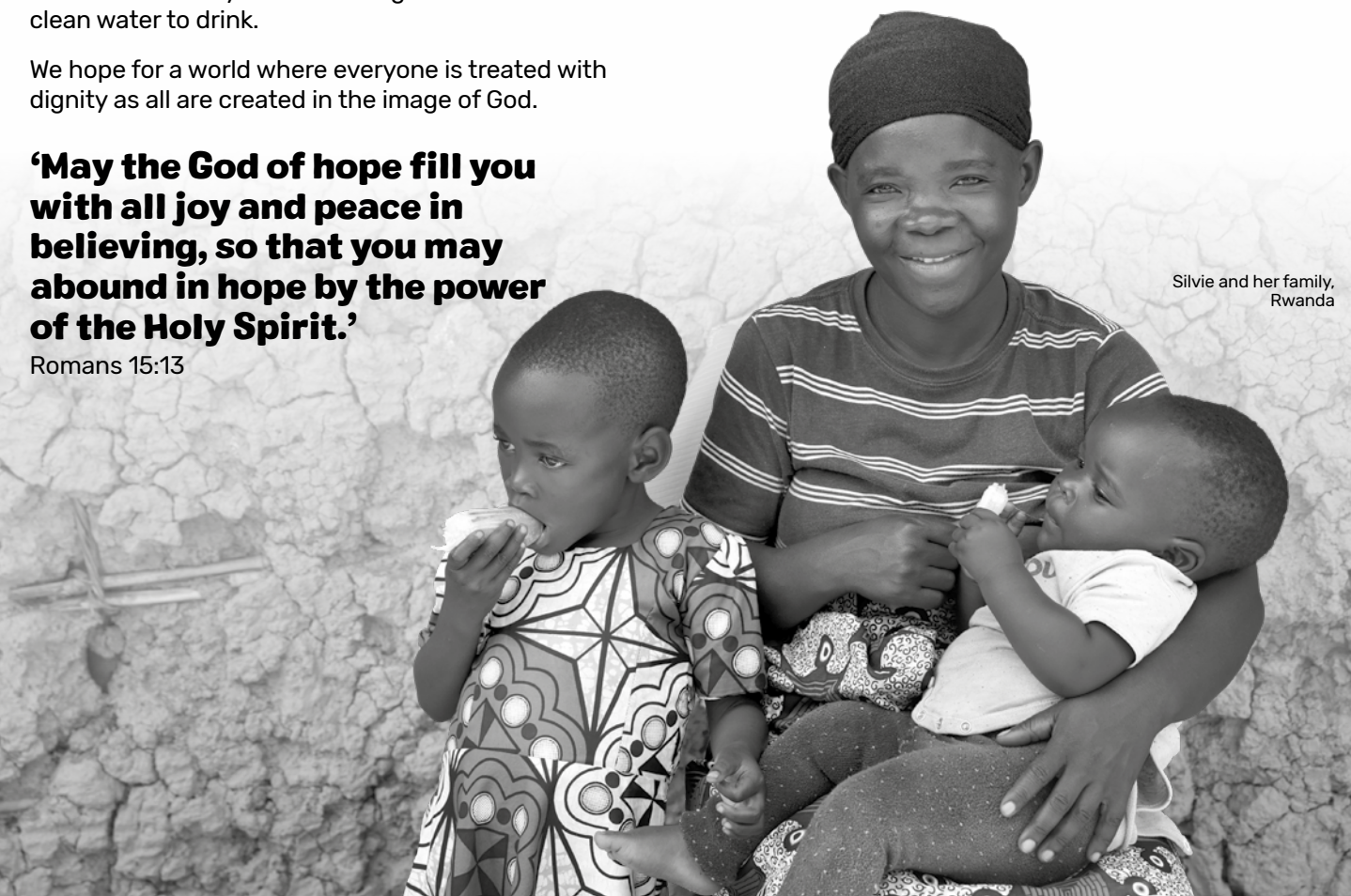
We hope for a world where everyone is treated with dignity as all are created in the image of God.

'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.'

Romans 15:13

Let us...

- Give thanks that we have a God who cares for us. A God of justice, a God of peace.
- Pray that the God of hope will fill you and those closest to you with joy and peace.
- Pray for those that SCIAF serve. That they may live in peace and that they may experience justice.
- Pray for SCIAF's partners who work tirelessly to help our sisters and brothers work their way out of the poverty they find themselves in.



Silvie and her family,
Rwanda

WEE BOX – Rwanda

This year's WEE BOX appeal focuses on SCIAF's work in Rwanda.

In 1994, Rwanda experienced a devastating genocide. Over the course of 100 days, up to one million people were killed and 500,000 women and children suffered violence.

Today, many women and girls in Rwanda are facing sexual and gender-based violence and gender inequality. Women and girls are less likely to receive an education, get a job, and earn money to meet their basic needs.

We're working with the Church and our partner CEJP in Rwanda, to provide essential support and protection to people affected by sexual and gender-based violence.

We're also helping families to grow more food, start small businesses, access safe water and adapt to climate change. We work together as part of the global church, as one body with many parts (1 Corinthians 12:20).

“SCIAF has been a partner in Rwanda for many years, particularly in this process of peace and reconciliation... We are very grateful to SCIAF for all these years, with what they are doing. We thank all the people who support SCIAF.”

Cardinal Antoine Kambanda, Archbishop of Kigali



Josiane and her grandson, Rwanda



In this Lenten season, let us...

- Give thanks that Jesus drew strength from His Father, and from Scripture, to remain strong in His time of temptation. Ask God to help sustain you also.
- Pray for the people of Rwanda who have suffered much. Physical, psychological and emotional scars remain from the awful actions of the genocide 30 years ago.
- Pray particularly for the women and girls who have experienced - and still suffer from - sexual and gender based violence. Pray that SCIAF's partners are able to provide essential help and long-term support.
- Pray for the Church in Rwanda and the partnerships they make with other faith-based organisations. Pray that they continue to make great strides in gender equity as they educate and work with communities.
- Pray that we, as servants of God, respond with action as well as words to the injustices we see in our world.

April



Food for the body and soul

Hunger in our world is not a new problem but unfortunately it is on the increase. Conflicts and climate change are causing millions of people to face the worst hunger crisis the world has seen in decades. This is not the world that God created and intended for his people. There is enough food grown and produced in the world to feed everyone but due to unfair policies, practices and distribution, 811 million people face hunger around the world.

It is right that this makes us angry and it is right that we respond.

It is also right that Scripture reminds us of a different kind of food, a spiritual food that helps us grow in faith. In Matthew 4:4 Jesus quotes Scripture to the devil who tempts him, **“One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”**

God has provided for our physical and spiritual needs but we can all too often be poor stewards of both needs.

Let us...

- Give thanks for the spiritual and physical food we have and ask for forgiveness for the times we are not good stewards.
- Pray for those in power, those making decisions on the equitable distribution of food, of just and fair trading. We pray that multi-national companies will come round to think more of people than profit.
- Pray for those going hungry; we pray for provision.
- Pray for SCIAF partners who are not only helping to meet the most pressing needs of hunger today, but are helping to build families' resilience so they can provide for themselves in the future.

May



Blessed art thou amongst women

Traditionally, the month of May is given to the honouring of Mary. Parishes and individuals will do that in different ways throughout this month. Why? Let's look at Scripture.

In Luke 1:38, Mary responds to hearing that she is pregnant and will give birth to the Saviour of the world by saying, **“Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.”** What faith, what humility.

We sometimes find it difficult to accept what God asks of us but in Mary, we have an example of someone who wholeheartedly trusted God in a very challenging situation.

In verses 46 and 47 of Luke chapter 1, Mary sings, **“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.”**

In Mary we have an example of someone who gives her worship to God always.

In John chapter 19 we see Mary as a shining example of a loving, caring mother at the Cross as Jesus was crucified.

Mary was chosen by God – she humbly accepted her calling and was loyal, loving and gave of herself to God and others.

Let us...

- Give thanks for Mary, the Mother of God, who gave us a Holy example of a life lived well.
- Pray that we might follow Mary's example, giving praise to God in all situations and by being humble servants to our Father and to others.

June



Water

Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the Scripture has said, **“Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water.”** John 7:37-38

Life-giving words from Jesus who spoke many times using the theme of water for both physical and spiritual needs.

Pope Francis cites ‘water’ 47 times in Laudato Si’ – so it is fair to say that great value is placed on this essential gift that many take for granted.

Unfortunately, we live in a world where nearly 800 million people don’t have access to clean drinking water. 1 million people die every year from diarrhoea because of unsafe drinking water and a lack of running water to wash their hands. Something that is not acceptable and preventable.

Of course this is not the perfect world that God created but as his people, we are responsible not only to be good stewards of water but also to seek justice for those millions of people who have no or limited access to water.

Let us...

- Give thanks for the life-giving nature of water that we have access to. Pray that we never take it for granted.
- Give thanks for the living water that comes from God and quenches our spiritual need.
- Pray for the provision of water for millions of people who have limited or no access to it.
- Pray for SCIAF partners who work closely with thousands of people providing water points and irrigation so that families are able to access water and grow crops.

July



A focus on Parish life

In 1 Corinthians chapter 12, St Paul speaks of the Church as a body. A group of people, all unique and with different gifts but all with Christ as their head. St Paul calls for unity, not division.

In the same way that a broken toe impacts the whole body, a parishioner’s hurt should impact the whole Parish. Likewise, a parishioner experiencing joy should lift the whole Parish.

We are a community for a reason and Church exists for us to collectively worship God and to serve one another.

We are always encouraged at SCIAF when we consistently see Parishes coming together to pray for and to raise money for the work of SCIAF. It is heartening to hear of parishioners giving up time to hold bake sales, take collections, learn more about the work of SCIAF through workshops and more!

You truly are a global Church, responding to your sisters and brothers in greatest need, helping people to help themselves. Keep going and as Hebrews 12:1-2 says, **‘let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus.’**

Let us...

- Give thanks for the Church and the role each of us play in it. Thank God for the support of the Church and pray that we look to serve others in the way that Jesus modelled.
- Give thanks for the millions of pounds that have been raised by Parishes across Scotland for the work implemented through SCIAF partners.
- Pray that we keep on meeting and building one another up within the Church.
- Pray for unity within the Church.

August



Back to school

'Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray.' Proverbs 22:6

Pope Francis said that "Teaching is a beautiful job. It is a little like being parents, at least spiritually. It is a great responsibility!"

We all have a responsibility to teach younger generations to be good spiritual role models and to put our faith into action for others to see.

Being a teacher is not easy and sometimes it is a huge challenge. Let us not forget, as Pope Francis says, that "teaching is a beautiful job". To see development and growth in all areas of a child's life, and to be part of that, even in the smallest way, is a privilege as well as a great responsibility.

This month, take time to pray for pupils, teachers, and all school staff as they return and begin a new academic year. Pray also for SCIAF as we support learning through resources and workshops in schools across Scotland.

Let us...

- Give thanks for teachers and all school staff for serving in this way.
- Give thanks for Catholic education and for spiritual formation.
- Pray for the start of term. Pray for those teachers and pupils who are anxious to return after the summer break; That pupils settle and feel safe and that teachers recognise the gifts they have been given and have confidence in their ability.
- Pray that the education work of SCIAF in schools will continue to grow and that pupils grow in faith and in the service of others.

September



Season of Creation

Throughout September and finishing on the 4th October (Feast day of St Francis of Assisi) the ecumenical Season of Creation provides us with a focused opportunity to reflect on and pray for our Common Home.

Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* and his Apostolic Exhortation *Laudate Deum* call us to take urgent action against the climate crisis.

'And God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.' (Genesis 1:31)

The world we see now is but a poor reflection of the world created by God. It is not perfect now, but we are called to be good stewards. **'The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it.'** (Psalm 24:1)

There is no stronger reason for us to care for and protect the earth on which we live than knowing that God created it and those who live in it.

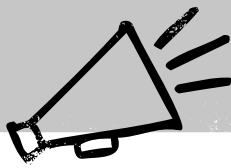
Millions are without food and struggle to grow it because of climate change. Communities are torn apart by illegal mining, fishing, and land-grabbing. So-called natural disasters (often increasing in frequency and severity due to climate change) are destroying crops and homes, and causing thousands to be displaced.

We can't stand by and do nothing.

Let us...

- Give thanks for creation and its beauty.
- Pray that we first look at ourselves and make changes that will benefit creation and those in it.
- Pray for all those that are displaced due to floods, storms, and droughts. Let us pray that they find refuge and the support required to build back better.
- Pray for SCIAF partners who are responding to emergencies and who are helping farmers to mitigate the impacts of the climate crisis.
- Pray for world leaders who decide on levels of support and on policies that benefit those hit hardest by climate change.

October



Speak up!

'Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.' Proverbs 31:9

It is our Christian duty to speak up when we see injustice while also enabling those who are not heard, to be heard. SCIAF's advocacy work overseas and in Scotland is vital to our overall mission to unite and create a more just world.

Project participants knowing their fishing and land rights, for example, not only means that they are in a stronger position when it comes to the protection of their livelihoods, but by passing on knowledge, those we serve are served with dignity and in full respect of their position as created in God's image. People become stronger, not because something is done for them, but because they themselves have done it. In solidarity, it is a hand-up rather than a hand-out.

Here in Scotland, we feel that we can and should speak up for and defend the vulnerable. We often do that by giving our partners a platform to speak from. We do that by lobbying our MPs and MSPs, signing petitions to propose policy changes and encouraging others to follow – and it does work!

Let us...

- Give thanks for the work of SCIAF that provides us here in Scotland with the opportunity to speak up and speak out against injustice.
- Give thanks for the life-transforming advocacy that takes place in the countries SCIAF works. Give thanks that young people are involved and feel empowered to have their say.
- Pray that change will come and that we will see a more just world.

November



The month of Holy Souls

During this month we pray especially for departed friends and loved ones. As Catholics, we believe that although our physical bodies die, we are alive in the body of Christ, the Church.

Jesus conquered death, it could not hold him – and as Jesus rose from the dead, we also live in the hope of that resurrection.

Our God is a God of compassion and mercy, and although bereavement is hard to experience, we have a God that cares and is there for us.

We remember our loved ones, those closest to us. We also remember our sisters and brothers across the world who have died because of war and conflict; because of injustices that keep people in poverty; and because of climate change induced disasters.

Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace. Amen.

Let us...

- Give thanks for loved ones. Those that are with us and those that have departed.
- Give thanks that God's compassion is more than sufficient to support you in your grief.
- Pray for departed friends and loved ones.



St Joseph's Secondary,
Kilmarnock

December



For a child has been born for us...

As we prepare for the coming of Jesus, may it be a time of personal reflection and renewal.

'But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see – I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord."'

Luke 2:10-11

That same message of good news that the angel brought to the shepherds is the same message of good news for us. A Saviour has been born for us, Immanuel – God with us.

Not a bad present!

Take time this Advent to think about the gift of Jesus. To accept the gift of the Saviour first requires us to admit that we need a Saviour. Not easy to admit that we need to be saved but in our humility we open ourselves to the strength that comes through Jesus.

Have a reflective Advent and a blessed Christmas.

Let us...

- Give thanks for Jesus and for the good news of salvation.
- Take time to prepare our hearts this Advent and ask God for a fruitful time of reflection.
- Pray that we understand more of God's love for us this Advent and share the good news with those we meet.

sciaf.org.uk/pray

Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund

SCIAF is the official relief and development agency of the Catholic Church in Scotland and a proud member of the Caritas family. 7 West Nile Street, Glasgow G1 2PR. Tel: 0141 354 5555. Scottish Charity No: SC012302. Company No: SC197327. Photos by Colin Hattersley and James Cave (SCIAF).

 **Caritas**
Internationalis

