



Gifts of Love

A Mission Education Service from JMA

Ideas for an inclusive act of worship on the theme of God's loving provision for us and our response in gifts of love.

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, song and JMA news can also be downloaded or ordered from JMA.

Opening Responses

Come before God with thanks and praise!
We see and know God's love

In the world, new every morning
We see and know God's love

In the colourful life of all creation
We see and know God's love

In our comfort, food and friends
We see and know God's love

Come before God with thanks and praise!
We see and know God's love



Introduction

Coconuts are found in all parts of the tropical world – Pacific Islands, Southern Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. Every single part of the plant and its fruit can be used, providing for almost all human physical needs: food, shelter, health and comfort. (See below for a list of its many uses and order the JMA pack *Surfing South Pacific* for more to learn and do.)

Like the coconut tree, God too is to be found all over the world and provides for all our needs. All our needs can be met because God has created – and continually recreates – the world in such a way that it provides everything we require.

Things are made this way, because God loves us so much. To illustrate how much we are loved by God, you could use the story, *Guess how much I love you* by Sam McBratney, illustrated by Anita Jeram, published by Walker Books. (It is available to buy or order from most bookshops or on-line in several formats including 'big book' size, which is large enough to show the pictures in church.) *I love you with all my heart* by Noris Kern, published by Chronicle Books is also suitable.

We take part in this divine process of providing for the needs of all people, by using the earth's resources wisely and ensuring there is a just sharing of food, shelter, health and comfort for all people. We do this out of our love, which is God's love, through gifts of love.

Suggested Readings

Psalms 148 Let everything praise the Lord!

John 6: 3-13 Feeding the 5,000, sharing for the good of all.

Revelation 22: 1-2 The trees for the healing of the nations.

Matthew 6: 26-34 See how the flowers are clothed and the birds fed, how much more will God provide for us.

Psalms 139 Lord, you know me through and through, you lead me and care for me.



Or Choose your own Readings

Invite young and old to choose their favourite parts of the Bible that tell of the love God wants us to receive and to share. Perhaps do this in small, all-age groups first and then see if anyone wants to share their choice with everyone. It may be good to ask two or three people (maybe a child, a teenager and an adult) to come prepared to share their choice.

Here is how one person retells the picture Zechariah is given of how God wants the world to be.

I will live in the heart of Jerusalem, for I love her people, and it will be called the faithful city. Old men and old women, so old that they walk with sticks, will sit in the squares. The streets will be full of boys and girls playing.

Seeds will be sown in peace and the heavens will give good rains; vines will produce grapes and the earth will give a good harvest.

You will all speak the truth to one another. There will be a justice that is true and brings peace. No one will plan to hurt anyone else. You will all hate lies as I do, but you will love truth and peace.

Hymns and Songs

You shall go out with joy (MP, SoF)

Will you come and follow me (CG)

Jesu tawo pano (Jesus we are here) (GP)

Jesus' love is very wonderful (JP)

For the healing of the nations (HP)

We are one big happy family (This leaflet)

All the wonder that surrounds us (One)

Brother, Sister let me serve you (CG)

Father in Heaven (HP)

Sometimes a light surprises (HP)

I am your mother (GP)

The garden of creation (CP)

HP – Hymns & Psalms

MP – Mission Praise

SoF – Songs of Fellowship

CG – Common Ground

GP – Global Praise

JP – Junior Praise

One – One is the Body (Wild Goose)

CP – Come & Praise, BBC



This year's gifts of love from JMA money

Through the money raised by children and young people, their families and friends this year, JMA has:

- Helped poor and hungry people in Zimbabwe
- Supported the new Methodist churches in Guinea established by refugees from the fighting in Sierra Leone and given motorbikes to four circuit superintendents in Sandaru, Segbwema, Bunumbu and Kailahun in Sierra Leone itself
- Given help to the youth work at Sid Methodist Church in Serbia
- Assisted in the development of an Open Door Centre for disadvantaged and unemployed people in Lancashire
- Enabled training for teams of evangelists in Bolivia
- Given support for food, shelter and education for the children of prisoners in Nepal
- Helped the Church of South India with a project to enable disabled children to learn skills so that they can become self-sufficient

To make it possible for such help to be given again this year:

- Please thank the children and young people of JMA who raised over £500,000 in 2003/4 to help other people throughout the world.
- Take time to pray for our partner churches who run these projects and for the people who are helped by them. Use the Prayer Handbook and the Rainbow magazine to help you learn and pray.
- Continue to support JMA by prayer and giving money to JMA members.
- Use the JMA envelopes for a special donation if they are available at this service. (Order them free on 020 7467 5119.)



Intercessions

Make or collect tree branches and arrange them around a globe or world map. Use pictures from Rainbow magazines, the JMA promise poster and the new target chart to create a display.

Give everyone leaf-shaped cards to write or draw prayers on. Invite them to hang their prayers on the branches or place them around the display.

If it is autumn, give people in return a leaf from a tree, to represent the love God gives them.

Poem

What Am I After All

What am I after all but a child, pleas'd with the sound of
my own name? repeating it over and over;
I stand apart to hear – it never tires me.

To you your name also;
Did you think there was nothing but two or three
pronunciations in the sound of your name?

Walt Whitman



Prayer

Loving God,
Whose hands hold all creation like a cradle,
Hold us in your love this day.
May your hands protect and guide us.
May your hands strengthen and enfold us,
That we may become your hands
Holding others with your love,
Knowing that you will never let us go.

Blessing

Blessing and laughter and loving be yours
The love of a great God
Who names you
And holds you
While the earth turns and the trees grow
This day
This night
This moment
And forever.

Take home

Take home a leaf. Leaves are given away by the tree and die, turning into nourishment in the soil to feed other plants. The leaf is part of a whole, part of a whole tree, part of the whole cycle of life, just as human beings are part of a whole family of humanity, part of the whole creation.

The leaf may be such that people can write a name on it.



The Coconut and its many uses

- The coconut provides water (which is sterile) that can be drunk or used for cooking.
- The 'meat' can be eaten as food, especially in curry and desserts.
- The husk can be used for rope, mats, clothing, cushions and brushes.
- Leaves from coconut palms are used for many purposes including roofing, fans, mats, baskets, torches, fuel, fodder for cattle and also as plates.
- The stems of the leaf are good for fencing, fishing rods and brooms.
- Coconut sap produces both vinegar and sugar!
- Boats are made from the trunk, which also gives good rafters and furniture.
- Coconut shell is used to make drinking cups, charcoal, toothpowder, spoons, buttons, cutlery handles and many decorative items.
- The tree and the leaves give shade.
- The leaf stems are planted at the edges of rice fields for birds to perch on, thereby attracting them so that they will eat the insects before they have chance to damage the rice plants
- Coconut oil can make soap, candles, shampoo and medicine for rheumatism.

The coconut itself often finds its way to the river or the sea and travels many miles until it finds a place where it can settle, then it takes root and grows into a strong tree and bears its own fruit.



Coconut Activities

Coconut collage

- Create a collage of a coconut palm and illustrate some of its different uses.
- Make some trees out of hardboard or card to use in the intercessions.
- Use this template of a leaf for prayers or to make model trees, making trunks out of pipe cleaners wrapped in coarse brown string.



Coconut face

Look at a real coconut and you will discover a face at one end. Many stories have developed over the years to explain this. Many are about the way the coconut provides for the needs of humans. You could let your imaginations run riot and develop a story of your own that illustrates how this face became a part of every coconut.

Coconut cooking

Find recipes for coconut cookies and biscuits, or a coconut cake. Many curries include coconut and you can cook coconut rice to go with it.

Or try this recipe for **Coconut Gizzadas**, an open pastry tart traditional in the Caribbean.

For the filling mix these ingredients in a saucepan on a gentle heat for about 15 minutes:

| | |
|--|---------------------|
| 170g desiccated coconut or one mature coconut grated | |
| 225g brown sugar | ½ tsp grated nutmeg |
| 2 tsp almond extract | 1 tbsp water |

Using 225g flour and 125g butter, make pastry and cut into circles with a mug. Raise the edges or place in a patty tin and bake at 180°C for 7 minutes.

Fill the pastry cases with the mixture and bake for another 15 minutes or until the pastry begins to brown.



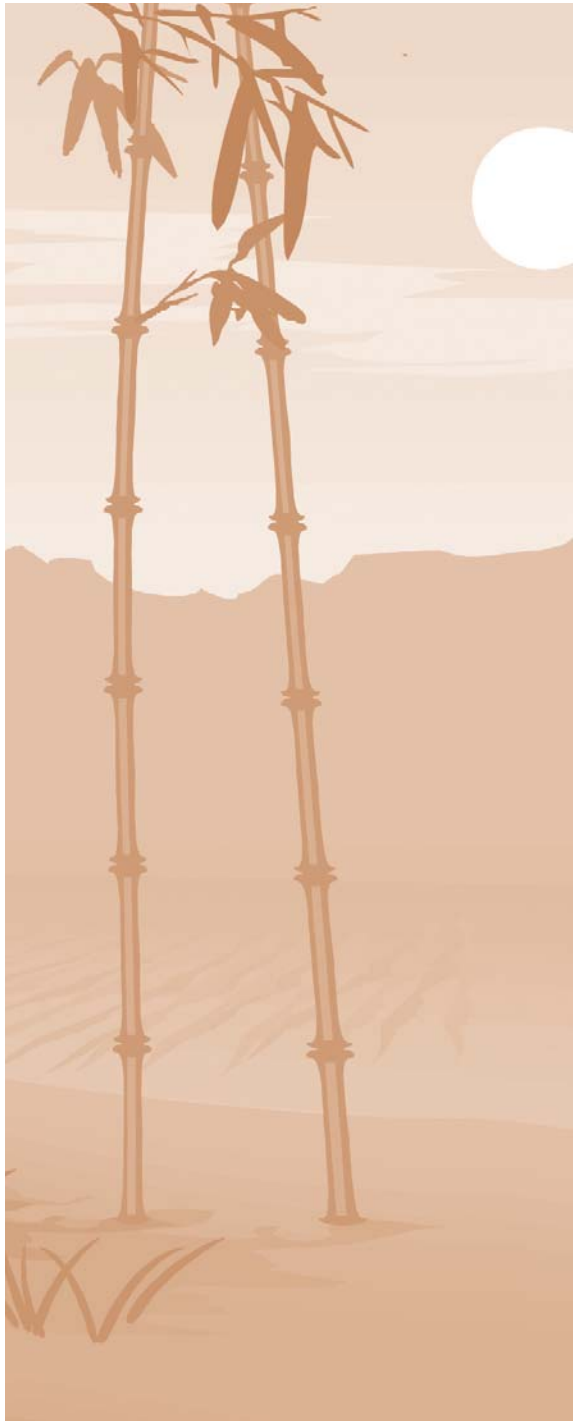
The Story of the Bamboo Tree

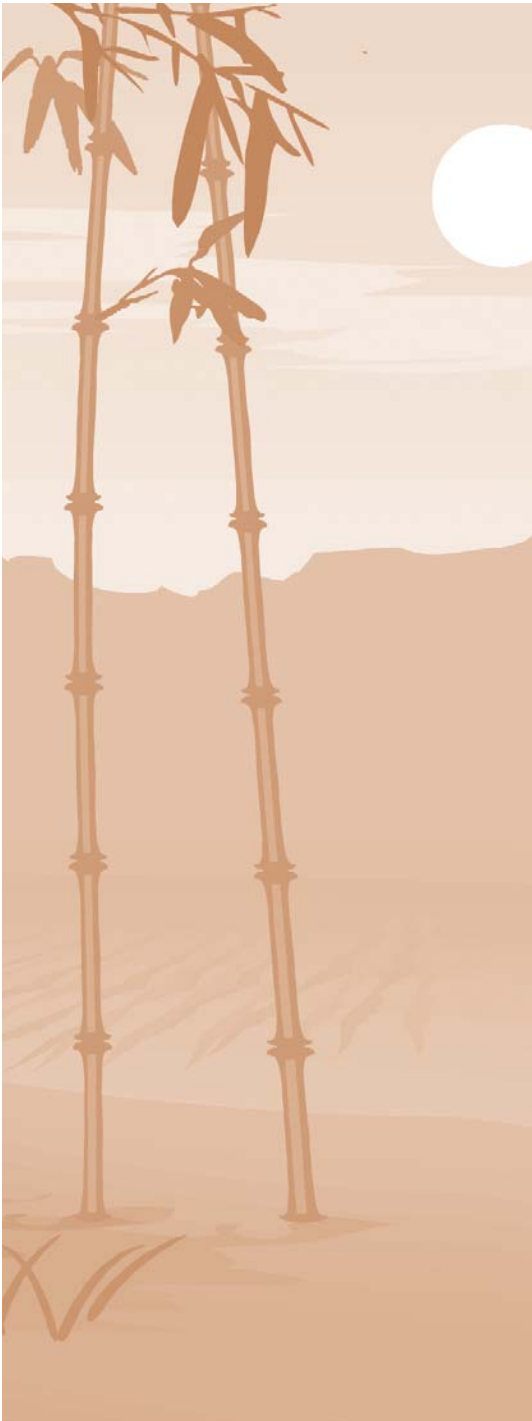
A traditional story from China

The Bamboo tree stood tall and straight, holding up its head proudly because it knew that it was the master's favourite tree. When the master walked in his garden the Bamboo would bow its proud head in greeting.

One day the master stood before the Bamboo and said, 'Bamboo, Bamboo, I must cut you down!' 'Cut me down! Oh no, master! No!' 'Yes,' said the master. 'You cannot serve me unless you let me cut you down.' The Bamboo bowed its proud head, saying sadly, 'Very well, master, cut me down if that is the only way I can serve you.' 'That is the only way,' said the master. And so he cut the Bamboo down.

The next day the master stood looking down at the proud Bamboo Tree lying on the ground, its trunk long and straight and its branches spread out. 'Bamboo, Bamboo,' said the master, 'I must cut off your branches.' 'All of them?' cried the Bamboo. 'All of them,' said the master, 'or you cannot serve me.' 'Very well,' sighed the Bamboo, 'Cut all my branches off, for I would serve you!' So the master cut off all the branches.





The Bamboo lay alone for a time thinking sadly of its lost beauty, and wondering what else the master had in store for it. Presently the master returned and said, 'Bamboo, Bamboo, you have a fine, strong, straight trunk. I must split you in half from top to bottom and take out your pith!' 'Oh no, no, master!' wailed the bamboo. 'I shall die if you do that. I will serve any way I can, but do not split me!' 'Bamboo, Bamboo, you cannot serve me if I do not split you in two and take out your pith!' 'As you will, master,' whispered the Bamboo. So the master split the Bamboo from end to end and took out all the pith. Then he laid the two halves of the trunk end to end and fastened them firmly together. One end he laid at the mouth of a little spring of water, which bubbled out of the ground and lost itself among the moss and stones. The other end he placed in his rice field, which was parched and dry. Soon the clear spring water was running from the spring down the channel made by the Bamboo trunk into the dry rice field, bringing refreshment to the drooping, dying plants.

So the Bamboo died and brought new life to the master's rice field. The rice grew tall and strong and brought life to many hungry people.



We are one big happy family

Ngaira teuana

trad. Kiribati

Musical notation for the first system, featuring a treble and bass clef with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a common time signature. The melody is written in the treble clef, and the bass line is in the bass clef. The lyrics are: "We are one big hap - py fam - i - ly, God's fam - i - ly, God's fam - i - ly." Chords E, B7, and E are indicated above the staff.

Musical notation for the second system, continuing the melody and bass line. The lyrics are: "We are one big hap - py fam - i - ly, God's fam - ily are we." Chords E, B7, and E are indicated above the staff. The system ends with a double bar line and the word "FINE".

Musical notation for the third system, continuing the melody and bass line. The lyrics are: "She is my sis - ter, he is my bro - ther, our". Chords E, A, E, and B7 are indicated above the staff.

Musical notation for the fourth system, continuing the melody and bass line. The lyrics are: "Fa - ther in hea - ven, He loves you and me." Chords E, A, E, F#m, E/B, B7, and E are indicated above the staff. The system ends with a double bar line and the word "Da Capo".

We are one big happy family,
God's family,
God's family.
We are one big happy family,
God's family are we.

She is my sister,
He is my brother,
Our Father in heaven,
He loves you and me.

Ngaira teuana te utu ae kakukurei,
Ana utu te Atua,
Ana utu te Atua.
Ngaira teuana te utu ae kakukurei,
Ana utu te Atua ngaira.

Neiei ai tariu,
Teuau ai maneu,
Ao tamara are i karawa,
E tangirai ma ngkoe.

A traditional Kiribati song from the Pacific with a vision of hope for the world.