

World Water Day 2007: Worship Resources

'Give me a Drink,' Jesus

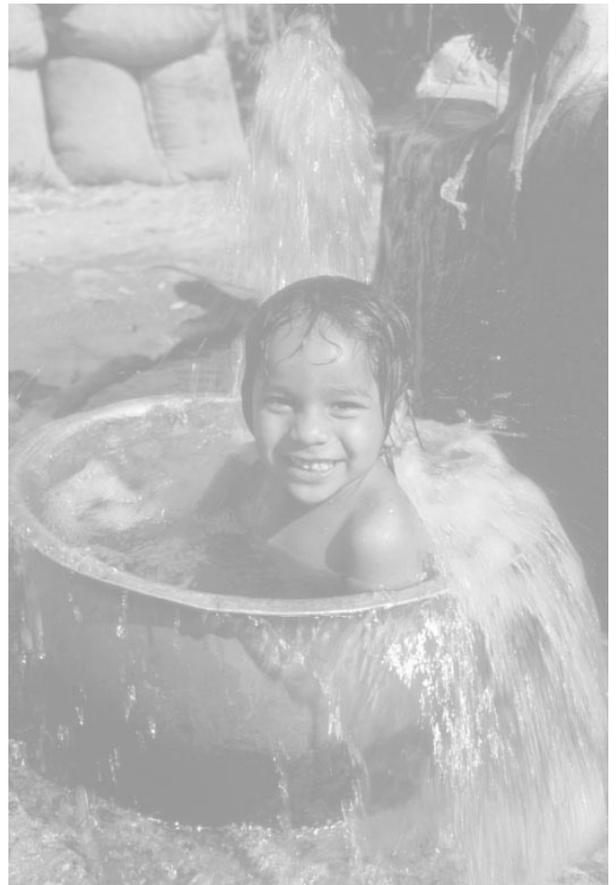


Introduction

Building on the 2006 Christmas Appeal theme, *Water, the gift of life*, Christian World Service offers these worship resources in support of World Water Day and to encourage parishes and communities to reflect on the growing shortage of safe water. In 1992 the United Nations designated 22 March as World Water Day to encourage nations to focus on the conservation and the development of water resources as part of Agenda 21. This year the theme is 'Coping with Water Scarcity' in an effort to focus attention on the need to manage water resources more sustainably and equitably.

The lack of access to clean and safe water is an issue that many of Christian World Service partners deal with as part of their work. From building water tanks to campaigning for water access to recycling household water, they know how much the lack of water is contributing to poverty and sickness. The increased lack of rainfall is leading to chronic drought in many parts of the world and access to water is a contributing factor in some conflict situations. According to the United Nations each person needs between 20 and 50 litres of clean water a day for drinking, cooking and cleaning, but a shocking 1.1 billion or one in six people miss out. Two out of every five people do not have adequate sanitation. The difference between those with safe water and adequate sanitation is a gulf that differentiates between rich and poor, healthy and sick, secure and vulnerable.

Water is a central symbol of life in the Biblical tradition especially in a region of the world where there was little water. In Ancient Palestine the contrast between the Dead Sea, with its sulphurous air, oppressive heat and high (7%) salt content, and the living water of the river Jordan was very real. There were few streams in ancient Palestine, many of the springs and wells were unreliable and the people relied on the run-off from winter rains. Towns grew up around permanent springs and in cities like Jerusalem they built tunnels and conduits to ensure continuous access. The frequent references to water as a symbol of life are earthed in the experience of the people.



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Call to Worship

God of Life

The earth belongs to you

And we are your people.

We come in worship,

**acknowledging how much we need your grace
in a world where there is so much violence
and greed.**

**We long for the living water that refreshes and
gives life**

Seeking justice and praying for peace

You are our hope and our strength

We open our hearts to your word.

Amen

Prayer of Approach

Rejoice in the Lord,

For he has refreshed the parched earth

We praise you, O God

Rejoice for the rain that falls by night,

And soaks gently into the dry ground,

Causing half dried up roots to swell,

And the deep cracks in the earth to close.

We praise you, O God

Rejoice for the great drops that fall at midday;

Rejoice in the small streams,

Singing on their way

From the hills down into the valleys,

To make the rivers swell

And fill the reservoirs

And supply the cities

And irrigation channels with water.

We praise you, O God

From Africa (Church World Service)

Litany with Water

Speaker 1: I am a woman from Africa. Each day I

walk 4 kilometres to collect water for my family.

The stream is shrinking and the water is cloudy.

Will you give me water to drink?

(She takes a glass to a central table)

Speaker 2: I am a man from Palestine. Water

used to come from a tap but now there is none. I

used to have a small shop selling household

goods but no more. I try to find work but there is

mostly none. I have to pay for every drop of water

that my family drinks. Will you give me water to

drink?

(He takes a glass to a central table)

Speaker 3: I am a woman from South India. We used to live off the sea and my husband caught enough fish – but now he is afraid. The water we drink is not good and I am afraid my children will become sick. Will you give me a glass of water?
(She takes a glass to a central table)

Silence

Leader:

Let us pray

Life giving God

It is not your fault that so many people go thirsty.

We have not taken care of your waterways nor tended to those in need. We have sought our own comfort and are sometimes deaf to those who cry out for water in faraway lands. We have not listened and we have not responded.

Life-giving God

Help us to hear the cries of those who are in need.

Strengthen us to respond with compassion.

Quench the thirst of the people

And heal your broken and divided world.

In the Name of the one who is our hope.

Amen.

Conclusion: You may like to pour water into each of the glasses. You might like to invite everyone to share in this life-giving drink.

Children's talk

Bring a pot plant – and a plastic bottle with the bottom cut off and a jug of water.

Introduce the plant and invite the group to respond to the question, what does this plant need to live.

Then continue: All over the world people grow plants for food. Some of them have no taps or pipes for water. Insert the bottle upside down into the soil beside the plant, explaining how the water will go down to the roots and not evaporate.

Share a story of a home gardener in Sri Lanka or Nicaragua who saves their 'grey water', the water that they have washed their dishes or bodies in, to help this plant to grow. Invite one of the children to put water in the plant and talk about how God has given us water to care for and share with others.

Conclude with a prayer:

Loving God, we thank you for the gift of water.

May there be enough for everyone to drink.

Amen.

Bible Readings

Psalm 63

David, in the wilderness of Judah, depends on God's presence to comfort him. He knew what it is like to be physically thirsty because the water supply in the wilderness was very limited and precarious. He acknowledged that only God can quench both his physical and spiritual thirst. In Aotearoa New Zealand where we rarely run out of water, the focus is more on quenching our spiritual thirst and we may forget that God is also concerned about meeting our physical need for water.

John 4:1-30

In the time of Jesus, Jews and Samaritans were enemies (v9). The source of their enmity was a Samaritan shrine at Mount Gerizim that competed with the Temple in Jerusalem. Jesus was sitting by Jacob's well in the heat of the day when an unnamed Samaritan woman comes to draw water (v6). Normally women drew water in the cool of the morning or evening and in company with other women. For Jesus to talk to a woman in a "public" place was astonishing and it was clear that the woman recognised this (v9). Jesus would become unclean by drinking out of the same vessel as a Samaritan according to the Pharisaic law. Jesus' actions transformed the situation. He offered her the water that gives the fullness of life (v13-14) and she accepted. In doing so she became a messenger to the Samaritans (vv28-9) and Jesus spent time sharing with them (v40-42). Jesus once again broke the rules and shows that God's love has no limits.

The story draws on the ancient symbolism of water as a gift of life but shows how it resonates to the everyday world of the people. It is not clear from the text if Jesus did drink from the well but one can safely assume that if he stayed with Samaritans he would have shared their drinking vessels.

Take Action

Organise enough water drops so that each person present can have one. Invite them to write something that struck them from the sermon on their water drop and then collect them as a living offering to God and to the world.

Intercessory Prayer

God of the running water

We pray for our world where waterways are polluted with rubbish, where streams that once were clean now carry poisonous bacteria and chemicals and our rivers are being clogged with didymo. So many people have depended on clean water for life but now they have been abandoned by those who could help.

Hear the cries of those without clean water

And quench their thirst

We pray for those who have power to bring water where the people need it, especially for governments who set policy and decide where to build pipes or to go to war. May they listen to the people and acknowledge their continued roles in maintaining their water systems while seeking better ways of sharing the water with all who depend on it.

Hear the cries of those without clean water

And quench their thirst

We pray for those that we know who are in need of your life-giving water at this time... (add names and circumstances known to you). May their thirst be quenched.

Hear the cries of those without clean water

And quench their thirst

Life-giving God we ask these things and much more in your name.

Amen

Closing Prayer

As Jesus walked to Jerusalem

So we make our way in this world

Committed to the Cross

Committed to the Word

Committed to our lives together.

We go knowing that we can draw on your wells

And in the hope of new life.

Amen

Hymns

AA 83 Just a cup of water

AA 85 Let Justice roll down

AA 88 Lift up your hearts to the Lord

AA114 Out of such sun and air

WOV200 Come, thou long-expected Jesus

WOV 494 Lead us, heavenly father, Lead Us

WOV667 The love of God is broad

WOV Where the road runs out



Partner Story: Gamawathi Gamage

Gamawathi lives in the Mahagalwewa area of Sri Lanka. She is part of the MONLAR home gardening programme. When MONLAR moved into the area she was very sceptical because there was not enough water to grow crops. After learning how to collect water and use it in the garden she and her husband joined the programme. They have learnt ridging techniques and also have a terracotta pot system where the water is collected and distributed through seepage holes into the earth to nourish the roots of the trees. The water is also collected during the monsoon period and stored in the pot system. There has been no monsoon for the last two seasons and the land is very dry. It is making it a lot harder to keep the trees alive and the family is being even more careful with its water.



Further information and resources:

World Water Day (including video clips, powerpoints, information):

<http://www.unwater.org/wwd07/flashindex.html>

Christian World Service has produced a video/ DVD that comes with study material, *Water, who owns it?* Exploring the water situation for small farmers in Sri Lanka.

Down the Gurgler is the latest *youth topics*, featuring a poster and group activities on the water theme.

The Ecumenical Water Network has a new website with some resources:

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/activities/ewn-home.html>

Ministry of the Environment on water management:

<http://www.mfe.govt.nz/issues/water/prog-action/index.html>

Water Facts

- More than 80 countries with 40% of the world's population are subject to water shortages.
- 1.1 billion people struggle to access safe clean drinking water
- 15% of the world's population have a tap in their home to provide clean drinking water.
- Around 6000 children die every day from drinking unsafe water and having poor sanitation.
- Only 0.008% of the planet's water is available for consumption.
- A Masai person in Kenya uses 10 litres of water a day; a New Zealander uses 350 litres a day.
- Women in many countries walk miles every day in search of water.

