Stopping indoor smoke in Nepal

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

Every year, household air pollution from traditional stoves kills more people worldwide than TB, malaria and AIDS combined. As the bitter winter cold sets in, temperatures in Nepal will plummet and families will have no choice but to huddle around the stove for warmth. Inhaling the thick smoke can lead to pneumonia, respiratory problems, heart disease and strokes - but there is a simple solution.

A gift from your church could help Practical Action to reach 36,000 homes across central Nepal, where we are installing smoke hoods. These hoods act like a chimney to draw the dangerous smoke out of homes, and save lives as children and families can grow up healthy without contracting fatal illnesses.
Welcome and explanation

Welcome to our all age service. Today we will be looking beyond our own church, and beyond our own country, to think about the people of the world. God has a lot to say about the people of our world.

In fact, Jesus says that the second greatest commandment is to love other people like ourselves. We need to think about this, to pray about this, and to do something practical. To help us do this, we will be looking at how we can support the charity, Practical Action, and their brilliant projects helping poor communities across the world.

Opening prayer

Almighty God, we thank You for all the provision that You make for us. We thank You for our families, for our homes and for our health. May You inspire and strengthen us to look outwardly to those that don’t have safe houses to live in.

Help us to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves and to defend those who cannot defend themselves. Open our minds and hearts to the plans that You have for us. Amen.

Opening song suggestions

For the beauty of the earth – John Rutter
He’s got the whole world in his hands – Obie Philpot

Confession

Loving God, we are sorry for when we have hidden away from You, through deliberate actions or weaknesses. For when we have said unkind words, for when we have thought cruel things, for when we have behaved in ways that are not loving or caring. Forgive us, and help us to make a new start today. Amen.

Bible reading

Proverbs 31:8-9,
Psalm 72:12-14
James 2:14-24
Talk

The charity we have partnered with for this service is called Practical Action. They are called Practical Action because they believe in creating simple, smart solutions to problems faced by people living in poverty across the world. They work alongside communities to create a world free of poverty and injustice.

The Bible talks about how we must be practical too. James is quite clear - if we see someone without clothes or without food, and just say 'go in peace! Keep warm, eat food!', that doesn't help them at all. If we do nothing about their physical need practically, what good does that do?

And this is what we must do too! We must match the faith that we talk about and sing about on Sundays with the actions that we do the rest of the week.

The wonderful thing about being a Christian is that God isn’t interested in our performance - He loves us no matter what, and Jesus died for every sin we have ever committed and will ever commit.

So this means that we don’t do good actions because God forces us to. It’s quite the opposite! We want to do good things because we know how much God has done for us and we love Him. In other words, if we love God, then we will love others like God.

Anne Frank is quoted to have said, “How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.” We can use our actions, fuelled by our faith, to make a real, practical difference to the world around us.

Many of us will be going home today to cook a meal for our families, and in this country, that isn’t usually a life-threatening event!

However, for families in Nepal, cooking every meal on a traditional, open stove in the middle of their homes produces thick, black smoke which, when inhaled, causes huge health problems such as pneumonia, stroke, heart disease and cancer. But the answer is so simple!

A smoke-hood that draws the smoke from the fire up out of the house through a chimney can ventilate homes enough to reduce pollution by 82%. Children grow up healthier and the smoke-hoods are made locally, so training local people to make and install the hoods creates income in the area.

Putting our faith into practice can feel overwhelming and a bit scary, but this is a great place to start. Giving a gift to Practical Action could make a real difference to someone’s life.
Song/hymn suggestions

Lord the light of your love - Graham Kendrick
How deep the Father’s love for us - Stuart Townend

Activities

- Invite members of the congregation to share their experiences of cooking on, or sitting around, open fires. Is it something they’d want to do all the time?
- Set up a washing line across the church and ask people to write prayers onto paper and peg them onto the line to remind us of others
- Hold a churchyard BBQ, or a sponsored sleep-over in the church, or sell toffee-apples, and then donate the money to Practical Action. It costs just £38 to install one efficient cook-stove in Nepal - how many families can you help, if you club together?

Prayers of intercession

Lord God, we pray for the people of Nepal, and those less fortunate in the world especially those living with disease and illness from inhaling smoke. May families know Your peace in the midst of difficulty. May families know Your hope when they feel despair. May You protect them from harm, and build for them new lives with secure futures.

We thank You for the opportunity we have had today to support these people, and thank You that, through Your Son Jesus, we can have hope in the future. Help us to pass this hope onto others, and transform our faith from words to actions that show others Your love.

Closing song suggestions

Take my life, and let it be - Frances Ridley Havergal
Great is thy faithfulness - Thomas Chisolm/William Runyan

Blessing

Lord God, may You strengthen us as we go through our week and send us out in Your power. Give us patience and grace for all who we meet, and help us to share in the joy of salvation.

And may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be on us today and all of our days. 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.