

# Growing pumpkins on barren sandbars in Bangladesh



## Service outline

**Practical Action is delighted to offer these worship resources to your church family. It is a chance to focus on fellowship with some of the poorest people across the globe, and the ways they can transform their lives. The ideas are suitable for all ages, and can be adapted for particular audiences. If your church has projection facilities, you can find videos and slides which have more information on the theme in this sheet, and which will help with your service, at [www.practicalaction.org/churchservices](http://www.practicalaction.org/churchservices)**

People in Bangladesh have always lived with floods, but in recent years, they have got much heavier, and less predictable. As the poorest families usually live on a village's outskirts, they are especially at risk of losing their homes and their crops, when the waters rise.

Practical Action has a clever solution – the humble pumpkin grows well in the barren sand left behind by

the floods, is nutritious, and stores well. It crops well, meaning there is enough for the pot, and a surplus to sell too.

A gift from your church could help poor families in Bangladesh to be trained and equipped for smallholder pumpkin farming, to improve both their health, and their household income.



## Welcome and explanation

A very warm welcome to our service today! As well as thanking God for the lives of the Saints that have gone before us, we are going to think about what it means to be a Saint nowadays. To help us, we will be looking at the charity, Practical Action, and their Pumpkins Against Poverty project, helping thousands of poor people in Bangladesh to grow pumpkins and become self-sufficient.



## Opening prayer

*Almighty God, thank You that we are surrounded by so many Saints in heaven and on earth. May we be inspired and strengthened by their example. Help us to follow Jesus who lives and reigns with You forever. Amen.*

.....

## Opening song suggestions

**We plough the fields and scatter** – Matthias Claudius  
**Shine Jesus Shine** – Graham Kendrick

.....

## Confession

*Loving God, we are sorry that we sometimes push people away when they need our support. When we turn away from You, through deliberate actions or weaknesses. When we have said unkind words, or pushed people aside, for when we have behaved in ways that are not loving or caring. Forgive us, and help us to include everyone. Amen.*

.....

## Bible reading

**Deuteronomy 7:6**

**Psalm 149:1-5**

**Matthew 5:14-16**



## Talk

You will need: two tea lights; two pumpkins with the tops cut off (one with the seeds and gunk in, one cleaned out). Put enough roasted pumpkin seeds in the cleaned out pumpkin for the congregation to have one each. Also cut a heart shape in the side of the pumpkin that's cleaned out that a child will be able to push out.

Ask the congregation – what is a Saint? Discuss what it takes to be a Saint, name some examples.

Explain that Saints are people throughout history who try to follow Jesus and do the things that Jesus teaches us to do. They are people just like us who let the love of God shine in their lives. They don't make a big song and dance about being good, like the religious leaders in Jesus' time, but they quietly go about doing good and shining God's light in dark places.

Remind the congregation of the reading from Matthew – God has given us the responsibility to be a light in the world. Jesus wants to see His love being revealed and not concealed by us.

Have the two pumpkins ready at the front. Take the first (not cleaned out) pumpkin and ask a child to look inside and explain what's in it. Put one of the tea lights inside and light it. Put the lid back on.

Ask another child to open the other pumpkin. Ask them to take out the roasted seeds, and push out the heart shape. Light the other tea light and put it in the pumpkin. Place the lid back on.

Explain to the congregation that we are all like pumpkins. God has given us 'seeds' – talents and gifts – that He wants us to share and give away. The more we give away, the more we make room for His light to shine in our hearts.

Bring the first pumpkin back. Take the lid off and see that the tea light has gone out. The seeds and gunk are still there.

Explain that if we do nothing with our talents, they sit there doing no good. On the other hand, the light is still shining in the other pumpkin. The seeds can be shared out, and enjoyed by everyone. The more in life we give, the more room there is for God's light to shine in our lives.

This morning, we have an opportunity to let God's light shine in us and to do something beautiful for God. Explain Anwar's story...

***Anwar lives in northwest Bangladesh with his family. Anwar used to help a man repair bicycles, but was paid less than £2 a day to feed and look after his family. Every year, the monsoon rains come between June and October, and many families like Anwar's lose their homes on the river embankments when the floodwaters rise.***

***After the monsoon rains drain away, sandbars are left behind in the river. Practical Action discovered that it is possible to grow pumpkin on these sandbars for 5 months of the year. Last year, Anwar grew 600 pumpkins. He sold 450 and kept 100 to feed his family. With the income he earned, he bought a cow and chickens, which means he can now afford to give his children an education. He is also passing his knowledge on to others like him. He is sharing the good things he has learnt – he is shining a light to others and passing on the hope and help he has received.***

Jesus said 'let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven'. Bringing light into the world starts with us.



## Song/hymn suggestions

**Light of the world** - Matt Redman

**For all the Saints, who from their labours rest** -  
How and Vaughan Williams

**Let Your light shine** – Andy Wallis

## Activities

- Cut out big 'pumpkin seeds' shapes from card and ask the congregation to write their prayers for Bangladesh and others in poverty onto them
- Allow the congregation to cut out their own shapes in pumpkins that show hope and light and love
- Try a game on 'pumpkin bowling', knocking over toilet rolls or empty drink bottles
- Make and sell pumpkin soup, cake, and biscuits, or hold a 'bring and share' supper. Just £38 trains and equips a family to grow pumpkins in Bangladesh: how many mouths could you feed if you all acted together?

## Prayers of intercession

***Heavenly Father, we pray for the people of Bangladesh living in areas affected by flooding and climate change. May they know Your peace in the midst of storms and monsoon rains.***

***May Your grace give them hope when in despair. May You hold them above the floods and protect their homes and livelihoods.***

***We thank You for the opportunity we have today to support these suffering people in their struggles and give them hope and a secure future. Amen.***

***We bless You God of seed and harvest and we bless each other that the beauty of this world and the love that created it might be expressed through our lives and be a blessing to others now and always. Amen.***

*John Birch, faithandworship.com*

## Closing song suggestions

**This little light of mine** – Stephen M. Lee

**Be Thou my vision** – Clifton, Hill and Byrne

**We are marching in the light of God** – Nyberg and Maries

## Blessing

*May you be strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the Saints in light.*

*And may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with you now and always. Amen.*



**Thank you for sharing Practical Action's service ideas with your church. We are an international charity which uses technology to challenge poverty in some of the world's poorest countries. We help men and women to find practical solutions to the hardships they face, without damaging the world.**

Registered office: The Robbins Building, 25 Albert Street, Rugby, Warwickshire, CV21 2SD, UK

+44 (0)1926 634400 Company Reg. No. 871954, England | Reg Charity No. 247257 | VAT No. 880 9924 76. | Patron HRH The Prince of Wales, KG, KT, GCB

**For more service topics and resources, visit [www.practicalaction.org/churchservices](http://www.practicalaction.org/churchservices)**