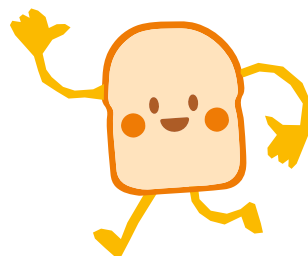


# Breaking bread with your newly elected MP



christian  
**aid**

A guide to hosting newly elected MPs in your church



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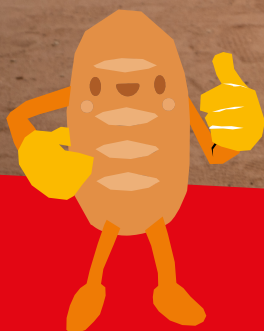
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Esther Saizi and her cooperative make bread from processed pigeon peas. They meet every morning in the warehouse Christian Aid has built and use the large oven to bake bread to sell at the market.



# Welcome

from Margaret

## Hello

**I'm Margaret and I've been a supporter and campaigner with Christian Aid for a number of years now.**



In 2007, I spent three weeks in Kenya with the Karibuni Trust and it was during this visit that I saw the absolute poverty of people in the Kawangware area of Nairobi. The injustice of the situation has stayed with me. It's simply not right that so many people around the world live in poverty whilst a powerful minority enjoys so much wealth - this is not God's plan.

Since visiting Kenya, I've felt more motivated to speak up for change. And I encourage you to do the same.

This year, with a general election, we have a special opportunity to make sure that our newly elected MPs know that we'd like them to act on poverty.

You don't have to be an expert to speak to your local politicians. Over the past few years, I've been contacting my MP about poverty and although it was daunting at first, it's been effective in bringing change. Christian Aid also provide a great amount of support. So don't think you can't speak to your politicians, because you can!

I also believe it's our Christian duty to speak out in this way. Jesus regularly influenced leaders of the day - and often whilst sharing food. I'm sure many of you already hold coffee mornings, lunch clubs and other community meals that bring people together and encourage discussion.

This guide from Christian Aid invites you to follow in Jesus's footsteps: to sit down and break bread with your newly elected MP. I'll be using this guide in my church, I hope you will too.

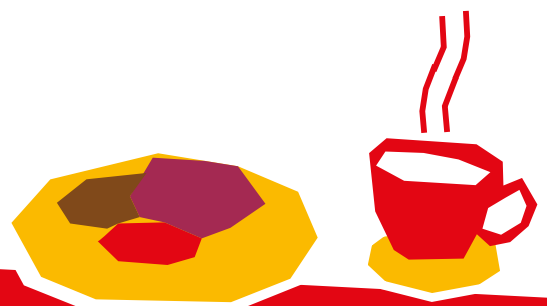
**Good luck**

**Margaret**

**Christian Aid supporter and campaigner**

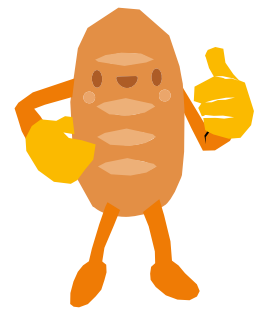
**‘This guide from Christian Aid invites you to follow in Jesus’s footsteps: to sit down and break bread with your newly elected MP.**

**I’ll be using this guide in my church, I hope you will too.☺**





# Seize the moment



## Why is building a relationship with your newly elected MP important for tackling poverty?

In this General Election year, hundreds of churches are gearing up to show their newly elected MPs that they care about poverty.

Like any good relationships, political relationships take time and nurturing – and this is the perfect time to start.

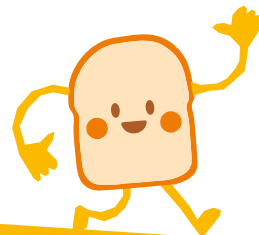
By simply inviting your newly elected MP into church to break bread and talk about poverty you could spark a poverty-busting relationship that could last for years to come.

The everyday act and symbolism of sharing bread with strangers crops up in many parts of the Bible. Jesus frequently shared bread with those he encountered and befriended – and as the central act of the Last Supper, the breaking of bread is imbued with special significance for Christians.

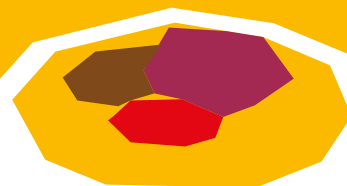
At its heart, the expression “breaking of bread” is a way of describing a shared meal, but it’s the connection between the people eating that is more important than what they are eating. It is as much about the relationship as it is the food.

It’s a symbol of welcome, hospitality, care, openness, and peace. In breaking bread, we build and strengthen our relationships. The humblest of meals - even a cup of tea and biscuits - can help build relationships.

Read on for ideas on how to use your coffee mornings and church meals to start building a relationship with your newly elected MP, that can lead to action.



**“Breaking of bread”** is a way of describing a shared meal, but it’s the connection between the people eating that is more important. Even a cup of tea and biscuits can help build relationships.





# Get others involved

## A few ideas for getting others involved in breaking bread with your newly elected MP

There is strength in numbers (even a few of you). Your MP will no doubt be busy, but the chance to speak to constituents will make them take notice.

So, think about how you can get others in your church or constituency involved – **even if it's just a few.**

**First and foremost, consider where there are 'easy wins.'** For example:

- You might already have a small group of people who feel happy to be involved.
- Maybe you could convince your home group – if you're part of one – to join you?
- Is there a social justice group in your church who could be involved?

- Are there people who have done the Act on Poverty course?
- Have you met people at a local Christian Aid workshop from another church who are also keen to act on poverty?
- Are there other churches in your constituency that have shown an interest in acting on poverty?
- Is there a prominent church leader who could support your event?

**Work with these people. Don't worry about trying to get everyone on board.**

If you want to get more people involved you could run the 2 hour Act on Poverty workshop to inspire people. Or try some other activities from our website [caid.org.uk/breakingbread](http://caid.org.uk/breakingbread)



**“When people say that religion and politics don't mix, I wonder which Bible it is they are reading”**

**Desmond Tutu**

# Your guide to breaking bread in 10 simple steps

Steps to help you break bread with your MP and start conversations about poverty.

## 1 Get a team together

Hosting your newly elected MP in your church is a great opportunity to help tackle poverty together - see some ideas on the previous page.

**Even if this is just two or three of you, working together will make this a more rewarding experience.**

Lastly, don't forget to invite your local Christian Aid rep who may also be willing to speak if they're free!

## 2 Choose your event

Which food-based event does your church hold that you could invite your candidates to? Do you have a bake sale, harvest meal, coffee morning or community event coming up?

**Let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.**

(1 John 3:18)



If you have nothing planned you could use the sample event plan in this pack. Or, how about coffee & cake with your newly elected MP - it really can be that simple!

## 3 Set the menu

The menu for your event could be as simple or complex as you decide. You could have a 'serve yourself' nibbles, drinks evening or a sit down meal.

Whatever you choose, plan your lay out so that your MP will have a chance to speak to at least a few people. For example, specific issues could be raised between courses. Use the sample event plan below for more ideas.


Remember to ask your MP if they have any dietary requirements.

Providing food as a volunteer? Use the safety checklists from the Food Standards Agency: [food.gov.uk](https://www.food.gov.uk)

Christian Aid volunteer, Oluwaferanmi lobbies his local MP on climate justice with members of his church youth group.







**Our focus is on what constituents are saying to us and their concerns. I feel very passionate about hearing personal stories.**  
2024 general election candidate

## 4 Plan your menu of questions too

Your MP wants to hear what you care about. The best thing you can do is speak from your heart about why you would like to see action on poverty.

Does your church have stories of local and global poverty that you have experienced, seen or heard? Consider who is best to share these stories in a dignified, respectful and loving way?

And remember, these discussions are also about getting to know your candidates on a personal level. Don't be afraid to start with simple questions about what food or coffee they enjoy!

At some point you might decide to get more pointed and specific, for example talking about what action is needed to tackle the climate crisis. You could even designate a "Conversation Leader" who could raise key points from Christian Aid's crib sheets – find these at [caid.org.uk/breaking bread](https://caid.org.uk/breaking-bread)

## 5 Go beyond the food

Consider how you can make a lasting impression on your MP and get a commitment to meet again in a few months' time to see what progress they've made in acting on poverty.

Is there something your church could make to give to your MP at the end of the visit?

How about sewing, knitting or even baking some gifts with an Act on Poverty message? Or get your whole your church involved in making a banner?

Find all our resources at [caid.org.uk/breaking bread](https://caid.org.uk/breaking-bread)

## 6 Invite your MP

Find out who your newly elected MP is by visiting the [theyworkforyou](https://theyworkforyou.com) website.

Ensure your invite

- sets out the date, time and location
- mentions you're writing as a constituent
- briefly explains what you're inviting them to.

Keep it brief but make it stand out.

And don't be afraid to send a reminder or two!





## 7 Get people round the table

Invite other members of your congregation to join you.

Don't worry about huge numbers – a smaller event may result in better conversations with your MP.

Why not also invite your local paper along – MPs love a photo op!

Find event posters and template press releases at [caid.org/breakingbread](https://caid.org/breakingbread)

## 8 Tuck in and talk!

Well done for getting to this stage! Whether you have a handful or roomful of guests, you'll be adding your church's voice to a national call for action on poverty!

Remember - politicians are human beings too, made in the image of God and loved by God. Like any good meal, let the conversations flow!

**6 Taking a human approach is a much more effective way of communicating with us. Don't just send us briefings!**  
2024 General Election candidate

## 9 Thank your MP

Towards the end of your event, make sure to thank your MP, give them anything you have made and get a commitment to meet again in a few months time to hear what they have done in Parliament to act on Poverty.

## 10 Let us know how you got on

Christian Aid is also aiming to influence MPs directly, so it's good to know if they have been contacted by Christian Aid supporters in their constituency.

Please email us at: [campaigns@christian-aid.org](mailto:campaigns@christian-aid.org) to let us know

# Sample event plan

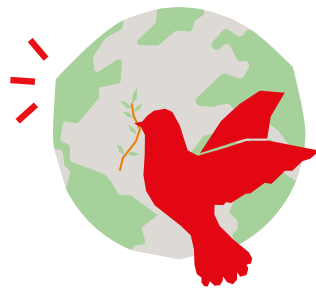
- Members of the congregation take their places at the tables.
- Someone welcomes and shows MP to different tables/places.
- Someone officially opens the event, welcoming everyone. You can start with a prayer or song. You may wish to give your MP a few minutes to introduce themselves and what they think about action on poverty.
- Food is served and a designated conversation leader (if you have one) gets people talking about why you care about poverty and what your church does both locally – and globally!
- Depending on timings and food servings, candidates could spend a set amount of time at each table then move to the next one – to meet more members of the congregation.
- Bring an end to the meal – get a photo with your MP, maybe they could stand with a banner, poster, or something that highlights their commitment to act on poverty.
- Thank your MP and get a commitment to meet again in a few months' time to see what progress they've made in acting on poverty.



# What to ask your newly elected MP

Links and information about some of the core issues Christian Aid is campaigning on.

Whilst the main emphasis should be on showing your MP that your church cares about action on poverty, you will probably want to talk to them about specific issues or raise specific questions at some stage during the conversation.



You can find out more about Christian Aid's calls on the new UK Government to

- Pay up for **climate justice**
- Introduce new laws to **cancel debt**
- Be a force for **peace in the world**

**WATCH:** Our short videos – about 3 minutes each

OR

**READ:** Our cribsheets on each of these issues

[caid.org.uk/breakingbread](http://caid.org.uk/breakingbread)



Nyibol Malek Garam age 37 years is preparing some flour to make some cakes in South Sudan



If you live in a nation with a devolved government, the tools and tips in this resource can be used equally well to build relationships with these political representatives.

For support contacting Scottish MSPs contact [scotlandcampaigns@christian-aid.org](mailto:scotlandcampaigns@christian-aid.org)

**Notes** 

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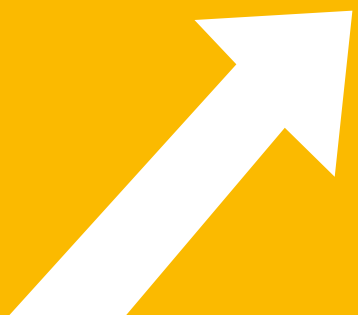
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# Promote your event with this poster.

If you wish, use this tear-off poster to promote your event to other members of the church. Add the time, date and any other details and place somewhere prominent in your church.







# Join us to break bread

with our newly elected MP



**DATE:**

**TIME:**

**LOCATION:**

**Contact:**

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Jen Bishop - farmer and chairwoman of her cooperative in Malawi, holds a handful of pigeon peas.



— Act on Poverty

— Put Peace First

— Cancel the Debt

— Pay Up for Climate Justice



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