

## Warming Up, Warming Down

### Running Out

#### Scene 1

Use the following short dramatic sketches to introduce the theme of the service/session. They are probably best left without further explanation at this point, but you could refer back to them later in the service as examples of times when we are quick to blame God (or those in leadership) when we feel we don't have the resources we need

*Two highly-strung children's group leaders (L1 and L2) are setting things out for the group. (Use one or two props.) L1 goes over to an imaginary door and opens it. Adapt the sketch to make it appropriate to a youth group if you wish.*

**L1:** Come on in. It's great to see you all at the group this morning.

**L2:** Wow, there are *loads* of you here today. One, two, three ... nineteen, twenty.

**L1:** Twenty! We've never had twenty before. That's... (*gulp!*) terrible!

**L2:** We haven't got enough glue for that many models.

**L1:** Or enough chairs.

**L2:** Or pencils. Or paints.

**L1:** Or puzzle sheets!

**L2:** Or helpers.

**L1:** Or erasers.

**L2:** Or biscuits! Or drinks.

**L1:** Someone should have told us. We should have been INFORMED.

**L2:** (*Hyperventilating*) It's going to be a disaster!

**L1:** It 's worse than that. It's like SO beyond bad. It's a so-bad-it's-too-late-to-call-International-rescue situation. We need paramedical intervention.

**L2:** Too right, matey. Why has God left us like this?

#### Scene 2

*Three finance committee members are sitting round a table. Each is holding an open umbrella. Each has a huge pile of papers.*

**Chair:** Bad news. The church has very little money left. We can repair the holes in the roof – but only if we cancel the youth group's weekend away.

**FC1:** We must fix the roof at once. If we don't, the place will become damper and damper, soggy and soggy until the church crumbles into a rotting pile of its constituent parts. And that will cost squillions to repair.

**FC2:** No. We *must* go ahead with the youth group weekend. If we are not helping them to grow as Christians, what's the point of the church?

**FC1:** But the roof must be repaired now.

**FC2:** The young people are more important than rafters and slates.

**FC1:** We *must* fix the roof.

**FC2:** We *must* hold the youth weekend.

**Chair:** Please, please...

**FC1:** Fix the roof.

**FC2:** Youth weekend.

**FC1:** Fix the roof.

**FC2:** Youth weekend.

**Chair:** If we could just...

**FC1:** Roof.

FC2: Youth.

FC1: Roof.

FC2: Youth

FC1: Ruth.

FC2: Yoof! Yoof! Yoof!

Chair: Aaaaaah! This is a disaster! Why has God left us like this?

## Scene 3

*The service leader beckons to the front one of the welcomers or sidespersons. They speak in stage whispers.*

L: Have you got a spare copy of the service sheet?

W: No, we've run out.

L: But I need one. How can I lead the service without one?

W: Well, why didn't you keep one?

L: I can't be expected to think of *everything*.

W: We never make enough copies.

L: We can't afford them.

W: (*Heading back down the church.*) This is going to be a disaster.

L: Why has God left us like this?

### Holding the blessing

*{=children}{=11-18s}{=all-age services}*

This activity introduces the idea of 'hoarding' blessing. Manna was a perishable provision and the Israelites had to rely on God supplying it each day (with the exception of the Sabbath). Before reading Exodus 16:9-30, give an ice-cube to everyone in the group. Ask them to hold it for the duration of the reading. Afterwards, ask them to reveal what is left of their ice cubes. In a larger group setting you might want to pass several ice-cubes around the group rather than supply enough for everyone to have one each.

Discuss:

- What happened to the manna when people tried to hold onto it?
- How did the young, the elderly or the sick cope with collecting their portion of the manna each day?
- What would it be like to have to trust God each day for daily food in the same way as the Israelites did?
- What happens when we try to 'hold onto' the things that God gives us?
- Are there things in life that are spoilt because we take them for granted? What things can you suggest?

### What is it? (Part 1)

*{=children}{=11-18s}{=all-age services}*

The word manna found in Ex16:15 simply means 'What is it?' This activity introduces the idea and the theme for the day. It can be done in a number of different ways:

- Prepare a number of food items in opaque containers. Blindfold a volunteer and invite him/her to guess what's in each container. For example: orange (by smell); bread (touch); water in a bottle (sound); chocolate (smell); cheese (touch).
- Use a selection of less familiar foods from across the world and ask people to guess what they are. This is more suitable for adults and older children.
- Alternatively use a selection of breads from around the world – chapatti, pitta, naan, brioche, matzos, rye, crisp breads etc. Again ask people to identify them.

For each item, ask 'What is it?' The volunteer should give the answer saying, 'It's the.... the Lord has given us.' With younger children you could use this form of words for them after they have identified the food: 'Yes, that's right, it's the chocolate that the Lord has given us.' Check that your volunteers do not have any food allergies.

At the end explain that *manna* is the Hebrew word for “*What is it?*” Read Ex16:15 to discover when the Israelites asked this question and the answer that Moses gave. Where appropriate let people taste the food. After the service the food can be shared out.

### What is it? Part 2

*{=children}{=11–18s}{=all-age services}*

This activity can follow immediately after Part 1 above – or could be left until after the main teaching point as a response and lead into prayer.

Israel knew that the manna was provided by God. It is not always as clear in our modern world that we are dependant upon God. Just as the Israelites gathered the manna, we have to work to receive what God has made, but ultimately it comes from him – as does the ability to ‘gather’ (work for) what we need. By remembering to thank God for his provision we remind ourselves of God’s daily provision for us.

Prepare a set of objects that represent different things which God has given you as a church – for example: a brick (the building); a photo of church members (people); coins (money); a map of the parish/area (area); Bible (message); a wooden cross (Jesus/God’s love). Try to include one or two items that are particular to your own church’s life. Put these in bags for people to guess by feeling them. Again, ask each time, ‘*What is it?*’ with the volunteer answering, ‘*It’s the ... that the Lord has given us*’. Afterwards, you can use these items for a responsive prayer based on the following text.

*(Leader holds up a brick.) What is it?*

**It’s the building the Lord has given us to meet in.**

*(Leader holds up some money.) What is it?*

**It’s the money the Lord has given us to use.**

*(Leader holds up a photo.) What is it?*

**It’s the people the Lord has given us to love.**

*(Leader holds up a map of your area.) What is it?*

**It’s the community the Lord has given us to serve.**

*(Leader holds up a Bible.) What is it?*

**It’s the message the Lord has given us to know and share.**

*(Leader holds up a cross.) What is it?*

**It’s the love the Lord has given us to set us free.**

For everything you give us

### The ration basket

*{=children}{=11–18s}{=all-age services}*

Use this activity to introduce the idea of Israel learning to live day by day trusting God to provide – no one could collect too much manna, the poor and sick did not go short. This simple illustration contrasts two very different experiences of money and possessions. In advance, invite an older adult member of the congregation, preferably one who remembers wartime shortages. to prepare a basket to represent a week’s food ration for one person in World War 2. Explain that during World War 2 food was strictly rationed. A typical adult ration could include:

- 3 pints milk
- ¾ lb meat
- 1 packet of dried egg (to last a month)
- 3 oz cheese
- 2 oz tea
- 4 oz bacon
- 8 oz sugar
- 2 oz butter
- 2 oz cooking fat

## Preach Exodus! Week Three

- 2 tins of food and modest amounts of bread, potatoes and vegetables.

You could add the odd item from the black market: stockings from an American GI or a piece of meat from a friendly butcher - after all some Israelites tried to hoard the manna! Show the items in the ration basket and ask for any stories church members may wish to tell. Compare it to a modern supermarket trolley full of all the things we think we need. Alternatively use the same basket but add modern day items we might shop for each week – the basket will not hold them all. Make the point that needs and wants are not always the same. It was a time of hardship but there may well be stories of sharing and community that are missing today. Certainly obesity was not the problem it is today. Make a brief link to the manna. No one went hungry but the greedy could not gather more than they needed.

### Balloon thanks

{=children}{=all-age services}

Use this activity after the main teaching section as an expression of thanks and possible a lead in to the intercession. Ask everyone to start thinking of some of the good things that God has given us – as individuals and as a church. Explain that you will throw a balloon in the air, saying the words: 'Thank you God for...'. The aim is for everyone to keep the balloon up in the air. Each time someone hits it up, they must mention one of God's gifts. If stuck, simply say: 'God is with us'.

This will work with a seated group (perhaps with several balloons) or with a small group free to stand and move around. Finish by simply commenting that God provides what we need; just as we kept the balloons in the air so saying thank you and being grateful continually reminds us that we are dependant upon God.

### Manna jars

{=children}{=11–18s}{=all-age services}

The Israelites kept some of the manna in a special jar to remind themselves of God's provision. Invite church members, to tell some brief stories of ways in which God has provided either for them or for the church in the past. For example:

- money for a particular project
- people with particular gifts
- gifts of people or resources to us from another church or A link with another church in this country or overseas
- Someone who has moved to another culture or experienced a major life change and found God faithful
- a grant to support a project or worker.

Invite each person who tells the story to bring a simple jar to the front of the church and display it as a symbol of God's provision. A lighted candle could be placed in front of it if desired. Link the stories to the intercessions, offering thanks for God's faithfulness in the past and praying for his blessing for the future. Challenge church members to think what their own 'manna jars' might be – what physical symbol, what special place, what relationship reminds them of God's provision?

### The village pump

This simple story can be accompanied by a mime if desired. It can be used to illustrate the truth in the story of the manna. Some people tried to hold on to the manna, either through greed or the fear it would run out. In fact it was only by trusting God that they lived day to day with the abundance of his provision. By letting go and not holding tightly to what we think we need we can find the fullness of God's provision for us.

Long ago country people got their water from the village pump. One hot day a tired, thirsty traveller passed through the village and stopped by the old pump. On the grass beside the pump was a bottle full of water. The thirsty traveller picked it up eagerly – but soon set it down again on seeing that its contents were cloudy and dirty. Then he noticed the label on the bottle: 'Pour this water into the pump to prime it – then pump up the clean water from the well.' The traveller paused. He looked at bottle and he looked at the pump. 'What if the instructions are wrong. What if I pour this water into the pump and nothing happens? I should have no water at all.' He looked at the dirty water in the bottle and he looked at the old, rusty pump. At last, he decided to trust the instructions. He emptied the bottle into the pump's mechanism and started to crank the heavy handle. Up and down. Up and down. At last, with a great gurgle and gush, out poured a torrent of clear cool water. Sometimes you have to let go of something in order to get something better. And remember to fill the bottle and leave it for the next person who needs water. The water is a gift for the village not just for you.