

HOW TO MAKE AN OFFERING OF LETTERS

Micah Challenge encourages you to use your words on behalf of the poor as an act of worship to God. All you need is a pen, 15 minutes and the desire to see our world transformed into a picture of how God wants it to be. You can take part as an individual or as a group.

Each year thousands of Christians in Australia write letters as part of the Micah Challenge 'Offering of Letters' campaign and our message is being heard in the halls of Parliament. Every major denomination and over thirty different Christian aid and mission groups are supporting the campaign and we want to make sure these issues stay on the minds of our leaders – asking them to act with urgency and compassion to help meet the basic needs of the poorest communities.

In 2009, the Prime Minister's office made an official response to the Offering of Letters campaign. It states in part: *"...Thank you for the encouraging words from Micah Challenge for the Government's policies to address global poverty. The Government remains committed to increasing the Official Development Assistance... as part of global efforts to make poverty history."*

The global economic crisis is making progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) more difficult. The impact of the crisis is especially severe in developing countries, and therefore the role of donor nations in protecting the poorest and most vulnerable is critical. In London in April 2009, Australia and all other G20 member states reaffirmed commitment to the MDGs and to achieving ODA pledges..."

The Australian Government has acknowledged the need for citizens to keep speaking out on behalf of the poor, especially in the face of a difficult economic climate. Taking part in the Offering of Letters campaign is one way Christians can respond to God's call to "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute" (Proverbs 31:8). This is particularly important in the lead up to a Federal Election where we are seeking to ensure that poverty is once again a key election issue.



PLEASE take the time to personally hand-write a letter to the Prime Minister. Some suggested wording is given over the page, but please feel free to use your own words and speak of your personal concern for the poor. This shows you have put time and thought into the issue and your letter will be more powerful.

- HAND-WRITE clearly and print your name and address at the end.
- BE POSITIVE and encouraging.
- PRAY that our leaders will act.
- This activity is best done with a group, such as part of a worship service. For more information including a PowerPoint presentation, visit the Micah Challenge website.

Thank you for taking part in Offering of Letters campaign. Your effort is much appreciated.

Micah Challenge is an international campaign calling for people of faith to speak up for justice and mercy for the world's poor and vulnerable. Only when individuals, communities and national leaders work together can we tackle the big issues set out in the MDGs such as reducing child and maternal deaths, ending hunger, and helping poor nations adapt to the damaging effects of climate change. Visit The Micah Challenge website to find out more.

See the next page for suggested text for writing a letter in 2009/2010 about aid [Please check the Micah Challenge website for the most up to date letter writing guides].

Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing because... [add your personal thoughts here]

I believe we can act to see global poverty halved if we meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. This date is not too far away.

Thank you for keeping your commitment to increase Australia's overseas aid to 0.5% of national income by 2015, even in the face of difficult economic times. I appreciate the value your Government places on the MDGs and the increase in aid funding we saw in the 2009-10 federal budget. This will make a very real difference to our global neighbours – people experiencing the crippling effects of poverty.

As your office stated in the official response to Offering of Letters in 2009, "The impact of the global economic crisis is especially severe in developing countries, and therefore the role of donor nations in protecting the poorest and most vulnerable is critical."

I therefore ask that you make a timetabled commitment to your 'aspiration goal' of an aid target of 0.7% of national income by the upcoming election.

I pray that you will have wisdom and courage as you lead Australia.

Yours sincerely,

[Sign the letter and neatly print your name, address and postcode]

1. **HAND-WRITE** and personalise the letter – please be neat.
2. Give your letter to the person who has organised the letter-writing. OR send your letter to Micah Challenge, Locked Bag 122, Frenchs Forest NSW 2086. We can then track numbers and present the letters to the Prime Minister at Voices for Justice – the annual Micah Challenge advocacy gathering in Canberra.
3. Please ensure your letters arrive at the office two weeks before Voices for Justice.
4. Consider sending a representative from your group to attend and help deliver the letters. Visit the Micah Challenge website to find out more.



Response form for Offering of Letters

Complete this form and send it with your letters to: Micah Challenge, Locked Bag 122, Frenchs Forest NSW 2086

Name of Church/school/group:

Contact person:

Phone:

Email:

Address:

Federal electorate (where the group is located):

Member of Parliament (where group is located):

(You can find out this information at www.apps.aec.gov.au/esearch)

Number of letters written to the Prime Minister:

I have sent a letter to the MP representing our church and/or a letter to the Opposition Leader

Please add me to the list to receive Micah Challenge monthly e- updates on the campaign

For more information contact the Micah Challenge office: info@micahchallenge.org.au.