



Keep it simple

Lent Appeal 2018

Service materials

Inspire your congregation to explore the pleasure of living simply while joining in solidarity with their global neighbours. These materials provide you with the elements you need to put together an engaging service for all ages.



Welcome

Dedicate a service to All We Can, connecting your congregation to people in the Bible and across the world fighting injustice, and giving them a chance to join in and make a practical difference.

This service can be run during Lent, or at any other time of the year. It also has the option to be run in conjunction with All We Can's *Keep it simple*, a 6-week (40-day) booklet of reflections, prayers and activities, for your congregation to follow either as individuals or to use in groups.

These free booklets are available to order from: allwecan.org.uk/simple

All We Can is an international development and emergency relief organisation. Focusing on those in greatest need, it is inspired by Christian principles, with its roots in the British Methodist Church. All We Can helps find solutions to poverty by engaging with local people and organisations in some of the world's poorest communities to end the suffering caused by inequality and injustice.

What you need

Provided in this pack is an order of service, prayers, an interactive activity, a talk and song suggestions. **Please adapt these materials to suit your congregation and situation.** With the wide selection of material available, we are confident that you will be able to create an inspiring and impactful service.

All resources can be downloaded from

 allwecan.org.uk/lent

Gift Aid envelopes, giving leaflets and *Keep it simple* devotional booklets can be ordered by calling the All We Can office on **020 7467 5132**, or emailing info@allwecan.org.uk

Additional resources required:

- Laptop, projector and speakers
- PowerPoint: *Keep it simple (Lent Appeal 2018)*
- Film: *Making a difference is simple (Lent Appeal 2018)*
- For the interactive activity: paper or plastic cups, table, and a drum/pan
- For the intercessions: each congregation member needs three colours of wool in threads of around 20cm each, tied together at one end
- *Keep it simple* booklets, Gift Aid envelopes and giving leaflets for members of the congregation

Suggested order of service

In the electronic version of this document, you can click on any underlined item in the list below to be taken to the relevant activity:

- [Call to worship](#)
- [Prayer of praise](#)
- [Hymn / Song](#)
- [Welcome & Introduction](#)
- [Prayer of thanksgiving](#)
- [Hymn / Song](#)
- [Interactive activity](#)
- [Hymn / Song](#)
- [Bible readings](#)
- [Talk notes \(Film: Making a difference is simple – Lent Appeal 2018\)](#)
- [Prayer of confession](#)
- [Hymn / Song](#)
- [Offering](#)
- [Prayers of intercession](#)
- [Hymn / Song](#)
- [Closing prayer](#)

Other elements in the pack

- [Hymn / Song suggestions](#)
- [Church donation return form](#)

The theme

The theme of this service is *simplicity* – to reduce the things that distract us from seeking God’s kingdom first. For this reason, you may wish to do things differently in your service, such as to use methods that people can apply at home. This could include – moments of silence; using memorable, contemplative songs that focus people’s minds on God; reading Scripture in an interactive way (such as with a question in mind, or placing themselves in the crowd); engaging with creation (distributing flowers, displaying photography/art, doing a short walk); simplifying the environment, e.g. by concentrating on a single visual thing – a cross, a candle, a banner, a photo etc. We would be appreciative if, as part of your service, you take an offering to support the work of All We Can.

Call to worship



Psalm 145: 5b-6, 10-12, 14-16

I will meditate on your wonderful works.
They tell of the power of your awesome works—
and I will proclaim your great deeds.
All your works praise you, Lord;
your faithful people extol you.
They tell of the glory of your kingdom
and speak of your might,
so that all people may know of your mighty acts
and the glorious splendour of your kingdom.
The Lord upholds all who fall
and lifts up all who are bowed down.
The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food at the proper time.
You open your hand
and satisfy the desires of every living thing.

SLIDES 2-3

Prayer for praise



A prayer to say with the congregation

Creator God
We join with your creation to declare your greatness –
Your glory is beyond our imagination
and your splendour is wondrous!
We thank you for your everlasting kingdom
and your mighty works that display your power.
You raise up the downtrodden
and you care for all you have created;
We praise your holy name.
Amen

SLIDE 4

Hymn/song

Click on the heading above to be taken to a list of suggested hymns and songs (page 7).

Welcome/introduction



In this service, we are going to be thinking about what it means to seek first God’s kingdom in our lives. In Psalm 145, we hear the writer describe how he meditates on God’s wonderful works. He then goes on to describe what he sees – a God who lifts those who fall low, a God who provides for his creation. He uses such tender imagery of God opening his hand to give his creation what they need to be satisfied.

The psalmist can express God in such terms because he has put time aside to meditate and be mindful of God in his surroundings, in creation. Today in the UK, many of us live busy and distracted lives. The average person watches over 4 hours of TV a day and is online for over 20 hours a week. And it’s typical for some of us to be on our phones the last thing at night and the first thing in the morning. It can be easy to be so busy and full of other things that we miss spending time with God and seeking his kingdom first in our lives. By doing so, we neglect to pause like

the psalmist to notice how God is active in our world.

While we can be easily distracted by things that we do not need, with products and activities that are not always beneficial to us, there are many people in our world struggling to provide for their most basic needs. People are going hungry due to lack of food, children are struggling to access education, and health care is beyond the reach of the sick. This is the brokenness of our world and does not reflect the values of God's kingdom. Today, we will be considering the difference we can make to our world when we keep things simple and seek God's kingdom first.

Prayer of thanksgiving



A responsive prayer with the congregation.

Leader: God, we thank you for your beautiful creation, which communicates your life-giving work.

All: We thank you God for the life you give.

Leader: God, we thank you for your wonderful ways, present in every generation.

All: We thank you God for your active presence.

Leader: God, we thank you for the compassion you show to all you have created.

All: We thank you God for your loving care.

Leader: God, we thank you for your love, which lifts us up when we fall down.

All: We thank you God for your faithfulness to us.

For all the ways you are active in our world, we thank and praise you. Amen.

SLIDES 5-6

Hymn/song

Click on the heading above to be taken to a list of suggested hymns and songs (page 7).

Interactive activity



Note: For this activity, you need to have paper / plastic cups, a table & drums / pans.

Activity: Invite a young person to volunteer to perform a task. The task is for the young person to create a tower by stacking cups in a pyramid shape, as tall as they can within a minute. Once they have done it, invite them to do it again but this time invite other young people from the congregation to distract him/her by talking loudly to each other and inviting the person doing the task to join in. You can also have a person banging a drum or pan around the activity to cause a further distraction. Once the minute is up ask the young person how they found doing the task the second time compared to the first. Then share:



It is very hard to stay focused on one thing in the midst of lots of noise and distractions.

While we may have every intention to complete the task well, it is very hard to do so if our environment is not beneficial. Sometimes the environment that distracts us can be self-imposed – where we choose to be, what we choose to do, how we portion our time – and we can lose focus on the task in hand. This can be equally true of our walk with God. If we're not careful, we can easily find ourselves so consumed by other things that we are unaware of God in our lives. It is perhaps not surprising, given the pace of life today, that mindfulness is now a popular activity and Christians are drawing inspiration from spiritual disciplines like prayer and simplicity, to try to create a more helpful balance in their life. If we want to prioritise seeking God first in our lives, then we may have to lose some of those unhelpful distractions. To exchange bad habits for holy habits.

Note: If the congregation is not yet aware of our 'Keep it simple' devotional booklets, give some out  before the service or place them on the seats for when people arrive. This booklet provides people with 40 days of reflections, prayers and activities.

These are available to order from
allwecan.org.uk/simple

Hymn/song

Click on the heading above to be taken to a list of suggested hymns and songs (page 7).

Bible readings



Matthew 6:25-34
Galatians 5:13-26

Talk



Note: For this talk you will need the film: *Making a difference is simple* – Lent

Appeal 2018. These notes have been provided for you to adapt and make appropriate for your situation.

Introduction

There are certain characteristics of God's kingdom which are likely to be evident in our lives, when we seek God's kingdom first. Today we are going to reflect on three of them.

Joy

Firstly, God's kingdom is full of joy! The parables Jesus used to convey what God's kingdom is like include a wedding feast, a man finding a precious treasure and a prodigal son whose return home kicks-off a massive party. Today, happiness is sold to us in many ways – the clothes we wear, the places we go, the gadgets we buy, the number of social media followers we have, and so on. When we do pursue these things, instead of experiencing the lasting happiness we are promised, we find that the pleasure is short-lived and we are left unsatisfied and in need of the next thing. God's kingdom, however, provides us with a deep and lasting joy, not found in earthly things or material possessions, but in finding our home in God's kingdom.

From his descriptions in Matthew 6 of the birds of the air and the flowers in the fields, Jesus clearly took pleasure from looking at the

creation around him and, through it, sensing the goodness of his Father at work within it. He sees the way God feeds the birds and clothes the flowers, and he reflects on God's loving care for us. We should ask ourselves – do we take opportunities to sense the goodness of our Father at work in our world? Do we take time to connect with God through his creation? Do we take pleasure in the simple things?

Often our time can be so full of *doing* things that we forget what it is like to simply *be*. It is helpful to be reminded of the saying, 'We are human beings, not human doings'. If we want to experience the joy of God's kingdom, then we should seek his kingdom above the things of this world, which never really satisfy us.

Freedom

Secondly, God's kingdom brings freedom. When Jesus declared God's kingdom to be at hand, he was forgiving people's sins and healing those who were sick. He was setting people free from both spiritual and physical captivity. As Christians, we are invited to live no longer enslaved to the desires of our flesh, which are described by Paul as destructive and harmful to others and ourselves. Instead, we are invited to live in the freedom of God's Spirit and to walk each day in step with him. This will mean that we are more likely to live in the present, displaying the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control), and not worrying about tomorrow, what we will eat and wear.

We can end up placing our security in *things* – such as jobs, relationships or material possessions – without even realising it. But the truth is that these things are never completely dependable. Deep down we know this, which can create anxiety. If we look to our things instead of looking to God to provide security in our lives, they can easily begin to have a hold over us and stifle the freedom we have found in God's kingdom.

Justice

Finally, God's kingdom is subject to his loving

rule of justice. Paul reminds us of Jesus' call for us to 'love our neighbour as ourselves', and in the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus defines our neighbour to include people beyond our national, ethnic and religious borders. By doing so, he implies that we should view everyone as our neighbour and deserving of our love. When we fail to love people, we are not giving them what they deserve. We are choosing to love ourselves above them, which means we are not reflecting God's kingdom rule of justice in our lives.

It is also all too easy to participate in structures and systems that neglect this value – the policies we vote for, the places we shop, the entertainment we consume. A person who seeks first God's kingdom will not be concerned with 'what clothes to wear' or 'what food to eat', but rather will be asking, 'who made these clothes' and 'who needs to share my food?' A life characterised by seeking God's kingdom first, will involve us loving our neighbours and pursuing justice with them.

There are many people in our world who don't have what we have. For them, each day is a struggle for their simplest needs. Zimbabweans Angela and Tulani know the brokenness and injustice of this world all too well...



Play the film: Making a difference is simple (Lent Appeal 2018)

What Tulani and Angela want is simple – to provide for the basic needs of their family. And because All We Can supporters are responding in love to help their 'neighbours' to overcome injustice, change has become possible. Now Tulani and Angela are able to work hard with others on a small business to earn a reliable and stable income. This is an example of how we can bring positive change to our world as we seek God's kingdom of justice first. It is also why we need to continue to be active – because there are many people in our world still struggling to provide for their families and we are in a position to make a difference by sharing what we have.

Conclusion

We live in a time of the *now and not yet*. Now, we experience God's kingdom in part, but we look forward to Jesus' return, when the joy, freedom and justice of God's kingdom will be complete. When we seek God's kingdom first in our lives and display its characteristics of joy, freedom and justice, we bring hope to our broken world and significant change to people's lives.

Prayer of confession



Pray

A prayer said by the worship leader

Loving God, we are sorry for letting the noise of our surroundings become louder than your life-giving words. We admit that at times we have allowed ourselves to be consumed by this world, and by doing so, we have neglected the work of your everlasting kingdom. We are sorry for staying silent when injustice has been present and passive when we have heard the cries of those in need.

Forgiving God, help us to live a life mindful of you in our midst. May we be devoted to you in our decisions and seek your kingdom first in our lives, that we may show the joy, freedom and justice found in your kingdom. Amen.

SLIDES 7-9

Hymn/song

Click on the heading above to be taken to a list of suggested hymns and songs (page 7).

Offering



Do

Share: We now have the opportunity to give to All We Can, to help people in some

of the world's poorest communities to find solutions to poverty, to end the suffering caused by inequality and injustice. All the money given today will enable All We Can to support people like Tulani and Angela – people across the world who are struggling to provide for their very basic

needs; people who, driven by hope, are working hard to improve their lives.

You can either make a one-off gift, or you can sign up to give regularly which will have an ongoing significant impact. Just fill in the relevant form. Also, if you are able, please Gift Aid your donation to make it go further.

You are also invited to consider what you can change or give up to simplify your life, making more room for God. You can write your pledge and place it in the offering.

Give a moment to allow people to fill in the Gift Aid envelope and their pledge, which they can write on their giving envelope or form.

SLIDE 10

Intercession



Prayer Activity: This is a good opportunity for you to introduce your congregation to

a meditative, prayerful exercise that they can apply to their lives. Below is one called the Prayer Plait. However, you can always gain inspiration from Ignatian exercises, Celtic spirituality, the Day by Day booklet produced by the President and Vice President of the Methodist Conference, Centering Prayer, and many more techniques.

For the Prayer Plait, you need to give each person three different colour strings of wool of the same length (around 20cm) tied together at the top.



Share: Each piece of wool represents three different aspects: 1. God, 2. Our

neighbour, 3. Ourselves. Take time plaiting these three chords together. It symbolises how connected we are to one another and that 'A cord of three strands is not quickly broken' (Ecclesiastes 4:12). As you plait the strands, pray for yourself, pray for others in your heart (including those we have heard about today) and invite God to be present through his binding love.



Finish the exercise by using this prayer:

Loving God,
We come to you, knowing that you care deeply for everything you have made. We thank you for the joy, freedom and justice that are found in your kingdom. We pray for your kingdom to come and for your will to be done – in our lives, in the lives of the people we hold in our hearts, and for people around the world struggling with poverty and injustice. Help us to be your witnesses as we seek your kingdom first. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Hymn/song

Click on the heading above to be taken to a list of suggested hymns and songs (page 7).

Closing prayer



A prayer said by the worship leader

We go, encouraged that through your Spirit, you go with us.

We go, to seek first your kingdom in our lives.

We go, to witness to the joy, freedom and justice that are found in you.

We go, in the binding love of Jesus.

Amen.

SLIDES 11-12

Hymns and songs

Here is a selection of appropriate hymns and songs which you may like to use in your service. If you are not familiar with these hymns and songs, or if your church uses other song books, then consider gaining inspiration for your selection from the themes of joy, freedom, justice and God's kingdom.

	<i>Singing the Faith</i>	Other info
All I once held dear	489	
Brother, sister, let me serve you	611	
Dear Lord and Father of mankind	495	
Everyone needs compassion	627	
For the healing of the nations	696	
Give thanks with a grateful heart	78	
God! As with silent hearts we bring to mind	698	
God give us life	612	
God of Eve and God of Mary	119	
God of Justice	699	
God in my living	497	
God is love: his the care	403	
God's spirit is in my heart	404	
God weeps at love withheld	700	
God with us	8	
Great is the darkness that covers the earth	405	
Hear the call of the kingdom	407	
Holy breath of God	380	
Holy Spirit, breath of heaven	381	
I will speak out for those who have no voices	702	
Jesus, stand among us	30	
Lead us heavenly Father, lead us	238	
Let love be real	615	

Lord God, your love has called us here	499	
Lord I come to you	471	
Lord Jesus Christ	594	
Lord of life	651	
Lord the light of your love is shining	59	
More like you Jesus	505	
O God, you search me and know me	728	
Over all the earth	63	
Praise is rising, eyes are turning	64	
Praise to the Lord	88	
Pray for a world	527	
Sacred the body God created	618	
Seek ye first the kingdom of God	254	
Send down the fire of your justice	413	
Sent by the Lord am I	239	
Show me how to stand for justice	713	
Teach me to dance	477	
Thanks for friends who keep on loving	619	
The spirit lives to set us free	397	
There's a quiet understanding	36	
There's a spirit in the air	398	
We come from the mountains	417	
We lay our broken world	718	
When the bonds of love are breaking	656	
When we were in the darkest night	241	
Where can we find you, Lord Jesus our Master?	672	
You showed us mercy when we were in chains	488	



Church donation form

To be completed by the treasurer or All We Can co-ordinator. Please use **BLOCK CAPITALS**.

Church/Circuit/Group: _____

I enclose a cheque/CAF cheque payable to **All We Can** for £_____ to be used where it is most needed.

This gift is from (please tick as applicable): a church collection church funds other fundraising

Would you like a receipt? YES NO By post/email (delete as applicable)

If you are sending in Gift Aid envelopes and regular giving forms with your church donation, please check that:

- the amount given is filled in on each envelope
- each person has completed their full name and full address legibly
- you only send All We Can Gift Aid envelopes and regular giving forms
- you keep the Giving envelopes and forms (containing sensitive information) secure, and send them to All We Can as quickly as possible.

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Contact details:

Title: _____ First name: _____ Surname: _____

Contact address: _____

_____ Postcode: _____

Telephone: _____

If you would like to receive updates by email about our work and how you can donate to us, please enter your email here (you can unsubscribe at any time). Email: _____

Thank you!

Return the form with your donation and any Gift Aid envelopes, including regular giving forms, to:

All We Can, 25 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5JR

020 7467 5132

info@allwecan.org.uk

allwecan.org.uk

We promise to never sell or swap your details and you can change your preferences at anytime. All We Can holds your details to thank you for your gift, process Gift Aid, to send you occasional updates about our work and how you can support us. If you would prefer not to receive these updates by post, please tick here (you will still receive communications relevant to your church role).