

Sharing the Light

A Mission Education Service from JMA

Ideas for an inclusive act of worship on the theme of Sharing the Light in times of darkness and how we can learn, pray, and serve to make a difference in the world.

These notes are available on the JMA pages of the website at www.methodist.org.uk as a text file so that you can download them and use them to create your own service. A congregational sheet with the responses, prayers and JMA news can also be downloaded or ordered from JMA.

Also on the website are a number of photos to use during the service or as an exhibition after the service to help you to visualise the people we are sharing our service with.

The service is centered around two sections – *Light from Japan* and *Light from the Bible*, each split into *Learn*, *Pray*, and *Serve*. There are suggestions for activities around each of the stories and you are invited to select the ones you think most appropriate, or replace them with your own.

Links to JMA are suggested but not necessary to the service. If you do use them, JMA offertory envelopes are available and might be used as part of the 'Pray' or 'Serve' sections after the story from Japan.



Opening Responses

Sun and moon and shining stars

Come and praise God's name

Fire, hail, snow, and ice

Come and praise God's name

Mountains, hills, fruit trees, and cedars

Come and praise God's name

Wild beasts, farm animals, snakes, and birds on the wing

Come and praise God's name

Kings, princes, governors, and judges

Come and praise God's name

Boys, girls, old men, children, and women

Come and praise God's name

Let us all praise God's name!

(From Psalm 148)

Introduction

Light and darkness are all around us. Sometimes the darkness can seem stronger when we are faced with times of trouble and despair. For many of our partner churches in Asia, the last year has been a time of darkness following the devastation of the tsunami. In those times of darkness it is important that we remember Jesus' command to us to be 'the light of the world' (Matthew 5:14). Through this service we hope to remember the light that exists in the darkness, as well as taking time to think of all our partner churches across the world. In particular how the courage and care of individuals and churches has often been a source of light to us.

Suggested Readings

The second half of the service has been built around Luke 24:13 – 35, Jesus on the road to Emmaus, but you may wish to use another reading that would illustrate the point just as well.

Matthew 8:23-27 Jesus calms the storm, showing us how God takes risks in every situation.

Ecclesiastes 4:7-12 The importance of friends and the fact that we all need each other, locally and globally.

Matthew 25:1-13 The wise bridesmaids who were resourceful and prepared.

John Wesley's voyage to America and the encounter with the Moravians during the storm.

Hymns and Songs

- The bell of creation (CP2)
- When God made the garden of creation (CP)
- How wonderful this world (H&P)
- For the fruits of his creation (H&P)
- God in his love (H&P)
- Praise and thanksgiving (H&P)
- Christ is alive (H&P)
- Make me a channel (H&P) (SF)
- Candle in the window (CP2)
- There is a place (WGR)
- Brother, sister let me serve you (CG) (SF)
- The light of Christ (MP)
- Give me oil in my lamp (MP)

CP Come & Praise, BBC

CP2 Come & Praise 2, BBC

H&P Hymns & Psalms

WGR When Grief is Raw (Wild Goose Publications)

CG Common Ground

SF Songs of Fellowship

MP Mission Praise

Light From Japan

LEARN:

The following story is an old Japanese folk tale whose roots are unknown, it is also known in India. The story could either be read aloud or adapted to be used as a drama.

Long ago in Japan lived an old man named Hamaguchi. His farmhouse was on the side of a mountain which sloped down to the sea. At the foot of the mountain was a village of a hundred or so thatched houses and a temple.

One late summer afternoon Hamaguchi was sitting on his balcony looking down at the village below. All the villagers were out celebrating the good rice harvest that year, the streets were decorated with brightly coloured paper lanterns and streamers and they were wearing festive clothing too. The dancing was about to begin. Hamaguchi looked out to sea - it was a beautiful blue under the mid-day sun. Suddenly there was a rocking feeling, then a bit stronger and the whole house seemed to shake. Hamaguchi knew exactly what it was, an earthquake, he'd experienced many in his lifetime so he wasn't at all frightened, until he looked again at the sea.

The seas had changed colour and the tide had changed, the water was being sucked out from the shore. The villagers stopped their dancing and ran to the beach to watch. No-one knew what this strange happening was. But the old man on the mountain did. He remembered something from his childhood. He knew what the sea was going to do. He must hurry - there was no time to run down to the village and ring the bell in the temple, he had to do something NOW!

'Quick,' he called to Yone his grandson, 'light a torch from the fire and follow me.' What on earth was Grandfather up to? Yone didn't stop to ask any questions, but

did what Hamaguchi said. The old man ran with his flaming torch to his rice stacks - all of his harvest and all of his wealth - and he set fire to each of them. The dry stalks went up in flames quickly and soon they were all ablaze. 'What are you doing?' Yone yelled and he started to cry. The watcher in the temple saw the fire and rang the big bell. In Japan as soon as the temple bell rings it is known that there is danger and if there is a fire ALL must help. As soon as the villagers heard the bell they turned from the sea and saw the fires on the mountainside, they ran like a swarm of ants in a race to put out the flames. By the time they reached Hamaguchi's place it was too late and all the rice was gone.

'How did it happen?' the people cried. 'Grandfather did it,' Yone said through his tears. 'Why? Why do such a thing? Are you crazy?'

'Look' said the old man. 'Look at the sea.' And then they saw the great wall of water sweeping across the very place where they had been standing on the shore, rushing faster than a bird flies. The noise was like thunder and the wave hit the side of the mountain and they were all drenched in spray. The waves came again, and again, but finally they slowed and the people were left speechless. Their fields had been torn and churned up. Their entire village was washed away. Nothing was left. But everyone was safe on the mountainside amongst Hamaguchi's burnt out rice stacks.

Then they realised what he had done for them.

After telling this story give people the opportunity, either in small groups or as a whole congregation to reflect by asking the following questions –

- *What would have happened if Hamaguchi had not been willing to burn his rice?*
- *How do you think Yone felt when his grandfather asked him to pass him the torch?*
- *Hamaguchi has burned all his rice, how do you think he will feed himself and his grandson now?*
- *What are your feelings about this story?*

PRAY:

The story we have just heard maybe an old folk tale, but as with many things in life, stories have a way of echoing reality. To focus the prayers for those affected by the darkness of the tsunami, share this story with people.

On 26th December 2004 in Edendakulai, a village in Tirunelveli District in Tamil Nadu, South India, something almost the same happened. Fr Britto had gone home after the Sunday morning service when he heard a strange sound and looked out of his window to see huge five metre waves hurtling towards the village. He ran back to his church and frantically started ringing the bell. It was so strange to hear the bells after the service, that everyone realised something was amiss. They ran to the church and Fr Britto got them to run away from the sea-shore. He kept ringing the bell as some people went back to the beach to pick up fish that had been thrown up on the beach after the first wave. Because Fr Britto kept on ringing the bell the whole village was saved from drowning that awful day.

In both the stories we have shared it was the sound of the bells that alerted people to the approaching disaster, ask people to consider other times when we hear bells to alert us to things. (If you have any hand-bells available you could invite people to try some bell ringing here!) Explore the idea that bells can be both to alarm, as in the stories, but also can be part of celebration, like church bells ringing at a wedding. The dual role of bells can be reflected in this prayer activity-

Give out cards which have been cut out into the shape of a bell, ask the people to draw or write prayers on one side for those who are still affected by the darkness of the tsunami, and on the other side, some of the hopes and dreams we would have for the future for all peoples of the world.

During this time you may want to play some music and, if you are able, show some of the images of lives affected by the Tsunami which are available to download from the JMA website www.methodist.org.uk

Ask people to hold on to these prayer bells and inform them that they will be used later in the service for another prayer activity.

SERVE:

In the story from Japan it is very significant that Yone was asked to pass the light to his grandfather so that he could then light the rice stacks. When Jesus told us to be the light of the world and not to hide our light, he was asking us to do what Yone did; passing the light on to others in times of darkness.

Passing the light is a important part of our service to those abroad and in this country.

Here you may want to share some of the ways that JMA has shared light in the last year. You will find these listed later in the booklet.

During a hymn or a piece of music you can ask the people to share the light with each other. Have one large candle at the front of the church and pass the light around the people from candle to candle. Keep the candles lit until you lead the next section of the service.

(You can purchase small candles online from www.hayes-and-finch-ltd.co.uk)

Light from the Bible

LEARN:

In this story we are starting in a time of darkness.(If you have used the candles suggested earlier then ask the people to blow them out **BUT** keep one lit and hide it away for use later on in this section. Ask everyone to keep hold of their unlit candles.) It is not long after Good Friday and the followers of Jesus are in despair over his arrest, trial, and crucifixion. We pick up the story as two of his followers are walking along the road to Emmaus.

Read or dramatise Luke 24 :13-35

PRAY:

Because the friends of Jesus told others of his life, his death, and his resurrection, the message spread quickly and the Church was born. The Church that we know now is made up of different groups all across the world. The British Methodist Church has partner churches all over the globe. These partner churches are listed on the congregational sheet as well as later in this booklet. Ask people to look at the list of partner

churches for a few minutes and then choose two or three of those churches to think of as they come forward to hang their bells at the front of the church. These are the churches that we walk with on the road towards the light. It would be ideal to use a small tree to hang these on, or even a wooden cross. Just like the bells that ring out in joy that we thought about earlier, these bells are ringing to remind us that light has been spread all across the world, and that in times of darkness we can provide a light to those in need.

SERVE:

In the Road to Emmaus story the followers of Jesus were startled to discover that the light had not gone from the world, that Jesus was not only alive but that he had walked and eaten with them! For us today that light still burns. If you still have the lit candle, bring it out to the front again at this point. Explain that even in the darkest of times the light cannot be extinguished and that we are still challenged to share it with peoples from around the world. Ask the congregation to pass the light to one another whilst saying or singing the words from the Prayer of St Francis of Assisi.

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness, joy.
O, Divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love;
for it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.*

As the last person lights their candle they may wish to share the blessing with the congregation. Invite people to take their candles home and burn

them there as a sign of the everlasting light.

You may also wish to ask the people to take away one of the bells that were made earlier to use as a personal prayer focus. Encourage people to take one that they did not make, sharing the light further with one another.

Blessing

The Lord bless and keep you,
The Lord make light to shine on you.
The Lord hold you safely forever.
Go out in to the world to learn, to pray and to serve.
Amen.

Sharing the Light across the World

The Methodist Church in Britain has links around the world, here is a list of the national churches that are our main partners:

Africa (13)

West Africa

The Gambia (the last overseas district of the British Methodist Church)
Methodist Churches of Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, Bénin, Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Togo and Nigeria.
The Presbyterian Church of Cameroon.

Southern Africa

The Methodist Church of Southern Africa (which covers Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia and Swaziland).
The United Church of Zambia and the Methodist Church Zimbabwe.

East Africa

The Methodist Church Kenya, which also supports mission work in Tanzania & Uganda.

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Americas (14)

South America

The Methodist Churches of Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, Chile and Peru.

Central America & the Caribbean

Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas (MCCA), including the districts of Leeward Islands, South Caribbean, Jamaica, Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands, Haiti, Belize and Honduras, Costa Rica and Guyana.

The Methodist Churches of Guatemala, Mexico, Panama and Cuba.

North America

United Methodist Church (USA)

The United Church of Canada

Asia (16)

Church of Pakistan

Church of Bangladesh

Church of North India (CNI)

Church of South India (CSI)

The Methodist Church of Upper Myanmar

The United Mission to Nepal (UMN)

The Methodist Churches of Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia.

China Christian Council

The Methodist Churches of Hong Kong and Korea

The United Church of Christ in Japan

Methodist Church of Aotearoa/New Zealand

The Uniting Church of Australia (UCA)

The Pacific (5)

United Church in Papua New Guinea

United Church of the Solomon Islands

Methodist Churches of Samoa and Fiji.

The Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga.

Europe (8)

The United Methodist Northern Europe Central Conference:

Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland (*Swedish language*), Finland (*Finnish language*), Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia.

The United Methodist German Central Conference

United Methodist Central and Southern Europe Central Conference:

Algeria, Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Hungary, Poland, Switzerland/France, Serbia and Montenegro, Macedonia.

The Methodist Churches of Portugal and Ireland

The United Churches in Belgium, Italy and Spain

2005 is another bumper year for Mission Partners, please remember the following

Revd Dr Janet Corlett to Honduras

Revd Alison Facey, Chris Esdaile and Luke to Chile.

Revd Rosemary Fletcher and James Rowley to Sri Lanka.

Revd Augusto and Mrs Mirna Giron with Gabriel and Debora to Italy.

Richard and Kathryn Jackson to the Solomon Islands.

Shani Sedgwick to Bangladesh.

Allan and Andrea Smith to Nepal.

JMA's sharing the light this year

During 2004/5 JMA spread the light with the money you raised by:

- Giving grants for post-tsunami relief work to Church of North India, Church of South India, Methodist Church of Sri Lanka, Methodist Church of Indonesia.
- Helping the Church of North India train its leaders about HIV/AIDS.
- Giving help to the churches of the Caribbean recovering from hurricane Ivan.

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- Paying Jonsen Sembiring in the Methodist Church of Indonesia who helps church communities to develop income-generating projects such as pig rearing using integrated organic farming methods.
- Supporting The Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine & Israel (EAPPI), an initiative of the World Council of Churches with the mission to accompany Palestinians and Israelis in non-violent actions and concerted advocacy efforts to end the occupation.
- Assisting The Methodist Church of Zimbabwe with a large grant to develop children and family services at the Matthew Rusike Children's Home near Harare, especially for those affected or infected by HIV/AIDS.

Sharing the Light Activities

Light making

If you have some small tealights you can use these as the lightsource inside paper bags. Decorate the paper bags with images of the places in the world that we share the light with. Placing the tealight inside the open paper bag (with the opening to the top) provides a beautiful table decoration. (But be careful not to let the bag catch fire, and never leave candles unattended.)

Lighting Up Priorities

A consultation was organised in Hong Kong by the Methodist Church of Great Britain with its partner churches. They wanted to discover what the common issues were for all the churches in South East Asia. The five issues that were highlighted by all the churches were; Religious Extremism, Globalisation, Climate Change, Training Church Leaders, and HIV/Aids. Just like the reading suggested from Ecclesiastes 4:7-12 the result reminds us of how closely we are tied to those in the world around us.

Finding out what the common issues for everyone in your church are is an important step towards planning your mission activity. Do you think that they would list the same things as our partners in South East Asia did? Would they be surprised about the issues that were raised there? Where are the common concerns for people of all ages in your church?

Take some time to find out what these issues would be.

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For JMA resources telephone 020 7467 5119.