

# Watering dry fields in Sudan



## 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)

85% of poor people in Sudan depend on smallholder farming to make a living. Recurrent drought and flash floods are devastating harvests, and causing fights over water rights. When food is scarce, people go hungry, especially women and children. Malnourished children never completely recover – they are dogged by illness

and disease for the rest of their lives. A gift from your church could help Practical Action bring irrigation, agriculture, and reforestation technologies to 450,000 smallholder farmers in Sudan which in turn could help to feed up to 1,000,000 men, women, and children, now and in the future.



## Welcome and explanation

Welcome the congregation and explain that this is a service, with a special focus on compassion for those around us.

Practical Action are working all over the world, but today we look especially at the Darfur region in Sudan, which has been enduring conflict for many years.

The fighting makes it hard to grow food, in a place which is already dry. Displaced people cut down trees for fuel and shelter, and the soil gradually erodes.

But there are solutions. Practical Action works with smallholder farmers to install irrigation dams and wells to plant tree saplings, and to find drought-tolerant seed varieties.

We hear so much about 'compassion fatigue', so in a world where famine is a reality, let's give thanks for the harvests that feed us.



## Opening prayer

(the Church of England Harvest Collect)

**Creator God,**

***You made the goodness of the land,***

***The riches of the sea***

***And the rhythm of the seasons;***

***As we thank You for the harvest,***

***May we cherish and respect***

***This planet and its people,***

***Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.***

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## Opening song suggestions

**Autumn days** – Estelle White

**We plough the fields and scatter** –  
Matthias Claudius

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## Confession

*Loving God, we are sorry when we take more than we need. We are sorry when we hide away from You, and when we say unkind words, or think cruel things, or behave in ways that are not loving or caring. Forgive us, and help us to share what we have, starting today. Amen.*

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## Bible reading

**Acts 11:19-30**

**Deuteronomy 26:1-22**

**Psalms 126**



## Talk

Having a good harvest is incredibly important for people all over the world. In the UK, we rely on harvests to grow our wheat, potatoes, tomatoes... *(ask the congregation/children to name other crops we grow in our country)*. On the whole, we have enough rain and sunshine in the UK to make growing food very straight forward. However, in some places across the world, prolonged drought and failing crops can mean the difference between life and death.

In the very first churches that we read about in Acts, if one part of the world was suffering from a bad harvest, Christians in other parts of the world would send them financial help. This happened 2,000 years ago, and it's still happening now. In fact, today you can be a part of it. This service today focuses on a charity called Practical Action, who work with some of the world's poorest communities to improve livelihoods and lift people out of poverty, for good. This harvest, we have the chance to not only be thankful for the provision that God gives us, but also to demonstrate God's love for others by showing compassion to those who are hungry.

We have the privilege of hearing the story of a woman named Aziza. She lives in a village called Zam Zam, which is in the Darfur region of Sudan. This is in her own words: *(ask someone else to read)*

*“Here in Zam Zam, we depend completely on selling crops for an income to feed and educate our family. Before the dam, there wasn't much water, and it didn't reach very far. We relied on the rainfall, but it wasn't enough. Many animals died because there was nothing eat, and it was difficult to give our children an education. But now the change we were praying for has come! Water now reaches areas that haven't had water for 20 years – everywhere you look, there is green! I feel empowered, and thank God, I'm just dreaming for more.”*

Through a simple system of dams, irrigation systems, and terracing land set up by Practical Action, Aziza and her community are no longer facing desperate hunger. But even more than that, Aziza is looking beyond her own situation:

*“I don't just want to think about myself and my village – I am talking on behalf of all poor farmers. We don't have a lot, and this is what God gives us. We want sustainability, and a secure future without support – we want this for ourselves and so many others who still need help”.*



**Aziza has summarised a core message of harvest:** Being thankful for what we have, and being generous with what we can give. Just like those early Christians in Acts, we can each give according to our means, to improve the lives of others around the world we are in need.

## Song/hymn suggestions

For the beauty of the earth – John Rutter

All things bright and beautiful – Cecil Frances Alexander

All creatures of our God & King –  
William Henry Draper

## Activities

- Take a collection for Practical Action in plant pots and discuss how even the smallest gift will grow in the context of helping others, for example the long-term impact of planting and tending just one tree sapling in Sudan, which will cost £30
- Cut out shapes of fruit and veg on coloured pieces of paper, and ask the congregation to write prayers for those in need onto them, and then place them on the altar to offer to God
- Eat together as a church, and make it a fundraiser for Practical Action whilst enjoying the produce that we are blessed with in this country
- Give each member of the congregation a seed, and remind them that one tiny seed can produce something incredible if we have faith – giving our money is the same

## Prayers of intercession

***Father God, we thank You for all the good things that You give to us – food to eat, clothes to wear, families and friends to love us, and for all the other blessings in this life.***

***We know that there are many people around our world who do not have enough to eat. We are sorry for when we are selfish or take Your provision for granted. Please help us to open our hearts to those who are hungry, whether near home or far away.***

***Please teach us to share your incredible creation, and help us use the gifts You give us to make a difference to the lives of those living in poverty.***

***In Jesus' name. Amen.***

## Together, we say the Lord's Prayer:

***Our Father in heaven,  
Hallowed be Your name.  
Your kingdom come, Your will be done,  
On earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread,  
And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation,  
And deliver us from evil,  
For Yours is the kingdom, and the power and the glory,  
Forever and ever. Amen.***

## Closing song suggestions

Tell out, my soul – Timothy Dudley-Smith

Bless the Lord, O my soul – Matt Redman

## Blessing (based on Psalm 67)

**Leader:** *May God be kind to us and bless us.*

**Everyone:** May the light of God's face shine on each one of us.

**Leader:** *Let God's ways and His praise be seen on earth.*

**Everyone:** Let everyone say thank you to God.

**Leader:** *Let all the nations of the world celebrate.*

**Everyone:** May You guide the nations of the earth and rule the people fairly.

**Leader:** *God has given us a good harvest.*

**Everyone:** God has blessed us.

**Leader:** *And may God go on blessing us!*

**Everyone:** And let the whole world say THANK YOU.

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.