

SERVICE IDEAS



Choosing a different way – loving your enemies

This is not an order of service but contains some suggestions for elements of a JMA service.

The theme is ‘Choosing a different way, loving your enemies’
(Both relating to the situations, in part, being addressed by the overseas and home mission projects)

i.e.

Sri Lanka – Christians choosing to live in peace where there is conflict (between Tamil and Sinhalese and between Christian and Bhuddist)

Crossroads – offering a chance to young people to turn their back on destructive behaviour to find community, friendship and purpose in a Christian context

Read Matthew 6, v38-42

(Choose a translation which is understandable for children)

Sometimes it is very difficult to do what God wants us to do. Imagine if someone has called you a name, said something unpleasant about you or your family or even physically hurt you. We will think that this is wrong and unfair. The obvious thing is to act in the same way back to the other person. To call them a name, insult their family or hit them. But Christ tells us we must choose a different way to be. We are to love our enemies. In Ireland, often because of what they are told by adults, many children still ‘hate’ Catholics or Protestants even though they don’t really know any or have little idea of what a Catholic or Protestant actually is. This is one of the things that the Crossroads project does (read about their project). Crossroads gives young people the chance to choose not to follow others in hating other groups and doing something fun and rewarding rather than causing trouble. In Sri Lanka (as the below story tells) Christians can suffer attacks because they believe in God. It is right for these Christians to protect themselves but even in these situations, Christ wants Sri Lankan Christians to love their enemies. Think how hard this must be. However, it is only by choosing this different way, choosing to love enemies, that others will know that our God is a god of peace and justice.

A church in Sri Lanka – a short story of witness and choosing a different way

As we drove along the narrow dirt road, Pastor Mahess, who was with us in the van, told us his story. “When I first came to work here,” he said, “the Buddhist monks told the people they were not allowed to listen when I told them about God and his love for them. I tried to help the people but they burned down my house. I kept telling people that God wants to help them. One day, a man whose son was very sick came to see me. The doctor couldn’t make him better. The monks at the temple couldn’t help him either. I prayed for the boy and he got better. Soon the boy’s whole family was following Jesus’ way.”

The van stopped beside a large, simple stone house. There was a crowd of men and women, boys and girls waiting outside. “This is the church,” Mahess said, “and my home.”

Before telling this story you need to explain that there are people who have another religion, Buddhism. Sometimes Christians in Sri Lanka can be bullied and even attacked because of their faith. The natural thing to do would be to fight back but Christ tells us to be people of peace. Mahess chose to pray for and help the very people who had burned his house. Mahess had chosen a different way, Christ’s way. It was this that showed people his God was good and worth following.

Did you know? – why are we sometimes angry and what can love do

There is buried treasure in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka has an important gem (precious stone) industry. Some of the gems are mined in the mountains, but some are mined in the paddy (rice) fields. A little shelter with a thatched roof in the middle of a field often covers the mineshaft. Deep in these mines, people find rubies, emeralds, agate, onyx and other stones. They don't look like much when they are dug out but when they are shaped and polished they have great value and many people are willing to pay a lot of money for them.

Sometimes children are not told that they are loved or are valued by their parents or others round them. This can make them feel they aren't very important, sad or angry. Sometimes people take out this anger on others who are a bit different from themselves. It is important that we let people around us know that they are of value. Just like those gems from the Sri Lankan mines, young people, even if they don't think they look like much or have much to offer, need to understand that to God they are precious and of great value. They also need to know that we value them. How can we do this? Perhaps if we loved each other better, then there would be fewer angry people around.

A prayer for Sri Lanka and Ireland

We think of beautiful Sri Lanka with its golden beaches, lush jungle, elephants and diverse peoples. But Lord we also think of the violence there has been in the civil war.

We thank you that it now seems to be over.

We pray for communities where people still do not trust each other.

Where people even attack others because of the language they speak, the place they come from or because they call themselves Christians.

We pray that people who are different can learn to live together.

We pray that Christians can love their enemies and show that you are a God of peace and justice.

We pray for our own land of Ireland.

Forgive us that we sometimes decide not to like someone even though we don't really know them.

Help us to love people no matter what they look like, what church they go to or don't go to.

We pray for the young people who go along to the Crossroads project.

We ask that they would enjoy themselves, make friends and be able to stay out of trouble which sometimes others get them into.

We pray for the leaders who give their time and energy.

Help them to love the young people they work with.

God may the children and young people of Sri Lanka and Ireland have someone in their life who tells them that they are loved and of great value.

Help us to see when we can be that person.

Help us to choose a different way.

Amen

Display

You may be able to show some of the pictures and crafts that the group may have made through the use of the 2010 pack.

You could also show photos of the Crossroads project and Sri Lanka through Powerpoint.