



A LETTER TO CONGRESS

The Importance of US Development Assistance

ONE

Dear Congress,

We are faith leaders spanning across the United States, faith traditions, ethnicities, and the political spectrum. In our daily life, we might not have a lot in common but the ONE thing we can agree on is that where you live shouldn't determine whether you live. **Our faith compels us to care for all neighbors, whether they live next door or in Nigeria.** Right now, our global neighbors are in need. The aftershocks of the pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and environmental disasters pose serious threats to the fight to end extreme global poverty and preventable disease, moving us further away from the day that everyone, everywhere can lead a life of dignity and opportunity.

We signed this letter because we believe we are all called "to live generously, honestly, kindly and faithfully," as Mike Gerson writes in his recent essay. The Old Testament prophet, Isaiah, says "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Gerson writes, "These are some of the most hopeful words in history." We agree. As faith leaders, we want to help reform human affairs in ways that privilege the poor, the prisoner, the blind, and the oppressed. "At least, trying to live under the inspiration of this good news lends purpose to our days and nobility to our failure," writes Gerson. We try to live under this inspiration through prayer, service, and advocacy, harnessing the power of our voices as both faith leaders and constituents of a government with a storied history of service to countries in need.

US foreign policy is at its strongest when it draws on all three pillars of our influence abroad: defense, diplomacy, and development, the last of which is a critical piece of our moral legacy and a reflection of the best of American values. Beyond being simply the right and just course of action, US development assistance has proven incredibly effective in lifting people out of poverty and preventing the spread of deadly diseases. It is a strategic investment in our economic and security interests. Development aid helps create jobs, get children into school, modernize infrastructure, create stability and strategic partnerships, and improve lives and livelihoods, paving a path to a better future for all of us.

Development assistance is an important part of the US budget in any year but, as the world stares down several challenges with the potential for widespread human suffering, it is especially important to ensure that US leaders are prepared to provide robust aid to countries and people who will bear the brunt of these crises. Take the hunger crisis—right now, the world is hungrier than ever, with **828 million people** going to bed hungry each night. In Somalia, on the cusp of famine, a child is hospitalized for severe acute malnutrition **every minute**. With food supply threatened by historic drought, and with prices still soaring after COVID and the war in Ukraine, we must act urgently. It is incredibly important for Congress to approve the Global Food Security Reauthorization Act, which helps provide critically needed food assistance.

Members of Congress, the importance of US development assistance going into the next Congress cannot be emphasized enough. Just as we faith leaders try to protect a small percentage of our budget annually for overseas ministries, we are asking you to protect the less than 1% of our federal budget for foreign assistance.

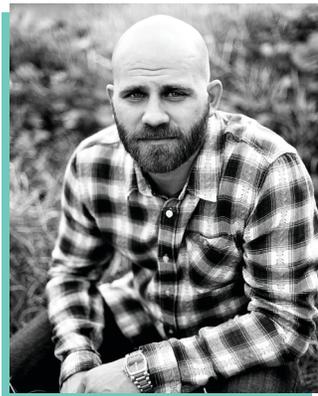
Signed



President Dean Collins

Lanett, AL

“Because every person matters to God it must matter to us as well.”



Pastor Paul Artino

Gilbert, AZ

“He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.”

– Isaiah 40:29



Pastor Tyler Hudgins

San Tan Valley, AZ

“To whom much is given, much is expected. Jesus has given me everything and now I can no longer unsee the injustice He sees in the world.”



Pastor Sean Warren

Gilbert, AZ

“My faith in Jesus compels me to look out for the least and last of our world, and this is why I want to end global poverty and preventable disease”



Pastor Mark DeYmaz

Little Rock, AR

“There is no work more intrinsic to the Christian faith than serving those marginalized from society due to lack of food, water, clothes and housing. Pursuing an end to extreme poverty in sub-Saharan Africa should do more than concern compassionate governments; it should rally them beyond political divides, and provide common ground from which to win, collectively.”



Propaganda

Los Angeles, CA

“There is more than enough to go around so it’s just unthinkable to continue in matter that abundance of some comes at the cost of many.”



Rabbi Danny Moss

Madison, CT

“We all share in equal human dignity and worth.”



Laura Viau

Wilmington, DE

“As long as our siblings anywhere in the world are hungry, we can never be truly satisfied; as long as any of our siblings know oppression, our liberation is incomplete; as long as any child is raised in poverty, our abundance cannot be named among our blessings.”



Youth Leader Amanda Chidzikwe

Orlando, FL

“Poverty eradication is an act of justice and protection of fundamental human rights.”



Rev. Dr. Jim Merritt

Orlando, FL

“In my work around the world, I witness first hand how important it is for us to eradicate extreme poverty and childhood diseases, both of which deprive our world of untold potential for good contained in those who suffer from them.”



Pastor Johnny Scott

Orlando, FL

“Being birthed a Christian nation, still to this day, a nation full of Christ followers, it is our duty, privilege and birthright to bear hope.”



Dean Wye Huxford

West Point, GA

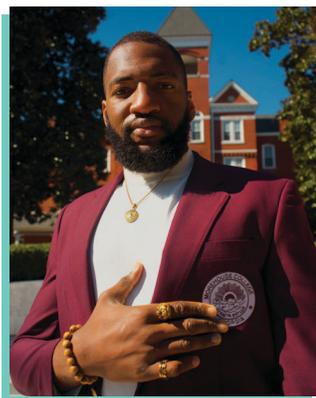
“Poverty is our culture’s burden. The extent to which I care about this issue is reflective of my understanding of the Jesus story. May God help us to see this issue for what it truly is.”



Lay Leader Kenny Kamson

Acworth, GA

“Born and raised in Lagos, Nigeria, I am a living witness to what my families and friends back home survive on a daily basis. The resilient people of Nigeria and majority of sub saharan Africa still battle the scourge of extreme poverty and preventable diseases like malaria, HIV/ AIDS and TB. The little support in the form of monies to acquire medicines, purchase food and sometimes keep kids in school from African individuals in the diaspora is deemed an act of God’s mercy and received with a lot of gratitude. Pease imagine what we can do with your support and that of the US congress as my people will see this as a witness of God’s open heavens, faithfulness and kindness.”



Pastor Chukwuebuka Nwafor

Atlanta, GA

“Born and raised in Nigeria, I have friends and have seen the extreme poverty of numerous individuals on the continent due to an irresponsible government that is unable to handle the economy. The lack of clean water, proper housing, free healthcare, and other basic social needs are also absent. These factors have lead to extreme poverty and preventable diseases in Africa as a whole. Ending these things would cause me great contentment.”



Pastor Shawn Ringer

Richmond Hill, GA

“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”



Apostle & Filmmaker Adam Thomason
Atlanta, GA

“Denouncing an ill in private while living your life idly in silence, publicly, makes you complicit to the injustice.”



Pastor Kyle & Amy Waddell
Savannah, GA

“Jesus said ‘Love.’”



Pastor Andrew Burns
Idaho Falls, ID

“Poverty and hunger are terrible tragedies around the world and my intent was s to help and support causes that minimize this.”



Pastor Antonio Penn
Carbondale, IL

“All walks of life deserve to live life more abundantly. I believe that when we help the least of these we do it unto Him, Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And God is not a respecter of persons. He blesses us all, in all kind of ways. The biggest way He blesses us is by using people. Loving our neighbors as ourselves is definitely what we are doing, not only in our own communities but also globally.”



Pastor Jon Weatherly

Urbana, IL

“No one is an island entire of itself.”



Pastor Jim Littlejohn

Carmel, IN

“The term ‘good Samaritan’ is still a much-used term in America. I believe we are still called to help those less fortunate; those in extreme poverty and suffering from preventable diseases.”



Pastor Bronis Perteit

Iowa City, IA

“Everybody is somebody.”



Dr. Rick Bartlett

Wichita, KS

“I have traveled and taught in countries all over the world, and I know firsthand the benefits of American aid to needy people, many of whom are former students and colleagues in ministry.”



Pastor Daniel Jackson

Georgetown, KY

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."



Pastor Terry Phillips

Covington, KY

"As the world becomes more globalized, it isn't enough to only put our focus on people in close proximity - but rather we need to look at where we have the responsibility to help and offer aid for the good of others and mankind across the now accessible world."



Pastor Griff Ray

Georgetown, KY

"Created in each of us is the God given call to care for those who can't care for themselves, after all, that's what He did for us."



**Co-Chair Outreach & Social Justice
Carol Cropp**

Bethesda, MD

"In my travels, I have seen extreme poverty, and it breaks my heart. My faith calls me to love my neighbor, and the first step in that is to recognize that all people deserve a life of dignity and justice."



Pastor Scott Valasquez

Germantown, MD

"Amen, because as a follower of Jesus, who loves people and hates injustice, how can I not give my support? It's my pleasure and honor to join my 'amen'."



Pastor Miriam M. K. Bunge

Lansing, MI

"My life's passion is 'justice' for everyone, not for 'just-us' (those of who are privileged)."



Pastor Ellen Schoepf

Okemos, MI

"The call to love our neighbor means we work for justice, equality and the best of health for ALL people, especially the most vulnerable, wherever they live throughout the world."



Pastor Brad VanderWaal

Hayfield, MN

"Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."
-Luke 6:36



Relief Worker Joe Mason

Nixa, MO

"I've seen extreme poverty and it's devastating effects firsthand. Through smart development programs, we can give millions of people the chance to not just survive but thrive."



Pastor Russell Epperson

Lewistown, MT

"At the core of my spiritual beliefs rests the statement of Jesus about caring for those who are hungry and need clothing and, in our world today, one of the countries that seems to fit that need the most is Africa."



Dr. Andrew Wood

Lincoln, NE

"I believe human beings are the most important resource on planet earth. We need to maximize the ability of all people on the planet to pursue life, liberty, and happiness. To pursue these things only for ourselves is tribalism. To care for one another is one of the things that makes us truly human."



Pastor Daniels Akpan

Chapel Hill, NC

"Growing up in a rural community in Nigeria, gave me the opportunity to experience firsthand how the potentials of children from low income families in Africa are underutilized for community development and this is why I believe that ending poverty and preventable diseases in Africa is a smart investment for global leaders."



Pastor Ashley Randall

Winston-Salem, NC

"God calls us to love one another through practical acts of concern, care, and service."



Pastor Kelly Riggan

Ellendale, ND

"In Matt 25:40, Jesus said that when we take care of the least of these, we are doing it for Him and the folks in the regions we are talking about would quantify the least of these."



Pastor Dick Alexander

Cincinnati, OH

"Africa is the center of global extreme poverty where people live in sub-human conditions, and the US has the capacity to turn this around."



Dr. Doug Collins

Cincinnati, OH

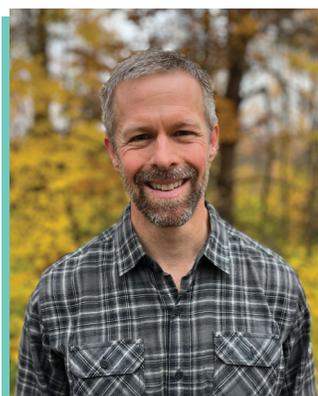
"As an associate professor of family medicine and local church leader, I care about addressing and ending extreme poverty in Africa through both church and U.S. government led efforts because Jesus loves the poor and calls us to defend them—and He, full of mercy, will nevertheless hold us all accountable."



Pastor Greg McElfresh

Cincinnati, OH

“Everyone deserves to live a life free of illness and poverty. If we, as Americans, can help make this a reality, we must.”



Pastor Matthew Reeves

Chesterland, OH

“God has a heart for those living in extreme poverty, and living open handedly increases joy—for them and for us.”



Pastor Jon Middendorf

Edmond, OK

“Hope and healing begin in the heart of God because God’s love knows no bounds or boundaries!”



Pastor Matt Staniz

Chesterbrook, PA

“My faith calls me to actions that express God’s desire for every person, everywhere, to experience a meaningful and healthy life.”



Pastor Don Brock

Irmo, SC

“Please make a difference for those who do not have the resources to care for themselves.”



Elder Debby DeRosa

Greenville, SC

“When I do mission trips in Africa, I feel convicted about the disparity in living conditions and healthcare between the African continent and ours. I want to use my voice to encourage my leaders to join me in trying to help.”



Pastor Jodi McCall

Mt. Pleasant, SC

“As a Christian, I believe that we are called to care for the poor and most vulnerable. Faith and the fight to end extreme poverty should go hand in hand.”



Pastor Joe Hauer

Aberdeen, SD

“We were created to do life together in community in this crazy adventure we call life and our faith walk was not meant to be done alone.”



Pastor Stephen Cook

Germantown, TN

“Love for God is bound tightly to love for neighbor and the two cannot be separated.”



Community Advocate Muna Muday

Nashville, TN

“Born in one of the largest refugee camps called Dadaab in Northeastern, Kenya, I witnessed many women and children who were family and community members die every day. I also lost my two older siblings due to malnutrition and malaria during the civil war in Somalia. This is why I am committed to the fight to end HIV/Aids, Malaria, and TB everywhere.”



Pastor Josh Scott

Nashville, TN

“All human lives are sacred and deserve the opportunity to thrive and flourish, to become everything they were created to become.”



Mike Hogan

Austin, TX

“As believers we are called (directed, even!) by the Bible to look after and care for the poor and suffering. Extreme poverty, preventable disease, and famine are wholly avoidable.”



Pastor Billy Schiel

Tomball, TX

"We need to care for the most vulnerable among us because that is what it means to appropriate the Grace that Jesus has given us."



Pastor Robert & Wendy Griffith

Manassas, VA

"The love of God compels us to pray for hope and healing around the world."



Pastor Billy & Jamie Williams

Morgantown, WV

"We care about ending extreme poverty and preventable disease in Sub-Saharan Africa because we are parents and we want families everywhere to have opportunities to thrive and watch their children grow healthy and strong."



Pastor Jim Gates

Schofield, WI

"The Apostle John tells us that we cannot love God, who we do not see, if we do not love our neighbor, who we can see; and in our modern world, my neighbors live in Schofield, WI, Gonaives, Haiti, and Korogocho, Kenya."