

# Talking about Toilets

## Sanitation Worship Resources

### Prepared for World Water Day 22 March



#### Introduction

Talking about toilets is not something we normally do at church, but CWS is encouraging you to be a little daring in the name of ending poverty. Sanitation is a topic that can provoke some wide-ranging discussion. Individuals can provide stories of harrowing experiences in using a particular toilet. Some people are fastidious about what toilets they use and there are always the arguments about who cleans them, countless toilet jokes and euphemisms for somewhere that we all visit throughout the day. In Aotearoa New Zealand most people have access to at least one flushable toilet in their homes but there are some situations where there are no adequate toilet facilities or they are unsafe, unpleasant or unclean.

The lack of adequate sanitation here causes some disease but not to the extent it does in developing countries where it is a significant contributor to the incidence of poverty as noted in the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. The figures are truly shocking: over 2.6 billion or 40% of the world's population cannot go to a safe, clean and private toilet and over 1.8 million people die each year from diarrhoeal diseases.

As well as causing ill health and death, poor sanitation also has a major impact on the economic well-being of the world's people - adults cannot work and need to spend the little money they might have on treatment. Inadequate sanitation undermines the dignity of people and their access to a decent life. In recognition of the crucial difference good sanitation would make in eradicating poverty, the United Nations has designated this year as the International Year of Sanitation and the theme of World Water Day held each year on 22 March. While sanitation is not a topic for Easter Saturday reflections it could be the focus of a fun youth service, all age worship or at another suitable time when the congregation wants to reflect on one of the seldom discussed causes of poverty and illness. Christian World Service invites you to focus on efforts to make the world a cleaner, healthier and safer place for all its citizens.

*Please adapt these resources for your use. CWS staff are happy to speak on theme at appropriate occasions and there are further resources available*

#### Prayer

God of the water and air  
You have provided all that we need to live:  
You give us air to breath, water to drink and food to eat.  
You offer us the gifts of life to be shared with everyone.

And yet so many of the world's people do not have enough:  
They live in poverty, vulnerable to illness and lacking food,  
water and sanitation.

Expand our worldview so that we may find new ways of  
ending the indignity of poverty.  
In your name we pray. Amen

#### Notes on Sanitation

The costs of not investing in adequate sanitation are huge. People cannot work, children miss school and there is increased demand for medical treatment. The World Health Organisation has estimated that for every \$1 invested in providing sanitation the benefit will be between \$3 and \$34 (on average \$7) to the community. It is shameful that more action has not been taken already. Perhaps one of the reasons is that good sanitation often requires a community response – there needs to be investment in adequate systems of waste disposal and for the distribution of clean water. Providing such infrastructure requires both political will and financial investment. There is a need for action at every level of a community in order to dramatically increase access to good sanitation and find creative solutions to help people out of poverty.



A girl and boy walk toward latrines at Mutovhoti Primary School in Zimbabwe  
©UNICEF/HQ06-0428/Giacomo Pirozzi



Photo credit: Act-Intl

### CWS Partners provide sanitation

CWS partners especially in emergency situations often include education on hygiene and the provision of toilets (sometimes compost toilets) and pit latrines. Typically they arrange the delivery of equipment, contract the necessary labour some of which may be voluntary, train local personnel to manage the water, latrines and the production and distribution of compost.

#### *Wiping Out Worms in Darfur (see above photo)*

Fatiha is the coordinator of a latrine project in Abata. She works on a voluntary basis encouraging people to dig latrines in their compounds, registering households, participating in the project and monitoring the progress. She measures each pit to see to make sure that it will be deep enough. Already 250 households out of 1,500 have built their own pit latrines. Before the latrines were built people used to go to the toilet in the open. "During the rainy season this would have a serious affect on our health. We get our water from the stream but during the rains the water has worms in it - white ones and red ones. You can see them with your eyes. There is always a lot of sickness."

Fatiha adds, "People have been willing to participate in this project. They have learnt about hygiene and now we realise that latrines are a good thing; they will clean up our village and protect people from disease."

As well as providing household latrines the community has built two blocks of latrines at the only school in Avara. The headmaster says, "These facilities will encourage young people to follow good hygiene practice. Instilling youths with good hygiene practice will improve the health of the whole community."

Providing clean water and good sanitation is an important part of the relief effort in Darfur, Sudan where ongoing conflict has forced over 4 million people from their homes. Many are living in crowded refugee camps and remote villages with few facilities. The government had neglected the region before the fighting erupted and this lack of development contributed to the conflict.

### An Idea for a Children's Talk:

Bring a roll of toilet paper on which you have written some facts and figures about sanitation. Invite those present to explain what it is used for – you may like to have a discussion about how they use it – ie whether they fold it or scrunch it! For older children you may prefer to discuss some other aspect of toilets like who uses it the most or what happens to the material that we flush. (It was recently reported in Christchurch that it takes approximately 4 hours for waste material to reach the Bromley sewerage treatment plant.) After gaining their interest read and discuss some of the facts and figures written on the paper beginning with the number of people who don't have access to safe toilets. You could pin them somewhere so that they are available later. It is worth giving a healthy reminder to wash their hands after each visit to the toilet during the course of the conversation.

### Bible Reading

Deuteronomy 23: 9-14

This text is part of the central teachings of the book, laying out the law according to Moses. These teachings prescribe the divinely authorised social order by which the people will live justly and in keeping with God's laws. This prescription for cleanliness in a military camp is very wise in providing for both individual decency and a hygienic living environment. Note that Bible does not say that defecation is impure – perhaps it suggests repugnance and concern for the health of the people. According to the War Scroll of later times, found at Qmran, the latrine was to be located 2000 cubits (900 metres) from the camp. Israel's success did not depend on military prowess but on their carrying out the will of God.

*If you would like a copy of a short skit illustrating the text please contact [cws@cws.org.nz](mailto:cws@cws.org.nz)*



CWS partner, SCS Malaysia organized toilets for long houses in Sarawak and lessons in better hygiene.

## Prayer for Others

Loving God

There are so many people who live each day deprived of basic human dignity: they do not have adequate food, they lack clean water and they have no where safe to relieve themselves. Women, men and children suffer from diseases that could be prevented by good sanitation and governments fail to find ways to invest in the necessities of life.

Such injustice is not your will for the people of the world

R: Loving God, we pray for a change of heart and a new commitment to action.

Gracious God

Your world has been damaged and polluted by people. Waterways that once brought life are now dammed or diverted and sometimes carry disease. Land that once provided good food and shelter has been destroyed by overuse and the dumping of toxic waste. The climate is heating up because people have exploited it for profit and greed.

Such injustice is not your will for the resources of the world

R: Loving God, we pray for a change of heart and a new commitment to action.

Compassionate God

The goods of the world have not been distributed fairly. The poorest people who have lived carefully and close to the earth and sea, bear the highest cost as their source of life is taken from them by large scale development. Those who control the world's resources clutch on to their power, accumulating the riches for themselves that you have given to be shared by us all.

Such injustice is not your will for the people of the world

R: Loving God, we pray for a change of heart and a new commitment to action.

Amen

## Some Sanitary Activities

Hold a competition to think of as many words as you can for the word 'toilet' including in other languages.

Produce images of the variety of toilets and latrines.

Hold a debate: Sanitation is an individual's responsibility.

Try the quiz compiled by CWS. Send for a copy of the Powerpoint: [cws@cws.org.nz](mailto:cws@cws.org.nz)

Find out the history of local sanitation if your town or city provides such facilities. When did your council introduce a sanitary system and why? You may also like to arrange a field visit to see what happens to your community's waste. Alternatively if many people use a septic tank or perhaps compost toilets, someone may be willing to explain how they work.



From SCS Malaysia

## Millennium Development Goals

To mark the new millennium world leaders at the United Nations agreed to some radical goals that could help the needs of poor people. While there has been some progress indications are that Africa and the Pacific are falling further behind. Under Goal 7, the tenth target is to "Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe water and basic sanitation. To meet this target the World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that an additional 260 000 people per day up to 2015 need access to improved water sources and an extra 370,000 people per day need to gain access to improved sanitation.

In launching the International Year of Sanitation at the end of 2007 the United Nations stated, "If current trends continue, there will be 2.4 billion people without basic sanitation in 2015, with children continuing to pay the price in lost lives, missed schooling, in disease, malnutrition and poverty. Lack of toilets makes women and girls vulnerable to violence if they are forced to defecate only after nightfall and in secluded areas. Sanitation enhances dignity, privacy and safety, especially for women and girls. Schools with decent toilet facilities enable children, especially girls reaching puberty, to remain in the educational system. "Clean, safe and dignified toilet and hand-washing facilities in schools help ensure that girls get the education they need and deserve," said Ann M. Veneman, UNICEF Executive Director. "When girls get an education, the whole community benefits. The International Year of Sanitation highlights the need for investments in proper sanitation facilities around the world."

A full list of the goals, indicators and progress reports is available here: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>



Mozambique

## Facts and Figures

2.6 billion people (including 980 million children) or 40% of the world's population do not have access to adequate sanitation – most of them live in rural areas.

Only 53% of sub-Saharan Africa has adequate sanitation.

1.1 billion people do not have access to safe water.

1.8 million people die every year from diarrhoeal diseases (including cholera); 90% are under 5 years old and they mostly live in developing countries.

3900 children die everyday because of dirty water or poor hygiene.

88% of diarrhoeal disease is attributed to unsafe water supply, inadequate sanitation and hygiene.

Improved sanitation reduces the number of people who die from diarrhoea by 37.5%.

According to the British Medical Journal the incidence of diarrhoeal diseases would drop by 40% by the simple act of washing hands with soap and water.

One gram of human faeces can contain 10,000,000 viruses, 1,000,000 bacteria, 1,000 parasite cysts and 100 parasite eggs.

Almost half the population of the developing world is suffering from one or more of the main diseases associated with inadequate provision of water and sanitation at any given time.

Flooding increases the likelihood of illness from contaminated water and inadequate sanitation.

In developing countries 11% more girls attend school when sanitation is available.

443 million school days are lost each year to water-related diseases.

Sources: WHO, WaterAid, UNICEF



## Take Action

Support the Point Seven Campaign

In 2007 the NZ government announced an increase in aid spending to 0.3% of the Gross National Income for 2007, rising to 0.35% by 2010. This is well short of the commitment made by the government to the world at the UN Millennium summit of 0.7%. CWS is continuing to support the campaign for more and better aid to ensure that poor people get a better deal than at present. If you would like more information of how you can be part of the campaign please contact CWS.

Use your creativity to raise funds for a current emergency situation that includes provision for sanitation. Perhaps you might like to form a coin trail to the toilets or hold a toilet toss - using a potty.

## Further information and resources:

*Engaged?* is the latest *youth topics*, featuring a poster and group activities on the theme of sanitation. Young people are also invited to take part in our photo petition asking for more action by the government on sanitation issues. The petition will be presented to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Winston Peters.

The Ecumenical Water Network has a website with some resources focusing on water: <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/activities/ewn-home.html>

Including a series of meditations for Lent: [http://www.oikoumene.org/en/activities/ewn-home/resources-and-links/seven-weeks-for-water.html?tx\\_wecdiscussion%5Bsingle%5D=251](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/activities/ewn-home/resources-and-links/seven-weeks-for-water.html?tx_wecdiscussion%5Bsingle%5D=251)

WaterAid UK resource sheet on the International Year of Sanitation

[http://www.wateraid.org/documents/iys\\_issue\\_sheet.pdf](http://www.wateraid.org/documents/iys_issue_sheet.pdf)

*The State of the World's Toilets* WaterAid report released on World Toilet Day, 19 November, 2007

[http://www.wateraid.org/documents/the\\_state\\_of\\_the\\_worlds\\_toilets\\_2007\\_1.pdf](http://www.wateraid.org/documents/the_state_of_the_worlds_toilets_2007_1.pdf)

International Year of Sanitation

<http://esa.un.org/iys/index.shtml>

World Toilet Organisation

Includes images, instructions, video clips, and information <http://www.worldtoilet.org/>

World Water Council resources on water and sanitation

<http://www.worldwatercouncil.org/index.php?id=23&L=0target%3D>

Ministry of the Environment information on waste

management: <http://www.mfe.govt.nz/publications/waste/>

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