

# Parliament in your Parish

A step-by-step guide to arranging  
a community MP meeting



**“Local individuals and groups can make a real difference. They are able to instil a greater sense of responsibility, a strong sense of community, a readiness to protect others, a spirit of creativity and a deep love for the land... Unless citizens control political power – national, regional and municipal – it will not be possible to control damage to the environment.”**

*LAUDATO SI,  
POPE FRANCIS, # 179*

# A Prayer to the Creator

Lord, Father of our human family, you created all human beings equal in dignity: pour forth into our hearts a fraternal spirit and inspire in us a dream of renewed encounter, dialogue, justice and peace. Move us to create healthier societies and a more dignified world, a world without hunger, poverty, violence and war.

May our hearts be open to all the peoples and nations of the earth. May we recognise the goodness and beauty that you have sown in each of us, and thus forge bonds of unity, common projects, and shared dreams. Amen.

**This prayer is from Pope Francis' encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*.**



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# Taking an active part in reclaiming our common home

## RECLAIM OUR COMMON HOME

The coronavirus pandemic has been the greatest health crisis in a century. Pope Francis tells us that this moment of extraordinary turmoil is the time to rethink the future of our common home. By using the phrase 'our common home', the Holy Father reminds us that our planet is much more than simply a store of resources to be used and abused by a few at the expense of millions. The planet is everyone's home; it is also a gift from the Lord and a reminder of our shared humanity. With this as our inspiration, we are campaigning to achieving three major goals:

- Tackling the climate crisis
  - Ending unjust debts
  - Holding business accountable
- Global solidarity**  
**Global justice**  
**Global responsibility**

## GREATNESS, NOT COMFORT

The issues we are campaigning on may feel overwhelming for many of us. There is no doubt that they are big and complex. Yet, as Catholics, we know that for God nothing is impossible. We also know that small actions can be transformative.

We couldn't have a better example to illustrate this than the story of the CAFOD founders: two women, Jacquie and Elspeth, who decided to raise funds for a mother-and-baby clinic in the island of Dominica where children were starving.

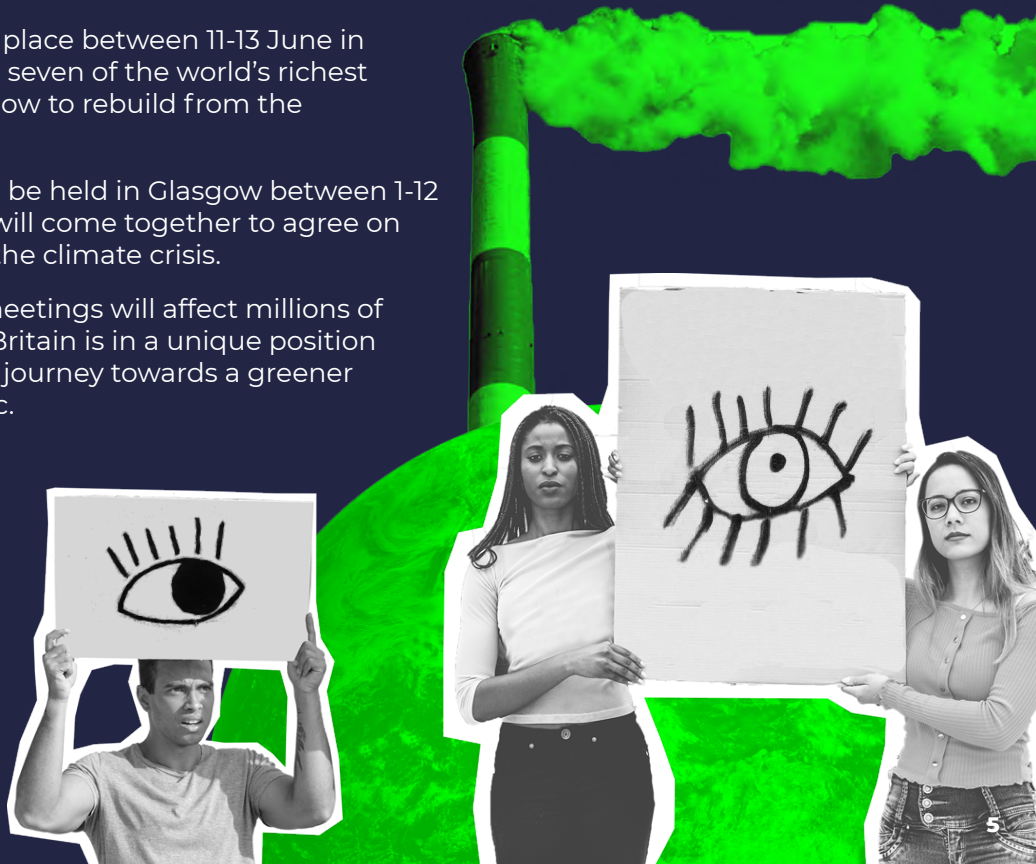
Sixty years later, we are part of one of the largest aid networks in the world, reaching out to people living in poverty in over 30 countries and campaigning for global justice so that everyone can live a full and dignified life. Yet CAFOD wouldn't exist if Jacquie and Elspeth hadn't taken action. They chose to put their faith into action. As Pope Benedict once put it, "... The world offers you comfort, but you were not made for comfort. You were made for greatness..."

# The eyes of the world are on us

**During 2021, Britain will be hosting two major international conferences:**

- The G7 annual meeting will take place between 11-13 June in Cornwall where the leaders from seven of the world's richest countries will gather to discuss how to rebuild from the pandemic.
- The UN 'COP26' climate talks will be held in Glasgow between 1-12 November where world leaders will come together to agree on the next steps needed to tackle the climate crisis.

The decisions taken in these two meetings will affect millions of people around the world. As host, Britain is in a unique position to exercise global leadership in the journey towards a greener and fairer world after the pandemic.



## PARLIAMENT IN OUR PARISH

We are inviting Catholics to organise a virtual meeting with their local MP, to discuss how to rebuild from the pandemic in a way that tackles the major global issues of our time, including climate change and unjust foreign debts.

With more than five million Catholics in the UK, these virtual meetings will be a chance for local MPs to hear the voices of the Catholic community in their constituency. It will also be an opportunity for us to get to know our MPs and learn what they are doing to ensure the UK plays a leading role



in the global recovery from the pandemic and to address the climate crisis.

Your MP was elected to represent their constituents in Parliament. That includes you! It's important that they hear about your concerns.

Regardless of whether your MP is a government minister, an opposition spokesperson or a backbench MP, each of them has the power to make a difference. This might be through the way they vote on legislation, getting important issues raised in Parliament or joining committees.

It's vital we encourage all MPs to support our campaign to reclaim our common home.

**“We have the space we need for co-responsibility in creating and putting into place new processes and changes. Let us take an active part in renewing and supporting our troubled societies.”**

*FRATELLI TUTTI, POPE FRANCIS, #77*

# Six simple steps to organising a virtual meeting with your MP

## 1. DARE TO DO IT!

It's simpler than it sounds! It can be a lot of fun and an opportunity to have a common project with other members of your parish. The CAFOD campaigns team will be on hand to support you every step of the way.

You don't have to be an expert on policy issues to host this meeting. What is important is that you care about God's creation and are passionate about ending global poverty and injustice. This is an opportunity to put your faith into action.

You might decide to organise this meeting along with other parishes who share the same MP so you could also make this an opportunity to connect with more people in your community.

The first steps you need to take are:

- **Talk to your priest** and let him know that you would like to organise a virtual meeting as part of CAFOD's Reclaim Our Common Home campaign. Explain what the meeting

is about and why it is important to follow Pope Francis' call to take an active part in renewing our troubled society.

- **Once your Parish is happy** 'hosting' the virtual meeting, note down a few potential dates and times.
- **Find one or two other members** of your parish to help organise the meeting. You can also ask friends or family members who might be able to help too. Anything between two to six people will be a good number to work on this project.
- **Email your MP's office** and invite them to the meeting. If you don't get a reply in one week, send another email and follow up with a phone call. You can find your MP's contact details at: [members.parliament.uk/members/Commons](https://members.parliament.uk/members/Commons)
- **Once your MP confirms** the date and time, you will need to set up the digital meeting. You can use a platform such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams or

Google Meet. Platforms like this will provide you with a link that you can share with everyone who is attending the meeting.

Some MPs may want to set up the link for the meeting themselves, but others will expect you to do it. Please note if you use Zoom there is 40-minute limit to the meeting. If you need support with setting up the meeting, the CAFOD campaigns team can provide you with a link. Contact us at: [PinyourP@cafod.org.uk](mailto:PinyourP@cafod.org.uk)

### More than one MP in your parish?

Depending on the parish boundaries in your area, members of the same parish might live in different parliamentary constituencies and have different MPs. There are a few options to address this and it all depends on your preferences:

- You could pick the MP you think would be most receptive to our campaign goals or the one you think could be most influential.
- You could set up separate meetings with the different MPs who represent your parishioners.
- You could meet more than one MP at a time by setting up a date with one MP and then invite the other MPs to come along.

## IMPORTANT

Let us know that you will be joining Parliament in your Parish by registering your virtual meeting at [cafod.org.uk/PIYP](https://cafod.org.uk/PIYP)





## SUGGESTED TEMPLATE EMAIL



To **Name of your MP**

Subject Invite to join a virtual meeting.

Dear **Name of your MP**,

I am one of your constituents and I am writing to invite you to join a virtual meeting with a group of local Catholic supporters from CAFOD – the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development.

The coronavirus pandemic has had a catastrophic impact on the world's poorest communities, with 150 million people set to fall into extreme poverty as a result. Meanwhile, the climate crisis has not gone away, and it is the same communities who are the hardest hit. With Britain hosting both the G7 and the COP26 this year, we think that our country has a crucial role to play in tackling global poverty, injustice and the climate crisis.

We would appreciate the opportunity for our community to share our concerns with you and learn more about your work in

Parliament on these issues.

*(You could share here more about your parish work or the local Catholic community in your area. For example: "Faith groups in Blackburn have a long history of campaigning on social justice. In our parish, we have received a liveSimply award in recognition of our efforts to live sustainably and in solidarity with the world's poorest communities.")*

This meeting is part of CAFOD's Reclaim Our Common Home campaign which aims to rebuild a better world as we recover from the pandemic. There is more information on the campaign at [cafod.org.uk/reclaim](https://cafod.org.uk/reclaim).

We have suggested a few possible dates for our meeting below. If none of those dates are suitable, please let us know when you are available.

***(Add you possible dates here)***

I look forward to hearing from you.

***(Greeting, signature and your address).***

**Send**

## 2. LET'S SPREAD THE WORD!

Once you have confirmed the meeting date, it's time to let other members of your parish know.

- **Promote the meeting** through your parish's website, newsletter and social media channels. You'll need to include the date and time of the event and provide contact details for people who want to find out more (and so you can send them the link to the meeting once it's ready).

- **Phone and email people** you know locally and invite them.
- **Let your local CAFOD Coordinator** know the date.
- **A week before the event**, phone and send out a gentle reminder to everyone who has registered. You can tweet too.



If people get in touch with you about the event and give you their contact details, then you must keep any new contact details you collect private. Store them securely and delete them after the event unless someone has given you permission to keep hold of their contact details.

**“Each individual Christian and every community is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and for enabling them to be fully a part of society.”**

*EVANGELII GAUDIUM,  
POPE FRANCIS, #187*

## SUGGESTED TEMPLATE EMAIL



To ***Names of invitees***

Subject Virtual meeting with our local MP

The coronavirus pandemic has had a catastrophic impact on the world's poorest communities, with 150 million people set to fall into extreme poverty as a result. Meanwhile, the climate crisis is still a huge threat.

Come and discuss with ***(Name of MP)*** the role Britain can play in leading a just and green global recovery from the pandemic.

**When:** *(Date & time)*

**Join us using this link:** *(link to the meeting and any registration or login instructions.)*

This event is hosted by members of ***(parish name)*** as part of CAFOD's Reclaim Our Common Home campaign.

Let us know you're coming by emailing: ***(add your email address here)***.

Send

## 3. BEFORE THE MEETING

### The technical side of hosting an event

Hosting a virtual meeting using platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams or Google Meet is fairly simple, so don't worry about needing lots of technical skills.

- If you are worried about the technical side of the virtual meeting then try to identify a 'tech-savvy' person (a friend or family member) who can be on hand to help with the technology on the day of the meeting. Alternatively, you can contact the CAFOD Campaigns Team, who can support you. Email us at: **[PinyourP@cafod.org.uk](mailto:PinyourP@cafod.org.uk)**
- We recommend you organise a practice session before the big day to make sure everything is working fine.

## Structure of the meeting

It is up to you how you structure your meeting. Here's an example of how you might do so:

- **Introduction:** Welcome people to the call and introduce each other.
- **Presentation:** Ask your MP to present their views on how Britain can play a leading role in the global recovery from the pandemic and in ending the climate crisis.
- **Questions and discussion:** Invite parishioners to ask the MP questions and say how they want the British government to lead the way at this year's G7 and COP26 summits.
- **Wrap up:** Thank everyone for joining the meeting and ask people to sign the petition to the Prime Minister at [cafod.org.uk/reclaim](https://cafod.org.uk/reclaim)

## 4. ON THE BIG DAY

The day of the meeting has finally arrived!

Check that:

- You and your fellow parishioners have a few questions ready to ask to your MP once they finish their talk (see some suggestions on page 16 and 17).
- Before your MP starts speaking, explain the Zoom, Microsoft Teams or Google Meet features, including how people should mute themselves when they're not speaking, and ask attendees whether they are happy for a screenshot to be taken of the meeting.
- Make sure that as many people as possible have a chance to participate and ask questions. Some might want to talk too much and others might need a bit of encouragement!
- When the meeting is coming to an end, ensure that it is clear what your MP can do to support the campaign objectives. This could include a promise to raise the issue in Parliament, share a post on social media or write to the relevant ministers.
- Close the meeting by thanking your MP and the attendees, and remind them to sign our campaign petition at [cafod.org.uk/reclaim](https://cafod.org.uk/reclaim)

# The eyes of the world are on us

As part of our Reclaim Our Common Home campaign, children in Catholic schools across the country will be drawing and taking pictures of eyes to symbolise the key role that Britain has this year as host of two major global summits.

You can also find a downloadable template online that you can share with your children's liturgy coordinator at: [cafod.org.uk/families](https://cafod.org.uk/families)





**“As far as possible  
citizens should take  
an active part in  
public life.”**

THE CATECHISM OF THE  
CATHOLIC CHURCH  
(NOS. 1913-1915).



## SAMPLE OPENING SCRIPT FOR THE CHAIR

Good morning/afternoon everyone, and welcome to the **(name of your parish)** Parliament in your Parish event.

I am a supporter of CAFOD, the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development. Along with parishioners from **(name of your Parish)**, we are organising this meeting to talk to our local MP about how Britain can play a leading role in making sure we plan to recover from the pandemic in a way which includes everyone and cares for our common home.

***(Thank your MP and the audience for joining the meeting.)***

We'll start our meeting by hearing from **(MP name)**. Then we'll open the conversation up for people to ask some questions and to discuss how we can build a better world after the pandemic, as Pope Francis urges to do.

At any time during the webinar, you'll have the opportunity to submit your questions to our MP. To do so, just type your question into the chat box. As time allows, **(name of your MP)** will address as many questions as she/he can during the Q&A session at the end of her/his talk.

## 5. WHAT YOUR MP NEEDS TO KNOW

2021 is a crucial year for Britain as we host both the G7 summit and the UN COP26 climate change summit. It's vital that our political leaders hear our demands, as decisions taken at these international meetings will have lasting consequences for us all.

Make the most of your meeting by ensuring that your MP is clear about what our campaign demands are and asking them to support our campaign goals through their work in Parliament.

- **Cancel debts owed by lower income countries.**

CAFOD is campaigning for full debt cancellation – not just suspension – of debts owed by the world's poorest countries. Crucially, this must include debts owed to other governments such as the UK, to multilateral institutions such as the World Bank, and to private companies such as HSBC, JP Morgan, Blackrock and UBS. We don't want any country to have to choose between saving lives and repaying debts. Read more about CAFOD's work on debt cancellation at:

[cafod.org.uk/cancelthedebt](https://cafod.org.uk/cancelthedebt)

- **Support renewable energy.** We want to see an end to all support for fossil fuel overseas. Britain must invest in a just transition to renewable energy globally – one that puts the needs of the

poorest and those on the front line of the climate crisis at its heart. As host to the G7 and COP26 summits, the British government must aim to secure commitments from other wealthy nations to ensure there is global cooperation on moving away from fossil fuels. Read more about CAFOD's work on ending fossil fuels at:

[cafod.org.uk/climate](https://cafod.org.uk/climate)

- **Limit global temperature rises to 1.5°C.**

We need to see urgent and decisive action to end the climate crisis. This will require Britain to play a leadership role to ensure countries make ambitious commitments ahead of the COP26 climate talks in November. Countries that are least responsible for causing climate change are the ones suffering most from its effects. All countries must play their part and wealthy nations – who bear the greatest responsibility for the crisis – need to step up and commit to rapid action to reduce their impact on the climate.

## Suggested questions to ask your MP

150 million people are set to fall into extreme poverty as a result of the pandemic. But instead of increasing support to fight global poverty and support the global recovery, the UK government is slashing the aid budget this year. With 2021 being the year that the UK has a leadership role to play on the global stage, we are saddened to see Britain turning its back on the world like this. Will you support our calls to increase the quantity and quality of UK aid spending?

Pope Francis has been clear in his calls for debt cancellation. And the head of the World Bank has said that more debt cancellation is essential for low-income countries. We know that cancelling debts is the easiest way to allow poorer countries to recover from the pandemic. Will you support our calls for full debt cancellation for low income countries that need it?





Millions of our sisters and brothers worldwide are already facing the reality of the climate crisis, with homes, livelihoods and loved ones at risk from more frequent and more severe storms, floods and droughts. Yet it's the world's richest countries, including the UK, who bear the greatest responsibility for the greenhouse gas emissions driving temperature rises. What will you do to ensure that our government takes the climate crisis seriously at COP26 and that an agreement is reached that ensures we stay within 1.5 degrees of warming?

## 6. AFTER THE MEETING

We hope your meeting will have inspired more people to answer Pope Francis' call for us to play our part in reclaiming our common home and strengthening the Catholic voice in our communities.

After the meeting, don't forget to:

Send a thank you email to your MP for joining your meeting.

Contact the CAFOD Campaigns Team and let us know how your meeting went by emailing us at:

**[PinyourP@cafod.org.uk](mailto:PinyourP@cafod.org.uk)**



# Every petition signature counts

## Encouraging everyone to sign the campaign petition

Don't forget to ask everyone in your parish to sign our petition to the Prime Minister, demanding he put people worst affected by the climate crisis at the heart of the talks and ensure that the outcomes of the talks are ambitious enough to care for our common home.

You can do this by going to [cafod.org.uk/reclaim](https://cafod.org.uk/reclaim) or you can order paper versions of the petition at [shop.cafod.org.uk](https://shop.cafod.org.uk)

Please encourage as many people as possible to sign the petition. Some ideas to do this could be:

- Organising regular petition card signings after Mass.
- Posting the petition cards through the doors of other parish members you know well, or your local friends, (if lockdown restrictions allow).

- Once someone you know has signed the petition card, ask them if they would be happy to find at least two more people who could also sign the petition.

Once you are ready, please post the petition cards back to CAFOD using the free-post.



## Useful links and contacts

- Parliament in your Parish  
[cafod.org.uk/PIYP](https://cafod.org.uk/PIYP)
- Reclaim our Common Home Campaign  
[cafod.org.uk/reclaim](https://cafod.org.uk/reclaim)
- Find your MP  
[members.parliament.uk/FindYourMP](https://members.parliament.uk/FindYourMP)
- CAFOD education  
[cafod.org.uk/families](https://cafod.org.uk/families)
- Hope for the Future  
[hftf.org.uk](https://hftf.org.uk)

If you have any questions about how to organise a Parliament in your Parish meeting, please contact the CAFOD Campaigns Team at [PinyourP@cafod.org.uk](mailto:PinyourP@cafod.org.uk)

**“...Climate change is a global problem with serious implications... It represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day.”**

POPE FRANCIS



**reclaim  
our common  
home**

**CAFOD**  
Catholic Agency for  
Overseas Development



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