

Service ideas

This is a suggested service outline for Tearfund services during Lent 2021. The prayers, readings etc may all be used independently, and the outline may be adapted to suit the particular congregation.

Thank you for taking time to talk about Abeer and Tearfund with your congregation.

Introduction

Within the Christian calendar, Lent is normally a time of solemn observance and preparation. All this is in advance of the emotional rollercoaster of Easter, where we experience mourning, celebration and hope as we remember the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Lent is traditionally a time for fasting or giving something up. However we recognise that in the UK, Lent in 2021 has already been a year of giving up many things that we take for granted due to coronavirus. So this service acknowledges that, but also looks to the hope that comes both from resurrection and the end of this difficult year. This service focuses on rediscovering the awe-inspiring, miracle-woven boldness of our God.

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1 Call to Worship

Psalm 42:1-2, 11b

*As the deer pants for streams of water,
so my soul pants for you, my God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When can I go and meet with God?*

*Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Saviour and my God.*

2 Song

3 Prayer (Attentiveness)

Attentive God,
While we are often distracted,
You are always attentive.
While we often listen to newsfeeds and social
media posts,
You always hear the afflictions of your
people.
While we often listen to chatter, moans and
whines,
You always hear the prayers of the righteous.
While we focus on occupying our time,
You see those who fear you.
While we focus on outward appearances in
our profiles and selfies,
You see our hearts.

In this time of Lent, help us to cast aside the
distractions.

Help us to listen to you as you listen to us.

Help us to hear you as you hear us.

Help us to focus on you as you focus on us.

Help us to see you as you see us.

Amen

4 All-Age Talk

Tearfund have produced an all age talk for
use this Lent. Go to tearfund.org/churchlent
to download it for free.

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5 Song

6 Scripture Reading

Matthew 4:1-11 or Luke 4:1-13

7 Prayer (The Desert Place)

Almighty God, we pray for those in desert
places today.

For those facing hunger,
Lead them not into temptation but deliver
them from the evil one.

We ask you to provide them with more than
just bread.

For refugees without a home or kingdom to
call their own,

Lead them not into temptation but deliver
them from the evil one.

May they be able to freely worship you in
your kingdom.

For those standing at a cliff edge
of uncertainty,

Lead them not into temptation but deliver
them from the evil one. May they be able to
find a firm footing in trusting in you.

Spirit, lead those in need to the place where

Physical needs are fulfilled,

Social needs are fulfilled,

Psychological needs are fulfilled.

Amen

8 Scripture Reading

Luke 19:41-44

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9 Talk

In the UK, as we leave winter behind us and enter the spring, many of us start turning our minds towards the summer holidays.

This year, our holidays may be different from what they have been in the past. We may be having a UK holiday rather than going abroad or we may be planning to visit relatives that we haven't seen for far too long. Either way, we know that we can't just leave things until the summer, but rather we need to start preparing for our holiday in advance.

For most things, preparation is important. Even as we get up in the morning, we think through our activities for the day and what the weather might be like before getting ready and dressed.

In the Christian calendar, we also need to make preparations. For Christmas, we have Advent where we consider the love, joy, hope and peace that was realised at the birth of Jesus. For Easter, we have Lent, the 40-day period (not including Sundays) where we set aside distractions and focus our minds on who God is and all that Jesus achieved for us in his life, death and resurrection here on earth.

In our passages today, we see that Jesus made preparations too. Jesus' ministry got under way with the announcement that:

'The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the
prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'

Luke 4:18-19

Before this, however, Jesus was led by the Spirit to spend time in the desert preparing himself spiritually for his ministry.

During this time, he was tempted, yet he remained resolute in his faithfulness to and trust in God.

Even in the lead up to his crucifixion, we see Jesus being prepared for the future in a mountaintop experience, known as the transfiguration. There, Jesus spent time in prayer and spoke about his 'departure and what was going to come to fulfilment in Jerusalem' (Luke 9:31), namely his death on a cross.

Jesus then journeyed through towns and villages on his way to Jerusalem, where his mission would be fulfilled, and he wept over it. Each meeting, conversation, parable and miracle was another part of the preparation.

Preparation for what is ahead is so important, but not everyone has the chance to prepare. For those living in poverty and conflict situations, life can be very unpredictable.

Take Abeer, for example. Abeer was in her early twenties living in a quiet village in Iraq with her husband (who had a stable job) and her young children. They had to flee without notice, leaving behind their home and all their belongings.

[You could show our 3 minute film of Abeer's story at this point in the service. Go to tearfund.org/churchlent to download it for free.]

They had no time to prepare. No time to pack clothes. No time to pack photographs or sentimental items. They just had to leave their homes for their own safety.

Tearfund met Abeer in late 2019. Her family are living in a temporary camp. The closest thing she has to a home is a tent that offers little protection from the extremes of heat in the summer and cold in the winter.

Coronavirus has increased the risk to people who've had to leave their homes due to conflict, making them even more vulnerable.

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Tents are often built close together and handwashing facilities are often insufficient. While we are used to messages of social distancing and hand washing in order to prevent disease, this is more challenging in such camps.

Tearfund have been responding to the needs of Abeer and those like her who are living in poverty all around the world.

Tearfund know the church is part of God's plan to bring healing and restoration where there is brokenness and suffering, so they partner with local churches and organisations who have a crucial role to play in the places most affected by poverty. Your support can help individuals and communities fulfil their God-given potential.

For those living in camps around the world, Tearfund's partners have been supplying warm clothing; building handwashing stations ;and providing hygiene kits, which include items such as soap, shampoo and washing powder. Each of these things prepares families so that they can be safe from illness and disease.

An incredibly generous group of Tearfund

supporters has offered to match every pound your church gives to this appeal – up to £1 million until 30 April 2021! So this is a huge opportunity to make double the difference for families like Abeer's around the world.

[It's really helpful to give people a practical example of how their gifts could be used. We suggest using the example below in your talk.]

Tearfund knows that a gift of £35 doubled could provide six families with a vital hygiene kit that includes soap, antiseptic, toothpaste, sanitary towels, shampoo and washing powder, helping prevent the spread of coronavirus in temporary camp communities like Abeer's.

The other thing we can do is join with them in prayer. Let's do that now.

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10 Prayers of Intercession

Eternal God,
We pray for those around the world who are
in need of your protection.

Where life is unpredictable;
Where the rule of law has
diminished meaning;
Where lives and livelihoods are at risk.
May they know the protection of their
everlasting Saviour.

Protect those who live with fragile health
Where the risk of disease and illness is real;
Where bodies are weak and frail;
Where access to medicines and care
are limited.
May they know the protection of their
everlasting Saviour.

Protect those who live in fragile homes
Where living in tents has become the norm;
Where there is no heating in the winter nor
cooling in the summer;
Where animals and insects roam free.
May they know the protection of their
everlasting Saviour.

Amen

11 Offering

12 Song

13 Benediction (Love)

May the God who gives endurance and
encouragement give us the same attitude
of mind towards each other that Christ Jesus
had so that with one mind and one voice we
may glorify the God and Father of our Lord
Jesus Christ.

Amen

To the church leader

Thank you for taking the time to share this
with your congregation. We hope they have
been moved, as we were, by Abeer's story.

As always, we're right here if we can help with
any further information. You can reach us by
email at info@tearfund.org

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