



# On Eagles' Wings

## A Mission Education Service for 2003

Suitable for use as a JMA or World Church Service,  
either as all age worship or as a service for adults.

These notes are available on the website at  
[www.methodist.org.uk/information/jma.htm](http://www.methodist.org.uk/information/jma.htm)  
as a text file so that you can download them and use  
them to create your own service.

### Opening responses

From different houses and streets,  
Different ages and lives,  
**Gather us, O God.**

With those we know well or a little,  
With those we don't yet know at all,  
**Gather us, O God.**

If we are a little weary  
Or soaring on eagles' wings,  
**Gather us, O God.**

To fire our imaginations,  
To renew our strength,  
**Gather us, O God.**

So we learn about you  
And grow in your love,  
**Gather us, O God.**





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## Readings

**Psalm 103** 'He fills my life with good things, so that I stay young and strong like an eagle.'

**Isaiah 40:18-end** 'Those who trust in the Lord...will rise on wings like eagles.'

**Exodus 19:1-8** 'I carried you as an eagle carries her young on her wings.'

**Matthew 25:14-30** The parable of the three servants earning money while the king is away, by using their talents and abilities.

## Hymns and Songs

**Eagles' Wings** - see below

**Behold I make all things new** in *There is one among us* a collection of shorter songs (Wild Goose Publications)

**We will run and not grow weary** by Tricia Allen/Martin Nystrom in *Sing Glory* (Mayhew)

*Come and Praise (1&2)* (BBC)

**Song of Caedmon** by Donald Swann/Arthur Scholey

**What about being old Moses** by Donald Swann/Arthur Scholey

**Time is a thing** by Sydney Carter

*Songs for the New Millennium* (MPH)

123 **Lord of the Heavens** by John Nuttall/Ian Garland

131 **Shout to the North** by Martin Smith

164 **Eagle's Wings** by David Hardman

*Mission Praise*

16 **Be still and know**

17 **Be thou my vision**

124 **Jesus stand among us**

*Hymns & Psalms*

663 **Awake, our souls**

501 **Meet and right it is to sing**

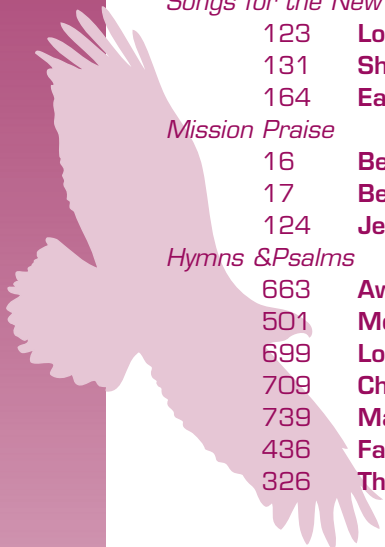
699 **Lord of creation**

709 **Christ be my leader**

739 **May the mind of Christ**

436 **Father, hear the prayer we offer**

326 **There's a spirit in the air**





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## Intercessions

Make a bird shape on card for everyone. Invite them to write or draw on one wing a person or place they want to raise up or give wings to; on the other side a person, a place or a thing that raises them up on wings like an eagle.

Or you could buy a bag of feathers from a craft shop and

- Let everyone take one and stick it on a large eagle shape at the front of the church, representing their prayer.
- Give everyone a feather to take home as a reminder to reflect this week on the things that help them rise up on wings like eagles.

## Presenting the story 'The eagle chick' *(see page 00)*

Consider beginning with this exercise. It is suitable for all ages but younger children may choose to do the exercise with someone older. Give everyone a piece of paper and a pen and in answer to what the leader says they are to think about what sort of person they really are and put a word, phrase or sketch on the paper.

If you were a colour, what colour would you be?

If you were a piece of furniture, what would you be?

If you were an animal, what animal would you be?

If you were a building, what building would you be?

If you were a song or a piece of music, what would you be?

Now tell or present the story. Use the version below or the picture book version (details below, retell it in your own words or create a dramatic version.

Afterwards people will have their own comments on the story and there is, of course, no 'correct' interpretation, but it may be interesting to draw a parallel with our Christian discipleship.

How many people chose a majestic animal like the eagle or the lion in the exercise? Most would probably hesitate before making such a grand choice and probably go for something more ordinary. It is worth remembering that Jesus chose 'ordinary' people to be his disciples, but through their time with him learned how great their potential was. They were still ordinary and had to earn their living like everyone else, but they had a view of what their potential was in God's eyes. They heard Jesus's great commission for them on a hilltop (a metaphorical mountain ledge?) and set off, no doubt with misgivings, to use their talents to fulfil that commission.



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## Other stories to use

**Fly, Eagle, Fly!** Christopher Gregorowski (Frances Lincoln £5.99) a beautiful picture book version of the traditional tale used in this service.

**Beauty and the Beast** is an appropriate traditional tale available in various formats including video.

**The Ugly Duckling** is in many storybooks and some will even remember the record.

**Elmer and the Stranger** by David McKee (Red Fox £4.99) for those who want to continue the relationship made with Elmer in last year's JMA service.

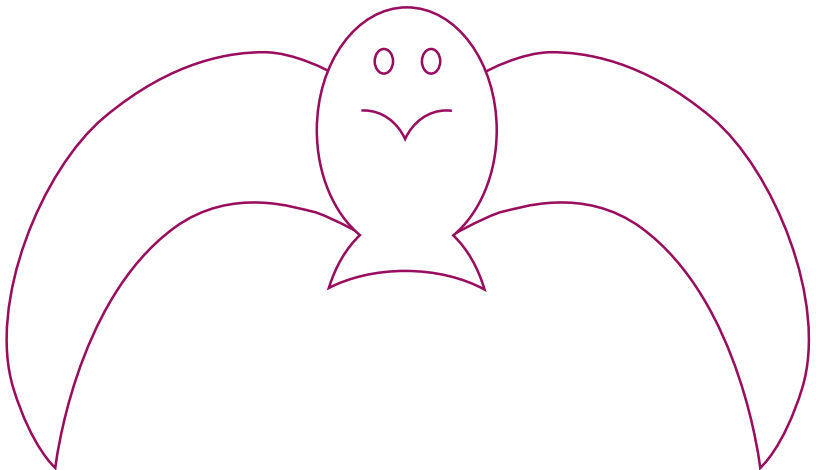
**Frog is Frog** by Max Velthuijs (Andersen Press) a story which ties in closely with the theme of this service and is especially suitable for younger children.

## To Make

This bird shape can be copied (ideally enlarged) onto stiff card and then cut out. If you stick a lump of blu-tack (or even small coins if your card is strong enough) on to the very ends of its wings, it will perch on any surface, upright as if about to soar at any moment.

Paper aeroplanes illustrate well the function of wings; try making them with and without wings to see what difference wings make.

Parachutes also depend on having a shape that uses the air to make them work. Play games with real parachutes or make models with plastic, cotton and small figures.





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## Suggestions for a talk or sermon

**The story of the eagle** is attributed to James Kwegyir Aggrey, a Ghanaian also known as Aggrey of Africa. When he told the story he likened the peoples of Africa to the eagle chick; they were created in the image of God but human beings had treated them as if they were less than that and even made them believe they were something less.


**The Isaiah and Exodus passages** focus on the eagle as a bird of great strength and agility, whose majestic appearance and ability to soar effortlessly for long periods is so inspiring. The eagle complements these masculine qualities with a maternal commitment to its young, both the male and female feeding and caring for them until they are able to leave the nest and fend for themselves. Long life is another characteristic and this gave rise to a story about the older eagle moulting and somehow thereby renewing its youth, hence the reference in Psalm 103.

It is difficult to pursue biblical imagery of the eagle too far as the Hebrew word 'nesher' can mean any large bird of prey. Sometimes where reference is made to its baldness (Micah 1:16) or the way it gathers over other dead and dying animals (Matt 24:28) it is clear that a vulture is meant, but the Old Testament passages in this service refer to the powerful and graceful nature of the eagle.

The eagle has been a symbol of strength and courage since ancient times, the Sumerians chose the 'spread eagle' as their emblem of power 5,000 years ago, as imperial Rome would many centuries later. Centuries after that on the 21 July 1969 we were to hear that the 'eagle' had landed on the moon.

Lecterns in many churches take the form of an eagle perched on a globe symbolising the call to take God's word right around the earth.

St John the Evangelist is represented by an eagle perhaps because his writing about Christ rises to such lofty heights.



**The story of the eagle chick** has clear similarities to the parable in Matthew 25:14-30. Both point towards the importance of being our true selves, always having an eye to God's vision of what we can be. We have God-given talents, skills and abilities which we can use for the best. It is sometimes easier to neglect our true selves and our real potential because of the setting we are in or what the people around us expect of us.



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To remain keenly aware of God's view of our potential, we should maybe occasionally

- list our 'talents'
- then think about the things that help us use them best
- think about the things that prevent us from using them well.
- reflect on our 'mountain ledge' and 'sunrise' experiences.


**As we consider** our place within 'The World Church' we must reflect on what we in Western Europe and in recent years as a rich northern nation have done to keep Africa from taking flight. What we have not done to help it profit from its natural and human resources and what we have done to make that process difficult for African countries and their peoples. Take examples such as the following,

- The inadequate contributions made so far to the UN Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria. Some comments on this are included below.
- The failure to make AIDS drugs available in Africa at an affordable price and the lack of commitment to developing a vaccination against HIV. The Methodist Conference 2002 passed a motion, proposed by some of our overseas representatives, encouraging congregations 'to pray constantly:
  - for a cure
  - for the infected
  - for all those affected

... and calling on pharmaceutical companies to make affordable drugs available, particularly for disadvantaged nations, and urging Government to make available substantially more funding for AIDS research.'

**At the same time give thanks** for the opportunity we have had to share through Mission Partners in wonderful work such as the work at Maua Hospital in Kenya where we have given money for a new surgeon's post and for a project supporting grandparents who find themselves caring for their orphaned grandchildren.

**The current World Action campaign** focuses on 'Trade Justice' and provides a lot of background on the way we have made it impossible for Africa to trade fairly with the rest of the world and prevented it from 'taking flight' in this way. It also suggests action that we can take.





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## **The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis & Malaria**

The appeal launched by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan in April 2001 for \$7 to \$10 billion US annually to combat AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria had by 1 May 2003 received just \$3 billion.

Rich countries are committing “mass murder by complacency” by failing to contribute enough money to defeat the AIDS pandemic that is ravaging Africa and killing millions every year, the UN’s adviser on AIDS in Africa Stephen Lewis said earlier this year. “We could prolong and save millions of lives if we had the resources. We don’t have the resources.”

In a scathing indictment, he said African leaders are increasingly committed to fighting the killer disease but the money isn’t there. “It’s legitimate to ask: what’s wrong with this world? What’s wrong with the rich countries?”

He urged the Group of Seven major industrialized countries - the United States, Britain, France, Japan, Italy, Germany and Canada - to make new contributions in the immediate future.

“There is no question that the pandemic can be defeated...with a joint and Herculean effort between the African countries themselves and the international community.”

Worldwide, there are 42 million HIV-positive people, with sub-Saharan Africa home to 75 per cent of them.

As examples of the problem, Lewis said impoverished Lesotho has one of the highest HIV rates on the continent and “a most impressive political leadership” committed to fighting the disease but insufficient funds to save “countless lives.”

Rev. Dr. Konrad Raiser, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, has said, ‘as the pandemic has unfolded, it has exposed fault lines that reach to the heart of our theology, our ethics, our liturgy and our practice of ministry.’ But he also pointed out that in this situation we are challenged by opportunity ‘because faith-based organizations have strengths, they have credibility, and they are grounded in communities.’



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## Eagle's Wings

*Unison* D *vv. 2-4* Bm F#m Bm

1. Those who wait on the Lord shall re - new their strength, *they shall*

Em7 A7 D D7

rise up on wings as ea - gles, *they shall*

G A7 F#m7 Bm

run and not be wea - ry, they shall walk and not faint: help us

Em7 A7 D

Lord, help us Lord in your way.



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## **Eagles' Wings**

Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength,  
They shall rise up on wings as eagles,  
They shall run and not be weary,  
They shall walk and not faint:  
Help us Lord, help us Lord in your way.

Those who learn from the poor shall renew their strength...  
Those who serve the suffering world shall renew their strength...  
Those who live the risen life shall renew their strength...

## **Blessing**

We ask the God who forgives us like a father,

**God bless us.**

We ask the God who gathers us together like a mother,

**God bless us.**

We ask the God who carries us high like an eagle,

**God bless us**

## **Music to play at the beginning or end of the service**

The lark ascending by Vaughan Williams  
El Condor Pasa traditional South American tune



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## The Eagle Chick

One morning a farmer went out from his village to look for a missing goat. It was a young one and he was concerned about what had happened to her. She must have wandered off the day before, because when the boys brought the herd home and he counted them into the pen, she was missing. During the night there had been a severe storm that made the farmer even more concerned for her safety.

He searched high and low, along the river, over the hillsides, even up among the rocks; always calling out in case the animal could hear his voice.



Suddenly he stopped. There before him on the narrow, rocky path was a small eagle chick a few days old. 'You must have been blown out only of your nest in the storm,' he said. He picked up the chick very carefully, and it nestled into the comfort and warmth of his big hands. Walking gently now, the farmer set off for home, still calling out for his lost goat but thinking about how he would need to care for the eagle chick too.

As he neared the village the children came rushing to meet him, shouting happily, 'The goat came home on its own!' When they saw what was in his hands, they were quiet and amazed, 'What is it?'

'It's an eagle chick that fell out of its nest in the storm, so we will have to look after it.'

The farmer put the chick in the warm amongst the hens and their chicks. 'The eagle might be the king of the birds, but now it will learn to be a chicken!'

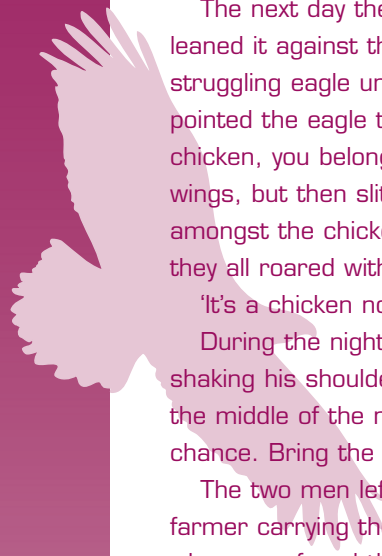
The eagle looked less and less like a chicken as the days went by and the children often pointed it out to their friends as it happily pecked at the scraps in the yard.

A few weeks later a relative came to stay with the family. As they sat under the big tree sharing news, the relative pointed at the bird among the chickens, 'That's not a chicken,' he said, 'it's an eagle!' The farmer



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smiled at him, 'It's a chicken now,' he said. 'It eats like a chicken and it walks like a chicken. It even thinks like a chicken.' 'I'll prove to you it's an eagle!' exclaimed his brother. And he instantly picked up the young eagle and held it high above his head. 'You are an eagle not a chicken, you belong to the sky!' The eagle stretched its wings out wide, but then saw the chickens scratching amongst the kitchen scraps and jumped down to the ground to join them. 'It's a chicken!' laughed the farmer, as the children screamed with delight.



The next day the farmer's brother asked to borrow a ladder. He leaned it against the side of the hut and with great difficulty tucked the struggling eagle under his arm and climbed up onto the roof. He pointed the eagle towards the sky and said, 'You are an eagle not a chicken, you belong to the sky!' Once more the eagle stretched out its wings, but then slithered down the thatched roof to land back amongst the chickens. By this time the neighbours were watching and they all roared with laughter.

'It's a chicken now!' said the farmer again.

During the night, the farmer woke suddenly. His brother was shaking his shoulder. 'Come outside and bring the bird,' he said. 'It's the middle of the night, what on earth do you want?' 'Give me one last chance. Bring the bird.'

The two men left their sleeping family and the silent village, the farmer carrying the bird. 'Where are we going?' 'To the mountain where you found the eagle chick. So that it can see the sun rise into the sky. Hurry, we must be there before the dawn.'

They walked up the hillside and onto the rocks, just able to see their way along the rocky path. They inched their way onto a ledge overlooking the valley and the farmer's village and placed the bird in front of them. The brother began quietly talking to it about the sun that would come over the horizon at any moment, bringing the morning to life and ruling the day with its light and power. 'Look for the sun, eagle. When it comes, you rise too. You are an eagle not a chicken, you belong to the sky!'

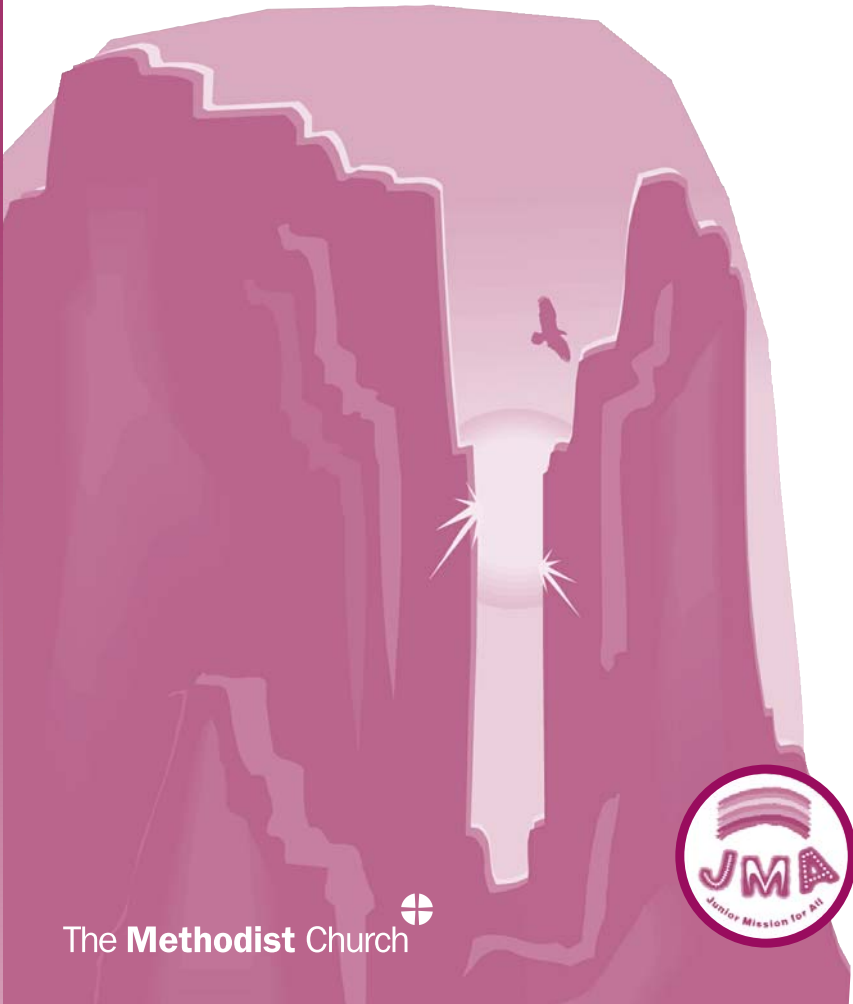
Just at that moment the first rays of the sun struck the mountain and the earth was ablaze with light. Warmth surrounded them as the



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sun rose over the horizon, unstoppable. The eagle stretched its wings as it felt the sun's life-giving rays on its feathers. Its head looked to left and right, suddenly alert; its talons checked their grip on the rock and it leaned forward towards the sun. 'You belong to the sky!' murmured the brother as he inched back towards the farmer. Then with scarcely any movement at all, the eagle gave itself to the wind rising up the face of the mountain and its feet left the rock. It swept outwards and upwards, soaring in the new morning's light, flying on strong wings towards the sun and out of sight.

*Written by Steve Pearce*



The **Methodist** Church

