

# **MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY**

## **NEWS RELEASE**

Date 13 January 2005

### **FEMALE CLERGY JOIN FIGHT AGAINST POVERTY**

Today, around 600 vicars from across the country joined Dawn French to deliver a white band card at No 10 Downing Street to show their support for the **MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY** campaign.

While the group of vicars waited outside Downing Street, proudly holding Make Poverty History banners and poignantly tying hundreds of white bands on the railings, a smaller delegation of 10 vicars representing the different church denominations, actor Dawn French and writer Richard Curtis, co-founder of Comic Relief met the Prime Minister. They reiterated the challenges on debt, trade and aid laid down earlier this year by the Make Poverty History campaign. With Gordon Brown in Africa addressing the same issues of poverty, the campaign hopes the UK government will use their influence internationally to make important changes at the G8 in July this year.

The idea was inspired by the Vicar of Dibley programme written by Richard Curtis, who made the following comments;

"Geraldine would have been 20 at the time of Live Aid - and so it seemed a very apt idea for an episode of Vicar of Dibley to centre around her trying to mark the anniversary of a day which changed her world.

"I believe she'd still be totally up in arms about the horrific statistics 20 years on - one child dying every 3 seconds, unnecessarily, of the results of extreme poverty.

"MakePovertyHistory is a real life campaign that is asking the UK public to send a white band message to the government urging them to make changes around debt, trade and aid that keep poor countries poor".

Members of the public wishing to support this year-long campaign or get a white band, should sign on at [www.makepovertyhistory.org](http://www.makepovertyhistory.org). People can also make their voices heard and exert pressure on Tony Blair and the UK government by sending a white band message, by text, email or post, calling on the government to reverse the injustice of poverty in 2005.

Donning their dog collars and the campaign's global symbol – a white band, the women met at St Martin in the Fields (Trafalgar Square) where they were welcomed by Dawn French and held prayers for the victims of the Asian Tsunami which has left more than 150,000 people dead and many millions homeless.

The Tsunami disaster in Asia has exposed the vulnerability of poor people across the world and the **MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY** campaign highlights the hidden disaster of abject poverty that kills 30,000 children every day. The campaign brings together around 150 charities, unions and faith groups to *challenge* Tony Blair and other world leaders to deliver trade justice, debt cancellation and more and better aid for the world's poorest countries.

Dr Mary Bradford, churches campaign manager, Christian Aid said: "The churches have been the backbone of virtually every major campaign against mass poverty over the last eight years or so. This visit to Downing Street was designed to show just how strongly the clergy feel that the millions of people who live in poverty every day should have a chance to improve their lives."

Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square will be dressed in a giant white band where the ladies will pose for a photocall before making their way down Whitehall towards Downing Street.

A delegation of ten women, including Dawn French and Richard Curtis, then handed the card over to the Prime Minister.

"In the aftermath of the terrible events of Boxing Day, we have been reminded that human beings suffer, regardless of ethnic origin or religion," Lucy Winkett, Canon of St Paul's Cathedral said. "To gather as Christians for a campaign such as "Make Poverty History" is to affirm that God is somehow present even in the long-term poverty that

goes unreported in the media. We find in our determination to eradicate poverty, that we are brought together as human beings across all boundaries.”

For more information on the **MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY** campaign visit [www.makepovertyhistory.org](http://www.makepovertyhistory.org).

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#### NOTES TO EDITORS

1. To download a copy of the report issued to Tony Blair earlier this week, please go to [www.makepovertyhistory.org](http://www.makepovertyhistory.org)
2. For more information on sending a white band message (by card or email) go to [www.makepovertyhistory.org](http://www.makepovertyhistory.org)
3. White bands are available:  
**Online:** at [www.makepovertyhistory.org](http://www.makepovertyhistory.org)  
**On the High Street:** at Oxfam shops  
**By phone:** by calling Save The Children on 0800 0273270, Action Aid on 01460 238027 or Christian Aid on 08700 787 788
4. The organisations that are currently working together to Make Poverty History are:

ACORD, ActionAid, ACTSA, Action on Disability and Development, African Initiatives, AMREF, African Refugee Community Health and Research, Bakers, Food & Allied Workers Union, BOND, Book Aid International, CADAni, CAFOD, CamFed, CARE International UK, Catholic Institute for International Relations, Christian Aid, Church of England, Church of Scotland Board of World Mission, Comic Relief, Commonwealth Human Ecology Council, CONCERN, DATA, Development Education Association, Development in Action, FARM-Africa, Find Your Feet, Garden Africa, Grow Up Free From Poverty Coalition, Harvest Help, Health Unlimited, Help the Aged, IMPACT Foundation, interact Worldwide, Intermediate Technology Development Group, International Care & Relief, International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS, International HIV/AIDS Alliance, International Rescue Committee – UK, iThemba AIDS Foundation, International Service, Jubilee Debt Campaign, Jubilee Scotland, Justice & Peace Scotland, Leicestershire AIDS Support Services, LEPRA, The Leprosy Mission, Mercy Corps Scotland, Methodist Church, Methodist Relief & Development Fund, Micro Loan Foundation, Musicians Union, National Board of Catholic Women of England and Wales, NCVO, NIDOS, Ockenden International, One World Action, One World Week, Opportunity International United Kingdom, OXFAM, Peace Child Charitable Trust, People & Planet, Plan UK, POWER International, Rainbow Development in Africa, RESULTS, Save the Children, SCIAF, Sense International, Sight Savers International, Skillshare International, SPEAK Network, St Mathew’s Children’s Fund, Stop AIDS Campaign, Student Partnerships Worldwide, Tearfund, The Fairtrade Foundation, The International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS, The Leprosy Mission, The Mother’s Union, TIDAL, Tobin Tax Network, Tools For Self Reliance, Tourism Concern, Trade Justice Movement, Traidcraft Exchange, Trocaire, Tropical Health and Education Trust, TUC, UK Coalition of People Living with HIV and AIDS, UNAIS, UNICEF UK, UNISON, Unitarian & Free Christian Churches, United Nations Association-UK, United Reformed Church, Village AiD, Viva Network, Voluntary Services Overseas, War on Want, Wateraid, Welsh Centre for International Affairs, Welsh Overseas Aid Group, World Development Movement, World Emergency Relief, World Medical Fund, World Vision UK, Y Care International