

LEADER'S NOTES

EASTER
OFFERING
2021

Into all the world



Your local Easter Offering Service is prepared by Methodist Women in Britain on behalf of the World Mission Fund. This act of worship enables the Methodist Church in Britain and Ireland to give to the work of our 65 Partner Churches overseas.



Methodist Women
in Britain 2011-2021

The **Methodist** Church 
Living generously

Introduction

Welcome to this year's Easter Offering Service, which a group of women from across the Connexion started to plan just over a year ago. This service follows the tradition started 136 years ago to raise money for Methodist Women Missionaries. Today, it is the World Mission Fund that receives your money and prayers. In 2019, the Easter Offering Service raised over £370,000.

The theme, 'Into all the world' was inspired by 2020 being the 400th anniversary of the sailing of the *Mayflower* to America. It is also the 260th anniversary of Methodist mission, which began in the Caribbean.

We shall hear stories of people throughout the world and through time who have made journeys out of obedience to God's call or because they had no other choice. As we reflect on them, we pray that we will consider our own journeys, whether physical or spiritual, and have the courage to follow God's purpose for our own lives.

This service is a gift from Methodist Women in Britain (MWiB) to the whole Church. It is an act of worship, and also an opportunity to hear stories and respond both with money and with our lives. Each year a different woman takes up the task of being the lead writer. The 2021 service has been written mainly by Carolyn Lawrence, Vice-President for Britain and Ireland of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women (WFMUCW) and Vice-President Designate for the Methodist Church in Britain 2020/2021.

Before the service

- Arrange for the **Easter Offering envelopes** to be distributed (with the accompanying explanatory bookmarks) in each church in your circuit during Lent, and particularly on Easter Sunday. These are available in English and Welsh from **www.methodistpublishing.org.uk**
- Ensure that church and circuit treasurers have a copy of the **guidelines/finance instructions** included in these notes and as a separate document on the MWiB and the Methodist Church websites.
- Use the **A3 posters** to advertise the service. Remember to complete the section showing when and where your service will take place. Smaller **A4-size posters** can be downloaded from the website and printed locally if you wish to have more copies.
- Advertise your service in your local church magazines, through websites and on social media. Let everyone know they are welcome to join.
- Contact your MWiB District Forum Representative (see **www.mwib.org.uk**) with details of your service, so that this information can be included in the list of all local services in your district.

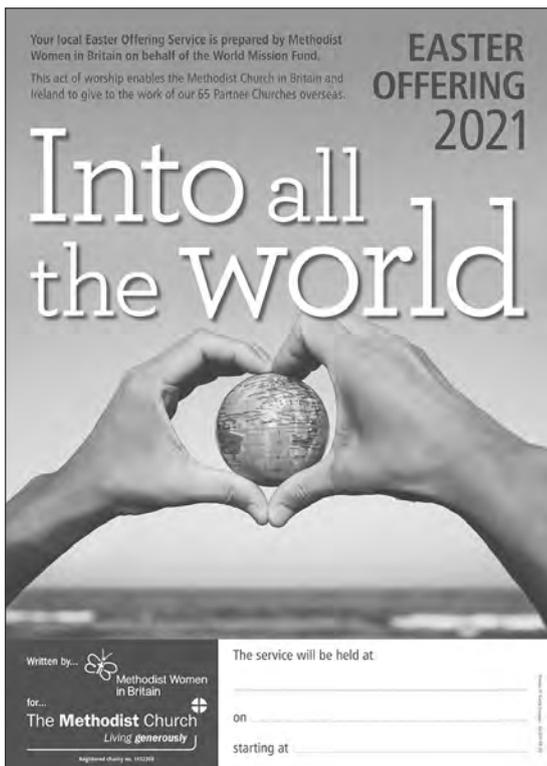
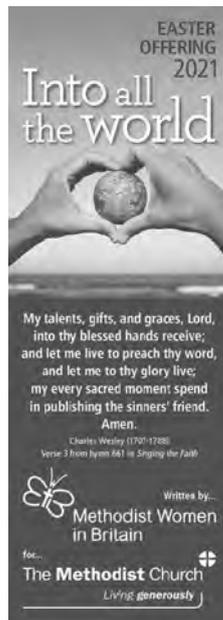
These notes should give you everything you need to explore the theme, as well as prepare for the service itself. You may also wish to use the Lent reflections on the MWiB website:

www.mwib.org.uk

Please read through both the Order of Service and these Leader's Notes to ensure you have everything you need in advance. Please photocopy any part of this document you need for your service, particularly the stories that appear later on. We have also included ideas for children's or all age-settings, or as part of a more creative session. Please feel free to use these as best suits your local context.



- A: Envelope
- B: Bookmark
- C: Poster



Music

The hymns in the Order of Service are from *Singing the Faith*, but we understand you may wish to have different songs, particularly if you use different song books in your church.

Other suitable hymns from *Singing the Faith (StF)* that you could use include:

- **StF 250** Jesus calls us!
- **StF 402** Go to the world!
- **StF 417** We come from the mountains
- **StF 418** We have a gospel to proclaim
- **StF 462** Come with me, come wander
- **StF 465** Guide me, O thou great Jehovah
- **StF 660** Called by Christ to be disciples
- **StF 663** I, the Lord of sea and sky
- **StF 664** Lord, you call us to your service

Copyright

All hymns included in the PowerPoint presentation come with an indication of copyright status. To secure copyright permissions, please:

- Add your own church's Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI) and/or Calamus numbers to the final slide at end of the presentation.
- Ensure that your digital display/downloading of hymns is reported in your church's copyright permissions returns to CCLI or Calamus.

Scripture quotations in the PowerPoint are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible: Anglicised Edition, copyright © 1989, 1995, National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Prayers and journeys

Psalm 139, found in *StF* 835, is to be read responsively.

Journeys 1-5

Choose different readers to tell the journey stories along with displaying the PowerPoint presentation. You can photocopy the stories from pages 6-7 of these Leader's Notes, or download large-print versions from www.mwib.org.uk

Prayers of intercession

Before the service set up a table at the front of the church so that the readers have somewhere to place the objects for each section of the prayers. Ensure that you collect the visual aids for the different sections before the service. You will need:

- a globe or map of the world
- a map of the UK or something that represents welcome
- a chain or a paper chain
- a map of your own village, town or city or a guide book to your area
- a pair of walking boots.

During the prayers of intercession, please feel free to add prayers for your local situation and for current world concerns at the points indicated... in the Order of Service.

Reflection

You may wish to invite a speaker to say something at this point in the service, after hearing all the journey stories. Equally, you may want to play some music quietly and give the congregation time to reflect. Alternatively, you could have a discussion in small groups. Possible discussion questions are included in the additional resources.

As a suggestion of a mini-sermon, here are three points for development, based on Genesis 12:1-5 and Matthew 28:16-20.

- **Obedience**

In both passages, obedience is key. Abram obeys God and leaves the post-Babel nation and its security. He takes a pilgrimage-style journey, trusting that he will reach a world that is better, because God made it. Abram showed prompt obedience in his response.

In Matthew's account the eleven remaining disciples (Judas is no longer with them) follow Jesus' directive to go to the mountain in Galilee.

- **The message is for all people**

God's original blessing in the Old Testament was that all mankind would be blessed. Here the promises are restored for all Abram's descendants, ie future generations.

The disciples were told to "make disciples of all nations". They were to offer baptism so that those baptised could show their commitment to, and union with Christ.

- **Reassurance**

Genesis promises that "all will be blessed". Abram took people with him on the journey. They were people who had gathered around Abram in Babel. Some may have been servants or slaves, but many were probably there voluntarily, as employees.

The final words in Matthew are both reassuring and powerful, recognising that in Jesus, 'God is with us'.

Response

This is an optional response activity, which can be used at the end of the service, or in a small group setting.

Meditation on the journey *(optional)*

Give each person a slip of paper showing a picture of a road or a walking boot on it or an outline of a footprint. As music is played, ask everyone to reflect on the following and write any thoughts they may want to offer to God:

- Where have you been in your life? What has brought you to this place in your Christian journey? What obstacles and diversions have there been on the way?
- Who has helped you when the road got tough? What experiences, good and bad, have made you the person you are today?
- How has Jesus changed you and guided you so far?
- Who have you been able to support in their Christian journey?
- Where are you going? What is the next step in your journey of faith?

Examples of next steps could be: baptism, confirmation, membership, local preaching, ordination, overseas service, serving in your local church or community, dealing with issues such as addiction, bad habits or failing to forgive people, and allocating more time or money to God's work.

- Who can help you walk the next part of your journey?
- Who can you support on the next step of their journey?

As this poem by Thomas Merton is read or music is played, invite people to bring their slips of paper forward to place on the display or altar as their offering to God. Stewards can collect up slips of paper from people who cannot easily move from their seats.

The Merton Prayer

My Lord God,
I have no idea where I am going.
I do not see the road ahead of me.
I cannot know for certain where it will end.
Nor do I really know myself,
and the fact that I think that I am following your will
does not mean that I am actually doing so.
But I believe that the desire to please you
does in fact please you.
And I hope that I have that desire in all
that I am doing.
I hope that I will never do anything apart
from that desire.
And I know that if I do this you will lead
me by the right road,
though I may know nothing about it.
Therefore I will trust you always though
I may seem to be lost and in the shadow
of death.
I will not fear, for you are ever with me,
and will never leave me to face my
perils alone.

Thomas Merton, *Thoughts in Solitude*, (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1956)

(Merton was an American Trappist Monk and theologian 1915-1968)

Stories

Please photocopy these for your readers or find each individual story on the MWiB website. They are not included in full in the service sheets but are available on the MWiB website for anyone to download to read after the service. Pictures to accompany the stories are in the PowerPoint presentation and may also be downloaded from the MWiB website.

Story 1. The *Mayflower*: a journey to escape persecution

Many of the men, women and children on board the *Mayflower* were seeking a new life. Having rejected the established Church in England, they were meeting to worship in secret. They were eventually forced to flee and begin a new life in Holland. Life there was difficult and war was looming, so they decided to pursue a fresh start in America where they could escape religious persecution and worship freely. They sailed on 16 September 1620 from Plymouth and were to become known as the Pilgrim Fathers.

Many of the original pilgrims died during the first winter in America because of disease, hunger and cold. Those who survived, formed a treaty with the local Native Americans who taught them how to plant crops and survive in their new home. This resulted in a bumper harvest in autumn 1621 and the pilgrims celebrated with a three-day festival of prayer. They invited their Native Americans friends to join them for a huge feast, which later became known as the first Thanksgiving.

Story 2. The Revd Thomas Coke: a journey to preach the gospel

The Revd Thomas Coke, a friend and colleague of John Wesley, had a passion to take the good news of Jesus Christ to the whole world. In 1786, he set sail bound for Newfoundland, but blown off course, found harbour in Antigua on Christmas Day. There he discovered and preached to a congregation of 1,000 people at a society started in 1760 by Nathaniel Gilbert amongst the slaves on his plantation. Coke took the exciting story back to Britain and this marked the start of Methodist mission overseas.

Coke had a vision of a mission to Asia and set sail for what was then Ceylon, but died in his cabin in 1814 and was buried at sea. Coke brought to Methodism a world vision and, following his death there was a huge expansion of mission to take the good news of Jesus across the world. It resulted in the official acknowledgement of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society by the 1816 Conference.

Story 3. Dorothy Ripley: a journey to speak out for justice

Dorothy Ripley was born in Whitby in 1767 to Methodist parents. Under the influence of John Wesley and his group of travelling women preachers, she became an evangelist and felt called to travel to the USA in 1801 to preach against slavery. She gained an audience with the President, Thomas Jefferson, and received his permission to minister to slaves, to preach to their owners and to found a school for freed

slaves. She became the first woman to preach inside the Capitol building and received the “approbation” of the President for her work.

Dorothy ministered to many men and women in prison and particularly to African slaves. She faced hostility as a woman preacher but with perseverance often won over her opponents through her preaching. She travelled thousands of miles in the USA and Britain attending camp meetings with other travelling evangelists. She died in Virginia in 1831, aged 64.

Story 4. Tommy and Mabel: a journey to earn a living

Struggling to earn enough money, Tommy and his wife Mabel moved from the south of Zimbabwe to Gokwe, in the centre of the country, where people spoke a different language and tended to spend their time with their own families. The couple felt lonely and described themselves as “strangers in the land”.

A local organisation, which works with All We Can (AWC), has helped Tommy and Mabel to join with their neighbours in starting a business rearing chickens. Now they not only have a stable income and improved standard of living, but also friends in the community.

Tommy says, “What excited me the most was the whole process of getting to meet and interact with people. Especially people who I never thought would interact with me. The whole concept of coming together mattered to me.”

All We Can helps vulnerable people in some of the world’s poorest communities. It helps them to connect with others and to fulfil their God-given potential.

Story 5. Angleena Keizer: a journey to bring God’s peace

It wasn’t long after becoming a Christian that Angleena felt the Lord was saying “I’ve called you to the nations.” The sense of God calling her to overseas ministry intensified. She was eventually accepted as a Methodist mission partner and sent to Sri Lanka to serve the large English-speaking Methodist congregation in Colombo. Angleena had to leave her appointment a year early as she contracted dengue fever twice. The second time she was in a critical state and unable to work for six months, but she felt God’s peace and healing as she recovered.

Angleena is now stationed to Israel/Palestine. She works at the Methodist Liaison Office and as an ecumenical pastor, as well as alongside a number of Palestinian organisations within the West Bank and Gaza. On regular visits to Gaza, she meets with the local Christians and Near Middle East Council of Churches, participating in ecumenical and interfaith initiatives. Angleena says, “It has been a great joy to organise group visits, encouraging visitors not only to visit the holy sites, but also the local people, both Palestinians and Israelis – and to hear their stories. Along with various groups we seek to work together for peace and justice.”

Finance/Gift Aid

Please read through these instructions and pass them to your church treasurer, Gift Aid secretary and, **importantly, the circuit MWiB treasurer.**

Easter Offering collection envelopes are available in English and in Welsh. You can order them through Methodist Publishing www.methodistpublishing.org.uk/

These instructions apply to individual church collections. However, we recognise that most Easter Offering services are held as circuit-wide dedication services, in which case local churches may take a separate collection, with donations received by circuit officers.

HMRC guidelines on church collections and Gift Aid are available on the GOV.UK website via www.bit.ly/churchcollections

In keeping with the HMRC guidance for best practices on handling and banking donations, we recommend the following options for collecting and sending in donations.

Collecting donations and Gift Aid

Preferred income route: where possible, we encourage all churches to claim Gift Aid on donations.

- People donating money should make cheques payable to 'Methodist Church World Mission Fund' (not 'Methodist Women in Britain' or 'MWiB'), and put the cheque or cash in the Easter Offering envelope completing their details.
- Collect and after the service open the sealed Easter Offering collection envelopes.
- The treasurer should pay cash donations into the church bank account. They then write a cheque payable to 'Methodist Church World Mission Fund' for the equivalent amount.
- Give the opened collection envelopes to your church or circuit Gift Aid secretary (or equivalent) so they can process the Gift Aid claim.
- Give the cheques to the circuit MWiB treasurer. They will bank them using the 'O2' paying-in books. Do not send cheques to Methodist Women in Britain.
- Alternatively, the donation can be paid by BACS transfer directly into the Methodist Church World Mission Fund account using the following information.

Sort code: 40-02-06

Account number: 70951706

If making a payment using this method, be sure to include your circuit reference followed by 02. So for example circuit number 18/9 would use the reference 180902. If there is space, please also include your circuit name to ensure that your donation is attributed to the correct circuit.

If your church is not set up to collect Gift Aid

- You should send the cheques you have collected and the Easter Offering envelopes they came in (which include Gift Aid information) to the circuit MWiB treasurer.
- **Do not send cash.** Bank the cash you have collected in the church bank account and write a cheque payable to 'Methodist Church World Mission Fund' for the equivalent amount and give it to the circuit MWiB treasurer.
- The circuit MWiB treasurer will bank the donations using the 'O2' paying-in book or through BACS transfer.

If the circuit MWiB treasurer is unavailable

- If churches cannot get in touch with their circuit MWiB treasurer, cheques may be sent to the Finance Department at Methodist Church House with a covering letter indicating the circuit's name and ID number, so that those donations can be properly attributed.

If you have any queries, need further assistance or would like to order a paying-in book, please contact Finance at Methodist Church House by calling 020 7486 5502 or emailing circuit.income@methodistchurch.org.uk

For more information about claiming Gift Aid, Gift Aid rules, and frequently asked questions on Gift Aid, please contact your church Gift Aid secretary.

Additional resources

Adapt these additional resources and ideas based on the theme of 'Into all the World', in your own setting. These optional activities can be used with children and young people; with adults as part of the Easter Offering Service; as an optional extra session or as part of a small group; or as part of an all-age or 'Messy Church' style event. Feel free to adapt them to suit your own situation, and be creative!

Exploring the stories

Use this year's stories to discover more about journeys. You can consider how these stories might impact on your own journey of faith.

1. The *Mayflower*: a journey to escape persecution

It is easy to take our freedom to worship for granted. There are still many in our world today who do not enjoy that privilege and for whom Christian belief or worship brings great risk to themselves and their families. Find out what the charity Open Doors is doing to support persecuted Christians today at www.opendoorsuk.org

Many in our world are forced to make journeys to escape persecution, war and danger. Consider how your church may help those who are displaced from their homes and living here in the UK or further afield.

You can find out more about the *Mayflower* voyage and the celebrations to mark the 400-year anniversary in 2020 at www.mayflower400uk.org

2. The Revd Thomas Coke: a journey to preach the gospel

The story of early Methodist mission history is exciting and challenging. Find out more from the *Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland*: www.dmbi.online or the Methodist Heritage site:

www.methodistheritage.org.uk

We are all called to be witnesses for Jesus – some at home and some further afield. Where is Jesus calling you to share the good news of God's love, as an individual, and as a group or church?

You can find out more about overseas opportunities with the Methodist Church at: www.methodist.org.uk/overseas-opportunities/

3. Dorothy Ripley: a journey to speak out for justice

It is difficult to imagine the courage needed by people like Dorothy Ripley to speak out against injustice amidst risky travel, opposition and speaking contrary to the tide of popular culture. Consider if there are areas of injustice to which God might be calling you to stand up as a prophetic voice.

Find out more about the work of the Methodist Church's Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) working for justice and peace at:

www.jointpublicissues.org.uk

Read about the historic involvement of Methodist women with overseas mission on the *Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland* website under the search 'women's work': www.dmbi.online

4. Tommy and Mabel a journey to earn a living

Tommy and Mabel found themselves as strangers in their own land but found a welcome. Who might feel like a stranger in the land in your church, community or nation? How could you help them feel more at home?

Find out more about the work of All We Can in countries like Zimbabwe and how the work they do in some of the poorest communities in the world is changing lives:

www.allwecan.org.uk

5. Angleena Keizer: a journey to bring God's peace

Angleena felt the call of God on her life to serve overseas as a mission partner. Despite the difficulties she faced along the way, she continues to know God's peace and follows this call. What is God calling you to do? Is there a call you have been pushing aside or ignoring that you need to pursue in obedience? As God says, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" (Isaiah 6:8, NRSV) Will you respond, "Here am I; send me!"?

Read more about the work Angleena is doing in the Middle East and some of her blogs at: www.methodist.org.uk/Angleena-Keizer/

If you feel God may be calling you to serve as a mission partner have a look at the information on the Global Relationships section of the Methodist Church website: www.methodist.org.uk/overseas-partner/

Exploring the Bible readings

Read through the passages used in the Easter Offering service: Psalm 139; Genesis 12:1-5; Matthew 28:16-20.

We are all at different stages on our personal journey of faith.

In a small group setting you may wish to think about the following questions together:

- When did you begin your 'faith journey'?
- Who and what has helped you through the rough times and good times?
- Have there been any stumbling blocks along the way?
- How has your journey with Jesus changed you?
- What is the next step in your journey of faith? Giving your life to Jesus? Baptism? Confirmation? Membership? Local preaching? Ordination? Overseas service? Something else? Will you be obedient to God's call on your life and follow where you believe God is leading you?
- How can you support others on their journey of faith?

Creating

Discover ideas for some Thanksgiving Pilgrim Crafts for kids at: www.artistshelpingchildren.org/thanksgivingartscraftsideaskids.html

Ideas for crafts and activities related to travelling around the world: www.educatall.com/page/432/Children-around-the-world.html
www.activityvillage.co.uk/around-the-world

All We Can has resources for children and youth activities related to justice and poverty in our world: www.allwecan.org.uk/resources/children-youth-resources/

Finding out

Using some of the websites mentioned above create a fact file, collage or booklet about:

- the Pilgrim Fathers and their journey to the USA
- Antigua and the early missionaries
- Zimbabwe and the work of All We Can
- Israel and Palestine.

You could find out about the flag, language, customs, climate, music, food, and the condition of Christianity in that country.

Encourage children in your families and churches to find out about the work of Junior Mission for All and sign up for the *Rainbow Magazine*: www.methodist.org.uk/jma/

Praying

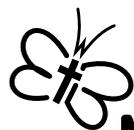
You could organise a prayer walk in your local area to bless the people and places in your community and invite God to break in. Find out more about how to do this at:

www.thykingdomcome.global/resources/prayer-walking

Buy copies of the Methodist Prayer Handbook to encourage people to remember our sisters and brothers in prayer day by day. www.methodistpublishing.org.uk

Invite four or five people who represent different stages on the journey of life to pray for their peers: a child to pray for children, a teenager to pray for other teenagers, and so forth.

Set up a prayer labyrinth, either for people to walk around or a printable one that people can follow with their fingers/pens: www.pilgrimpaths.co.uk



Methodist Women
in Britain 2011-2021



The **Methodist** Church
Living generously
