

Education for All Hope for All



Order of Service



Methodist Women
in Britain

for women, for justice, for Christ

The **Methodist** Church 

Welcome

A very warm welcome to this Easter Offering service. This service focuses on the right of every person to receive an education. There are countries where families are required to pay for their children's education, and often as a consequence boys' education takes precedence over that of girls. According to Unicef, there are 129 million girls currently out of school, including 32 million of primary school age, and 97 million of secondary school age.

Every day, girls face barriers to education caused by poverty, cultural norms and practices, poor infrastructure, violence and fragility. Ensuring that all children receive a quality education is one of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4), aiming to eradicate poverty. Education transforms lives and communities, opening God's promise of fullness of life for all people.

Shared by church communities across the country, this service raises funds for the Methodist Church's global partnerships through the World Mission Fund, in collaboration with the Methodist Church in Ireland.

Methodist Women in Britain prepares the Easter Offering service every year as a gift to the Methodist people, following a tradition of fundraising begun nearly 140 years ago. Our offering is a joyful response to the Easter story. All monies raised go to the World Mission Fund.



Opening Sentence

"Happy are those who find wisdom and those who get understanding, for her income is better than silver and her revenue better than gold." (*Proverbs 3:13-14*)

and/or

"If your plan is for a year, plant rice. If your plan is for a decade, plant trees. If your plan is for a century, educate children." (*Confucius*)



Optional Hymn

Holy Spirit, we welcome you (*Singing the Faith 385*)

Gathering Prayer

Gracious and loving God, help us to welcome you into our hearts, and to listen to your voice. Fill our hearts with your love and compassion and open our minds that we may recognise the needs of this world. We ask this in the name of Jesus. **Amen.**



Hymn Teach me to dance (*StF 477*)

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Confession

We praise you, amazing God.

We praise and thank you creator God, for our world in all its richness and diversity. We see your brush strokes clearly visible in the breathtaking beauty of creation, on earth and in the heavens.

We praise and thank you Jesus, who came to show us the way as a child in our midst, bending down to draw in the sand and telling stories full of hidden treasures.

We praise and thank you Holy Spirit, for your prompting and wisdom, guiding our thoughts and actions and helping us to see the potential around us.

We come saying sorry, as your people, for the things that we have done and the things we have failed to do. We regret our lack of love and compassion to others. We regret our complacency and the opportunities that have been missed.

We ask you to look on us with your forgiving heart as we commit ourselves anew to sharing the knowledge of your love, joy and peace throughout the world. In the light of your Easter message of hope, we pray that you will renew in us those gifts of wonder, wisdom and discernment so that we can grow and learn at all stages of our lives.

Amen.

Bible Reading Proverbs 3:13-18



Story 1: Hannah Ball

Robert Raikes is famous for starting the Sunday School movement. You probably learned that at school, so you might be surprised to know that it's not strictly true. We can guess some of the reasons why Raikes might get the credit! But, in fact, he was advised by a Methodist – a woman who had already set up a Sunday School, way back in 1769.

That woman was Hannah Ball – a friend of John Wesley – who believed that by giving children a basic schooling, she could change lives for good. She set up a simple pattern of education, with religious learning on a Sunday and the other '3 Rs' on a Monday. This wasn't easy! To start with, she got a lot of opposition from members of her wider family and people in the local community. People felt threatened that as the poorest families became empowered through education, the social order might be disturbed. Then there were the children themselves. In one of her letters to Wesley she

said: "They are a wild little company but seem willing to be instructed. I labour among them earnestly..." There's many a modern teacher could say the same!

Nowadays, Hannah Ball is beginning to get the proper credit for her role in establishing the world's first Sunday School. The idea caught on amongst Methodists, as well as Raikes' Anglican community and by the middle part of the 19th century, almost a third of a million children were learning in Methodist Sunday Schools.

There is a school named after Hannah Ball in High Wycombe and it is possible to find a picture of her grave – but of Hannah herself, there is no picture. However, her image is imprinted on our Methodist story: the passion she shared for education for the poor contributed to the change Methodism spread amongst wider society and, through the missionary movement, spread across the world – a change in which 'nobodies became somebodies'.



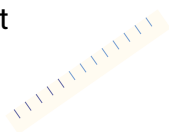
Hymn Sent by the Lord am I (StF 239)

Gospel Reading Luke 10:38–42



Reflection on the Reading

For notes to inform a sermon, reflection or Bible study, please see the Leaders' Notes available at methodist.org.uk/EasterOffering



Story 2: Learning in the Plantations Community in Sri Lanka

It is a source of some pride at the Methodist girls' school in Sri Lanka that they were founded eight years before the missionaries got round to offering education for the boys. In fact, being opened in 1866, Methodist College predates the 1870 Education Act in England – Methodists were offering education to girls in Sri Lanka before the British state had acknowledged the importance of schooling for all children in England.

Given such promising beginnings, what are things like for children in Sri Lanka now? On the one hand, there is a lot that is positive: every morning and lunchtime, the streets are flooded with children in all white uniforms on their way to and from school – riding pillion on motorbikes or jumping out of convoys of minivans that pause briefly outside the school. Education is seen as the gateway to better opportunities, so it is highly regarded – O Levels and A Levels, seem to be everyone's goal, but most children talk about going to university, and many expect to do a higher degree. Because of these levels of commitment, literacy nationally stands at 93.5 per cent.

Hidden cost of education

However, these figures mask the hard struggle for many. It's relatively easy to access schools when people live in towns but a different challenge for villagers who can have a long – and expensive – journey, setting off while it is dark and still cool but returning in the heat of the day. A three kilometre walk is challenge enough, but even worse when it's all uphill and 35 degrees. Then there's the hidden costs of 'free' education. For example, pupils have to provide their own learning materials. In the current financial crisis, the cost of an exercise book has risen from Rs200 to Rs500. That's bad enough in itself – but a tea-picker on a plantation earns only Rs1000 for a full day's work.

That means that one exercise book for just one of your children costs half a day's salary. Although schools have many eager children, classrooms have very few learning

materials. Even in the fee-paying schools, computers and attractive reading books are thin on the ground.

And what will girls do when they've got an education? The jobs for which they are qualified are in the towns and cities, a long way from village and family. Because of this, the Methodist Church runs boarding-houses for young women – safe places where girls can rent a room but still live in community under the caring watch of an older woman warden. Teachers and nurses live here alongside girls doing their A levels in the superior city schools.

Church schools healing tensions

The Methodist Church in Sri Lanka continues to see the importance of education to its work. The state nationalised most religious schools in the 1970s and it's difficult for religious bodies to open new ones. But across the country, Methodists are using their chapels to provide early years education for the most disadvantaged families in the community. They believe that getting these children a good start will give them a better end. The Church also sees the potential of church schools in healing the tensions that still shadow Sri Lankan society. Because they are open to all, church schools are an opportunity to bring together Hindus and Buddhists, Sinhalese and Tamil (as well as Christians and Muslims) to forge cross-cultural friendships from an early age.

Education is one way that the Methodist Church in Sri Lanka is having a long-lasting impact in changing the lives of individuals and communities. And it's an area in which they'd love to do more.



Hymn

Summoned by the God who made us (StF 689)

Dramatised Reading

I would love to learn to read and write!

The whole congregation could be Voice 2

Go to methodist.org.uk/EasterOffering for a downloadable *Education for All* colouring-in sheet, with facts about education campaigner, Malala.



Voice 1: I would love to learn to read and write!

Voice 2: What's stopping you?

Voice 1: My family is poor and can only afford to send my brothers to school.

Voice 3: I would love to learn to read and write!

Voice 2: What's stopping you?

Voice 3: I am needed to work in the fields, to tend our crops so that my family can eat.

Voice 4: I would love to learn to read and write!

Voice 2: What's stopping you?

Voice 4: Climate change caused our crops to fail because of drought and then floods came so we have no food to sell. There's no money to buy any school books.

Voice 5: I would love to learn to read and write!

Voice 2: What's stopping you?

Voice 5: We live too far away from the school, and I would have to walk there and back as we have no transport.

Voice 6: I would love to learn to read and write!

Voice 2: What's stopping you?

Voice 6: I am needed to fetch the water from the river several times a day so that we have water for cooking and cleaning. There's no time for school.

Voice 7: I would love to learn to read and write!

Voice 2: What's stopping you?

Voice 7: I went to school for a little while but then I was married when I was 12 years old. I now have to help my mother-in-law in the house and look after my child.

Voice 8: I would love to learn to read and write!

Voice 2: What's stopping you?

Voice 8: The Taliban will not allow girls to have an education. We have to stay at home all day, every day. I dream of going to university, and of being a politician or a doctor.

Voice 2: These are the words of Malala Yousafzia, the girl from Pakistan, who fought for the right for girls to receive an education.

Voice 3: "I raise up my voice – not so that I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard."

Voice 5: "When the whole world is silent, even one voice becomes powerful."

All: We would love to learn to read and write!



Hymn Brother, Sister, let me serve you (StF 611)

Education is not just the process of learning to read and write. Life skills are important and how we treat one another is important too. Education is used to highlight injustice, to change attitudes. We learn that each person is special in God's eyes and deserves to be shown respect and given dignity. The next two stories show how this is being put into practice.

Story 3: Church of North India – Durgapur Education for Safety

In a village in North Dinajpur, part of a thin corridor passage between West Bengal and the North Eastern states of India, local people looked with distrust on the scene before them. Two men and a woman were standing with two schoolgirls. Could these be traffickers? The villagers lost no time in informing the police, and sure enough, the strangers confessed that they were trafficking girls for sexual trade. They had lured these girls with promises of acting in movies

and TV serials. As a result of the villagers' intervention, the three traffickers were taken into custody, and two innocent girls were saved from devastation and pain.

The fact that the villagers recognised danger signs and had confidence to approach the police was the result of the Anti-Human Trafficking Programme undertaken by the Diocese of Durgapur, Church of North India. The programme spreads awareness of the dangers of human trafficking, and highlights its causes, which include unemployment, poverty and lack of education. Communities are mobilised to work together with local government and the police to prevent trafficking. It was due to the awareness campaigning in schools and villages that local people in North Dinajpur were able to identify the traffickers and take the right action in time to rescue innocent schoolgirls.

Protecting the vulnerable

The Diocese is actively trying to protect the vulnerable. Central to the work is the provision of education, with safe spaces and new opportunities for self-expression for children who are at risk of being trafficked. Baldahura Safe Home, a residential hostel, provides protection for girls who are at risk and who have been rescued. They are given individual care and attention in a secure, supportive atmosphere that encourages academic achievement and personal development.

The Baladhura Safe Home was built on land given by the father of the current warden, Phulin Hansda. She explains, "My father envisioned this place to be a place of well-being and shelter for girls who are abandoned, homeless, and who get abducted or abused." One student there is Payal Mardi, who says, "Both my parents have passed away and now it has been almost eight years that I am staying in this hostel. We have a very friendly environment in this hostel, and I feel very safe and secure here."

The home continues to transform the lives of the girls into a protected and safe future.

Story 4: Centre for Social Communication in Latin America – Colombia, South America

The Centre for Social Communication in Latin America (CEPALC) is an ecumenical organisation based in Colombia, a country that has seen much violence due to political-military conflict in which children are the main victims. CEPALC was founded in 1978 by Amparo and Felix Beltran to help children find their way in the world, giving them tools to build relationships and express themselves through arts and other activities.

CEPALC programmes are specifically designed for children of the sectors hardest hit by poverty and violence. The programmes focus on human and children's rights, social values and media training taught through painting, music, theatre, radio and video, among others. Through these methods, children creatively express their vision of the world, their view of conflicts and social problems, and their view of the role and validity of the rights of children in everyday life.

Programmes to sow peace

Using stories of the role of women in the Bible, such as Esther, Rahab and Miriam, CEPALC have developed programmes to help women and children understand their social and political rights and how to build gender-equal relationships. Girls and boys from different Christian communities have participated in children's meetings and workshops on their rights and the social values necessary to help create a culture of peace. They are encouraged to make YouTube videos to pass on their messages of peace and equality to their peers. Children who participate in these programmes have been the most effective sowers of peace in the lives of their families and communities.

During a visit to Colombia, the MWIB President, Ruth Parrott, travelled with a CEPALC team to Morca – a small mining village, high in the Andes, where children as young as ten work in illegal mines. This was an area where FARC (The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) operated; an area that had seen much violence.

Colombia is a very patriarchal society, so both girls and boys need to be taught to respect girls' bodies and to know they have a right to choose and say 'no' to sexual advances. Ruth was invited to watch a play by the children and young people to demonstrate this and took part in circle activities that encourage building healthy relationships. Everyone was asked to say something for which they were grateful. The letters spelling 'gratitude' in Spanish were handed out for everyone to decorate.

To deliver their message of peace and justice across Columbia, and other South American countries, CEPALC now have an online radio station 'Encuentro Radio' and publish a magazine through internet networks. Many of the team have come through CEPALC training themselves. Other indigenous communities are being encouraged to have their own radio station and CEPALC train young people to plan and broadcast programmes.

Amparo and Beltran say this about CEPALC:

"We are convinced that in order to achieve true peace in Colombia, leadership must be empowered, as well as the social role of the most vulnerable groups in society such as women, children, members of ethnic, sexual, social minorities etc. Without that empowerment, without restoration of the rights of these groups, the longed-for Utopia of being able to live in a country that is not dominated by hatred, violence and social inequalities can never be achieved.

But we are also convinced that the construction of that Utopia can only occur by fulfilling the commandment of love that Jesus brings us as the light of our lives. Our institutional mission could, then, be summed up in trying to fulfil the will of the Lord Jesus Christ by putting our wills and capacities as people and as an organisation in the service of building his kingdom, in the service of the humble, the impoverished and the forgotten."



Prayers of Intercession

During the prayers of intercession, we will sing
May the God of hope go with us every day (StF 411).

First verse

God of love,

We pray for our brothers and sisters throughout the world who are affected by poverty, for people whose daily life is a struggle against the effects of climate change: searing heat bringing drought, and floods that wash away crops.

We think of the families who are unable to send their children to school to give them a chance to improve their situation because of the challenges in their communities.

Awaken us afresh to the devastation that climate change is bringing.

Help us to work practically for the resources and solutions to help communities adapt to the changing climate, for the sake of future generations.

We pray that you will place the needs of the most vulnerable communities on the hearts of every leader.

Chorus

We pray for communities that lack the amenities we take for granted:

People whose lives and education are restricted by lack of transport and safe roads,

Communities that do not have access to clean water.

Inspire us to make a difference, to share resources and to help implement change.

Chorus

We pray for all women and girls who face prejudice, inequality and gender disparities:

For girls who are denied education,

For those who try to learn in secret,
For those whose aspirations of further
education are a distant dream.

We know that each person is special in your sight, so we pray
that all women and girls will be granted equal rights and equal
opportunities – educationally, economically and socially –
so that all people may work together to alleviate poverty
and make this world a better place.

Last verse and chorus

We ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ,
our risen Saviour. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer



Hymn As the Glory of Creation (StF 725)
or The Right Hand of God (StF 715)

*During the singing of this hymn, we invite you to bring forward
your Easter Offering gift for the World Mission Fund.*

Dedication of Offering

We dedicate the offerings made to the Methodist World Mission Fund through this Easter Offering service.

Let us stand and say together:

Loving and gracious God, we bring the offerings for the work of the Methodist Church through its World Mission Fund. Our gifts are our grateful response to your love poured out for us at Easter. May the money be used to support people where there is need, and to share the love of Jesus Christ, our Saviour. We pray for those who distribute the funds, and for those who will be recipients, that each may learn more of your generous hospitality and love for all humankind. Amen.

Blessing

Bless us as we journey onwards. May our eyes and ears and hearts and minds be alert to your prompting so that, as your children, we may continue to grow in light and truth.

We ask this in Jesus' name. **Amen.**



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