

# Abundant Life

How to live well with others  
How to live well on the earth  
How to live well with money  
and ethical choices

A Congregational Federation Resource  
New International Financial and  
Economic Architecture (NIFEA)







### **Recommendation from CWM**

We are delighted to add our recommendation to this resource produced by the Congregational Federation to support local churches thinking about finance and economics in new and different ways.

The CWM NIFEA programme – New International Financial and Economic Architecture – sounds very grand and perhaps somewhat complicated. Yet it is profoundly simple, it is concerned with our financial resources and what we do with that resource. At the one level finance and economics is about us as individuals and the choices we make about how we spend or save our money, but on a larger scale it is about how we participate in financial structures and systems much bigger than us but which impact many people's lives. Does the money we have as individuals and churches contribute towards a vision of justice and freedom or does it maintain systems that keep people in poverty?

The CWM NIFEA programme seeks to empower churches to consider our place in global economic structures and to imagine new ways of organising finance established on fairness and justice for all creation.

The Congregational Federation has been a valuable participant in the NIFEA processes and has produced this resource to enable local churches think about how we live gently together in God's world which is entrusted to our care.

**Wayne Hawkins CWM Mission Secretary Europe**

**Karen Francis CWM Mission Secretary Caribbean**



## Foreword from Rogate R Mshana

### The New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA) and the role of churches



Today, more than a billion people living in poverty are denied and deprived of the basic human rights to the gifts of God's creation: food, water, shelter, etc. A number of us come from countries experiencing grinding poverty and hunger, where children are dying daily because of lack of food. For many countries, the millennium development goals of halving poverty by 2015 were far from being met.

And yet the world we live in today has never been wealthier. Global wealth grew to US\$120 trillion in 2010 or an increase of 20 percent from 2007 (just before the global financial crisis). In ten years, the rich increased their wealth from USD 32.8 trillion in 2008 to 70.2 trillion in 2017. This wealth is expected to reach 100 trillion in 2025 ( US Today.com).

So, the world has never been more unequal. Presently, only 8 men own the same wealth as 3.6 billion people who make up the poorest half of humanity. Meanwhile, the poorest half of the global population possesses merely 3.7 percent of global riches and the poorest ten percent has scarcely one thousandth of global wealth, translating to a lack of access to basic needs necessary for survival and a dignified life.

This is contrary to God's vision of an Economy of Life.

Ecumenical studies and consultations including the Sao Paulo Conference on a New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA) organized by the CWM, WCRC and WCC in Brazil in 2012 point out that the current experience of impoverishment and inequality has been and continues to be shaped by an unjust and unsustainable financial and economic architecture driven by greed.

If we do not address the urgent need for equity in production, consumption, investment and distribution of goods and services at various levels when planning our economies, gender injustice, poverty, marginalization, climate change, indebtedness, bubbles and crashes will persist.

#### **The role of churches**

"I came so that they may have life and have it abundantly" said Jesus. Churches are called in the name of mission to work for an economy in the service of life where poverty is eradicated, social justice is embraced and ecological justice promoted. NIFEA colloquia have helped churches to work out programs in addressing the issues mentioned.

With the completion of the 11 CWM NIFEA colloquia, churches have begun implementing new programs and others are improving the on-going ones following their NIFEA action plans. They expressed the need to have further theological education on Economy of Life. The CWM is therefore looking into the possibility of developing a curriculum on Theological Education on Economy of Life (TEEL).

# Introduction

Since January 2017 the Congregational Federation have been involved with a Council for World Mission (CWM) project called NIFEA (New International Financial and Economic Architecture) to reflect on and help to tackle the critical challenges of economic, social and ecological injustice.

There have been three meetings on 'An Economy of Life', being part of the global life affirming movement that seeks to order our world that all may have life in all its fullness (John 10 v 10).

Presentations and discussions at each meeting has been regionally focussed but based on the backdrop of the new global reality of a Trump presidency in the USA and Britain's decision to exit from the European Union. Whatever our personal views on this, these kinds of things affect the global economy and world politics.

Topics that have been explored within each meeting and were affirmed in the Kingston Declaration<sup>1</sup> have included;

- **Money, Banking and investments**
- **Eco-church**
- **Ethics**
- **Fair Trade**
- **Poverty**

The work aimed to influence financial and economic policy decision-makers towards poverty eradication and ecological justice. It also aims to enable churches to initiate specific activities to promote local economies and care for the environment.

In a call from within the Congregational Federation churches for resources, we have produced this booklet full of biblical reflections and worship material which we hope you will enjoy, share and enable you to challenge economic, social and ecological injustice where you are. Each reflection contains a quote from the Kingston Declaration which can be downloaded in full from the Congregational Federation website.

We want this booklet to raise awareness of the financial inequalities in the world, the ecological crisis and economic changes.

Our prayer is that you are drawn closer to God and are empowered into action to make change, so more people can live life in all its fullness.

## Sara and Yvonne

### CWM NIFEA Project Workers

**This booklet has been designed for everyone.**

**It can be used as:**

- **personal daily reflections**
- **bible study material for groups**
- **sermon starters**
- **youth group material**
- **handouts for visitors to the church**

<sup>1</sup> The Kingston Declaration was agreed by the project participants at the first meeting and designed for action within our denominations and congregations.





# Everybody needs good neighbours



“ Our love for one another, and the pain it causes to see our neighbour in pain can mobilise the resources of the present age<sup>2</sup> ”

## Gathering activity

Who is your neighbour? You could discuss this at church after a service next Sunday and see what you and others think? Perhaps it is someone you live near and socialise with, or someone you rely on for your daily needs – like a girl on a farm in Ethiopia who helps to harvest your coffee, or someone you see on the news and share a compassionate thought for?

## Read the Word

Matthew 22 v 34 -40 (New Revised Standard Version NRSV)

‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’  
Verse 39

## I wonder...

Doesn't life feel confusing sometimes? There are so many different demands on our time and all sorts of choices. With life in an 'I want...!' culture, it is hard to see the wood for the trees when it comes to doing what is best in the world. So what shall we do?

These commandments Jesus gave us are called the GREATEST – that is to say, the most significant, important, powerful and influential! The GREATEST! A tall order to follow, but simple, truthful and world changing!

How do we love our neighbour as our self? How do I expect my family to know and feel love? What kind of rights do I expect my nephews and God-

<sup>2</sup> Extract from the Kingston Declaration January 2017



# Churches! Are we good neighbours?

daughters to experience, as they are growing up in the big wide world? What kind of rights and loving kindness do you expect your children or young people in your church and community to experience? I expect pretty near the top of that list of a demonstration of love for the people you know and love is access to education and healthcare. Sometimes we can take this for granted in the UK and developed world. But for many, it is not seen as a right or an act of kindness. For many across the world, especially girls living developing countries, access to education and healthcare is sadly lacking. The CF have been active over the last few years in a partnership with Christian Aid to support for girls in Ethiopia and El Salvador. It has been a great team effort and has reached its fundraising goal. Just because someone lives in another country, it doesn't mean they are not our neighbours. Caring for others whether they live next door or the other side of the world.

Jesus says 'you shall..' which implies that he means it strongly – 'shall' has a commanding assertive quality to it, to make an intention in us to do something. I wonder.... what we shall do next?

## Prayer<sup>3</sup>

Creator God, you loved the world into life. Forgive us when our dreams of the future are shaped by anything other than glimpses of a kingdom of justice, peace and an end to poverty.

Incarnate God, you taught us to speak out for what is right. Make us content with nothing less than a world that is transformed into the shape of love, where poverty shall be no more.

Breath of God, let there be abundant life. Inspire us with the vision of poverty over, and give us the faith, courage and will to make it happen. Amen.

## Song

### When I needed a neighbour, were you there?

1.  
When I needed a neighbour  
Were you there, were you there?  
When I needed a neighbour  
Were you there?  
And the creed and the colour  
And the name won't matter  
Were you there?

2.  
I was hungry and thirsty  
Were you there, were you there?  
I was hungry and thirsty  
Were you there?  
And the creed and the colour  
And the name won't matter  
Were you there?

3.  
I was cold, I was naked  
Were you there, were you there?  
I was cold, I was naked  
Were you there?  
And the creed and the colour  
And the name won't matter  
Were you there?

4.  
When I needed a shelter  
Were you there, were you there?  
When I needed a shelter  
Were you there?  
And the creed and the colour  
And the name won't matter  
Were you there?

5.  
When I needed a healer  
Were you there, were you there?  
When I needed a healer  
Were you there?  
And the creed and the colour  
And the name won't matter  
Were you there?

6.  
Wherever you travel  
I'll be there, I'll be there.  
Wherever you travel  
I'll be there.  
And the creed and the colour  
And the name won't matter  
I'll be there.

**By Sydney Carter (1915-2004)**

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/churches/prayer>

**Do**

What could you do? A church I have spent time with in South Wales do something simple, kind and inspiring.... On Tuesdays, there is an opportunity to bring someone who does not usually go to Church and have a time making friends. Tea, coffee and cake are available. They have found it helps them reach out and show care among their wider neighbourhood, as well as bringing in people who might feel lonely. When people need a neighbour, they are there. Are we there?

**Share**

Perhaps you could share what you have read here with your friends and neighbours? You can also share in prayer with people at your church and encourage the worship leaders to use prayer and worship resources from Christian Aid.

Christian Aid are strongly committed to inspire and encourage churches and individuals to hold poor communities in prayer: <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/churches/prayer>

**Prayer<sup>4</sup>**

Lord, a land of coffee and grain  
of cattle and crops  
of pasture and plain  
of laughter and love  
is thirsty.

O God, comfort your people.

Protect families struggling to get by  
protect children losing out on education  
protect those seeking water in their travels.

O God, comfort your people.

We pray for Christian Aid and their partners,  
with institutions and organisations supporting  
people in Ethiopia.

Grant them wisdom as they assess need  
and bless them as they respond.

O God, comfort your people.

Amen.

**Written by Sara Iles**



<sup>4</sup> <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/churches/prayer>



**“ Before you finish eating breakfast in the morning, you’ve depended on more than half the world. ”**

**Revd Martin Luther King, 1967**



**“ We have heard and been moved by stories of struggle. Struggle creates hope. That we care enough to struggle gives us hope. ‘Hope is God’s gift to battered, broken, disappointed and dispirited people, giving us the will to go on, to be able to say: “Yes, we can” when everything says “No”. Hope is participatory, and engenders solidarity. Our hope is in God and is born in God.’ ”**

### **Gathering activity**

What have you had to eat and drink today?

Perhaps a cup of tea or some cereal with fruit on?

Or have a look on your kitchen cupboards and see where all of the spices, herbs and tins come from?

### **Read the word**

Deuteronomy 28 v 12 -14 (NIV)

“The Lord will open the heavens, the storehouse of his bounty, to send rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hands. You will lend to many nations but will borrow from none.” Verse 12

## I wonder ...

As the Revd King so rightly says, before we finish breakfast, we have depended on half the world! How do we ensure that as a consumer of everyday items, that we are supporting the farmers and producers? Fairtrade is one way we can do this.

The Bible passage tells us that God will bless us with rain and we will be blessed from our labour if we are righteous; that we will be able to offer hospitality and offerings to many nations but borrow from no-one. If we actioned what the Bible said, the world would be perfect – in this passage we have a combination of instruction and guidance.

It might be relatively easy to see how we can do the first part of this – by keeping God's commandments about our own work, we can stay on the right track – but we are relying on produce and labour of the rest of the world. If we do not act graciously and kindly to those producers and farmers, we are taking from them and benefitting from their labour, without fair recompense. If you put it another way, we are borrowing from them in an exploitative way, and not giving back a fair price. Fairness is not taking more than you need.

How can we do this if we do not know who grows and harvests food and drink that we rely on each day? Fairtrade is one way we can ensure that as consumers we act in a fair, kind and righteous way.

## Prayer<sup>6</sup>

Loving God. As I enter the street market  
wheel my trolley at the superstore  
leaf through a catalogue, or log on to the internet:  
be with me and help me.

When I spend money  
be with me and help me  
to see the market place as you see it  
as wide as the world you love so much.  
Be with us and help us  
to share the markets we share  
for all people.

As we live under your steady gaze,  
so we can change, by your gracious love.

Amen

## Song

### For the Fruits of His Creation

For the fruits of His creation, thanks be to God;

For the gifts to every nation, thanks be to God;

For the ploughing, sowing, reaping,

Silent growth while men are sleeping,

Future needs in earths safe keeping, thanks be to God!

In the just reward of labour, God's will is done;

In the hope we give our neighbour, God's will is done;

In our worldwide take of caring

For the hungry and despairing,

In the harvests men are sharing, God's will is done.

For the harvests of His Spirit, thanks be to God;

For the good all men inherit, thanks be to God;

For the wonders that astound us,

For the truths that still confound us,

Most of all, that love has found us, thanks be to God!

© Fred Pratt Green (1903-2000)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/resources/worship/prayer-fair-trade>



## Do

The Fairtrade website says – “With Fairtrade you have the power to change the world every day. With simple shopping choices you can get farmers a better deal. That means they can make their own decisions, control their future and lead the dignified life everyone deserves.”

Why not work towards becoming a Fairtrade church?

Use Fairtrade tea and coffee after services and in all meetings for which you have responsibility

Move forward on using other Fairtrade products such as sugar, biscuits and fruit

Promote Fairtrade during Fairtrade Fortnight and during the year through events, worship and other activities whenever possible

## Share

Set up an event for Fairtrade Fortnight at your church – this is usually during last week of February and first week of March. You could use a map and create an all age activity to plot where the items you are sharing and eating come from, pray for the farmers and producers for a good harvest and ask your worship leader to regularly include prayers for Fairtrade farmers.

## Prayer

Lord, forgive our silence. Forgive our reluctance to speak up for others. Forgive our reliance on goods which have been produced unfairly at the expense of the poor. Forgive our lack our awareness of how our clothes are manufactured, our food produced and our mistaking unneeded goods for essentials. Lord enter the silence of our hearts and lift them up with fresh understanding derived from the Wisdom contained in your Word. May we be ambassadors for Christ in bringing reconciliation between producer and consumer, those exploited and those who benefit from their exploitation. May all our labour be valued and rewarded justly. May our lifestyles reflect a care for creation and humanity. May we appreciate the gift of life and in so doing respect the lives of all God’s children. Lord, you reconciled the world to God through your suffering on the cross. May your reconciling power make us one with all who need fairness in their trading and systems which promote justice. Amen

**(from a URC prayer sheet for Fairtrade Fortnight, 2017)**

**Written by Sara Iles**



7 <https://www.fairtrade.org.uk/Get-Involved/In-your-community/Faith-Groups/Fairtrade-Churches>

# Ethical choices are an everyday



“ Our existing economic architecture is intricately intertwined. This enmeshing began in Empire, in the period of resource extraction founded upon the labour of slaves. This colloquium brings us face to face with the colonial relationships of the past and the modern forms of slavery that arise in the Empire of the present. We commit to intentional engagement with each other, and across our regions, that is both honest and fully open to hear.”

## Gathering activity

We make ethical choices all the time, although we may not always think of it this way. Speaking about ‘ethical choices’ makes it sound grand, as if this is just about major decisions with wide reaching impact on lots of people. But there are issues of injustice, exploitation and unfairness all around us. In fact, if we are faced with an ethical or moral issue, even a ‘small’ one, and we decide

not to say anything, not to get involved, not to make a decision – then we have just made an ethical choice.

## Read the word

Micah 6:1-8 (New International Version)

“He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” Verse 8

<sup>8</sup> Extract from the Kingston Declaration January 2017



# reality!

## I wonder ...

Are we not letting God down if we fail to talk to him in prayer, before we make them, all our significant choices in life, and certainly all those which impact on others and on our planet?

Asking God for guidance and direction is part of walking humbly with him, and when he speaks to us and shows us his way, he will champion justice and mercy.

How incarnational is our faith if we don't approach ethical issues from the perspective that Jesus wants us to represent his embodied nature, the Word made flesh, in our society? He wants to live among us; he wants us to meet him in one another; he wants us to treat others as if they were him. How incarnational is our faith if we are not prepared to live and speak from the perspective that Jesus wants us to represent God's standards for life and society, standards of justice and mercy, since he is the Word made flesh?

It can be very difficult to speak about Christian values and principles in today's society, since, as we hear constantly, we are living in a 'post-Christian' age. However, is the ethical choice behind all other ethical choices not the choice to do just that? To take a stand for Jesus' values and perspectives even when this will be unpopular or considered part of the past?

Can we commit together to finding ways to avoid being turned into a Christian club that only talks to itself? Can we find a stronger voice to reach the communities around us? There is a spiritual and ethical choice to be made here.

## Prayer

Dear Lord

Give us a voice, renew our boldness, may we have your wisdom in our choices and bring our thoughts and decisions to you

Amen

## Song

### Will you come and follow me?

Will you come and follow me  
if I but call your name?

Will you go where you don't know  
and never be the same?

Will you let my love be shown,  
will you let my name be known,  
will you let my life be grown  
in you and you in me?

Will you leave your self behind  
if I but call your name?

Will you care for cruel and kind  
and never be the same?

Will you risk the hostile stare  
should your life attract or scare,  
will you let me answer prayer  
in you and you in me?

Will you let the blinded see  
if I but call your name?

Will you set the prisoners free  
and never be the same?

Will you kiss the leper clean  
and do such as this unseen,  
and admit to what I mean  
in you and you in me?

Will you love the 'you' you hide  
if I but call your name?

Will you quell the fear inside  
and never be the same?

Will you use the faith you've found  
to reshape the world around  
through my sight and touch and sound  
in you and you in me?

Lord, your summons echoes true  
 when you but call my name.  
 Let me turn and follow you  
 and never be the same.  
 In your company I'll go  
 where your love and footsteps show.  
 Thus I'll move and live and grow  
 in you and you in me.

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 Glasgow G51 3UU, Scotland

## Do

Contact your local Council and ask them what particular communities in the locality are most at risk from issues of health, security or education. Make a point of finding out what factors are making their situation so bad, or what pressures are making things worse for them. Are there any injustices at work? Doing this will mean making an ethical choice.

## Share

Contact churches in your locality to see what you could do together to make some degree of difference for the people in those communities. Go an extra mile for them. Here is a second ethical choice.

## Prayer

Lord, help me to really put you and your Kingdom first in my life. Help me to want to seek for your righteousness in everything I do, and in every relationship which I have.

Help me to have the courage and the grace to share your values and perspectives with others when it comes to making choices, whether those others are friends and neighbours or decision makers in local or national organisations.

Help me always to try to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with you. Help me always to encourage others to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with you.

Amen

**Written by Walter Riggans**





# Humanity is privileged, but privileges a



**“ We have recognized that our churches are moved quickly to poverty alleviation, but that we must move not only towards poverty intervention, but to desire and seek poverty eradication. It is not enough even ‘to teach a human being to fish’ if the water in which it swims is polluted, and the pond has been land grabbed by the wealthy. We must cease to be complicit in subsistence.”**

## Gathering activity

Reflect on the health and wellbeing of the oceans, land and forestry, and that of fish, birds and wildlife that populate air, land and sea. Consider what the quality of the legacy that we are leaving to the children of future generations?

Eco Church is A Rocha UK’s award scheme for churches in England and Wales who want to demonstrate that the gospel is good news for God’s earth.

## Read the word

Genesis chapter 1 NRSV

“Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”

Verse 26

<sup>9</sup> Extract from the Kingston Declaration January 2017



# Always come with great responsibilities

## I wonder...

Our Triune God made us in His likeness. If we are truly walking in step with Him then evidence of His love, His truth and His wisdom should be transparent in our decision making, our planning and our actions. Are they? How have we responded to the great privilege that our God bestowed upon humanity to rule over the land, the air, the sea, and over all living things?

Having dominion is power. When power is coupled with wisdom and love then it reaches out with gentleness, seeking the greatest good for all, encouraging growth and wellbeing and creating harmony and peace. When power is abused it robs and depletes whatever and wherever it can and it does so for self-gratification and self-empowerment, oblivious, even indifferent to any negative impact. Dominion and power have the potential to lead to greatness, but we must always be mindful of Jesus teaching in Matthew 20: 26 "whoever wants to become great must be a servant". God calls us to rule over of every living thing by tending the earth with prudence, concerned for the wellbeing of every creature that inhabits the air, the land and the sea.

Let us glorify God by tending every living thing with the wisdom and love of Christ. Let us not be inward looking and self-seeking, on the contrary let us appreciate the diversity and beauty of all that God has made and consciously seek to rule by serving all life on this earth.

## Song

For the beauty of the earth, For the beauty of the skies  
For the love which from our birth, Over and around us lies,  
Over and around us lies, Lord of all, to thee we raise this our joyful hymn of praise

For the beauty of the hour, Of the day and of the night  
Hill and vale and tree and flower, Sun and moon and stars of light  
Sun and moon and stars of light, Lord of all, to thee we raise this our joyful hymn of praise

For the joy of human love, Brother, sister, parent, child  
Friends on earth and friends above, For all gentle thoughts and mild  
For all gentle thoughts and mild, Lord of all, to thee we raise this our joyful hymn of praise

For each perfect gift of thine, to our race so freely given  
Graces human and divine, Flow'rs of earth and buds of heav'n  
Flow'rs of earth and buds of heav'n, Lord of all, to thee we raise  
This our joyful hymn, our joyful hymn of praise,  
This our joyful hymn of praise

**By Folliot Sandford Pierpoint (1835-1917)**

## Prayer

Lord God the heavens declare the glory. You have called us to rule over all living things. Help us to do so with gentleness, always considering the greater good of all. The great wild beasts of the African Plains, the little animals that scurry in the undergrowth, the birds of the air, the mysterious life of the ocean depths. Help us to learn from the little ants working tirelessly to tend not their own needs but those of the colony. Give us this complete understanding of caring for this earth always seeking the greater good of all and always in Jesus' name, who taught us that true greatness is found in sincere servitude. Amen

## Do

What can you do to tend the needs of a little creature living in your midst today?

Feed the birds;

Collect plastic from the beach or litter from the park;

Put some thought into the plants you are growing in our garden to encourage the butterflies, birds and the bees to visit.

## Share

Get others involved, your Church, Sunday School, Brownie pack or similar can all take positive actions to be more aware, more attentive, more considerate to all creatures of the earth.

## Prayer

Loving Father forgive us when we are selfish, when we grasp for what we want or think we need, indifferent to what it costs others be it another human being, or a creature of this earth.

Give us a greater awareness of our responsibility for all life that when the time comes for us to leave this earth we may do so knowing that we have done our best for those who will follow in our footsteps. In Jesus name, Amen.

**Written by Janice E Andrews**





# Heal the world!



I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.<sup>10</sup>



## Gathering activity

Colour in this picture of a tiger which is in danger of being extinct and as you do praise God for conservation.

## Read the word

Psalm 23 NRSV

“He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name’s sake.” Verse 3



**I wonder....**

I wonder what's your favourite part of creation?

I wonder do you enjoy the countryside, your local park or simply just sitting in your garden?

I wonder if you enjoy the sea, the beach and sound of the waves?

I wonder if you enjoy climbing mountains and admiring the view from the top?

Creation in all its forms is beautiful whether we prefer the countryside or the seaside, but have you ever wondered how much creation can heal, help and support us. We all know the trees take in Carbon Dioxide and give out Oxygen, we work in harmony with them and I'm sure you have been told by someone to go outside and get some fresh air or maybe you know about the healing properties of aromatherapy or homeopathy? Creation is amazing.

In Psalm 23 reinforces how creation is for us - God leads us beside quiet waters, he makes us lie down in green pastures - places of healing and peace.

Yet the earth is suffering from climate change, pollution and too many animals face extinction.

"Huge areas of rainforest are torn down by bulldozers or burned to the ground to make way for palm oil. In Indonesia alone, an area the size of a football pitch is lost every 25 seconds. When these forests are destroyed, local people lose their homes and amazing species like orangutans are put in danger."<sup>11</sup>

Right now, an estimated 12.7 million tonnes of plastic – everything from plastic bottles and bags to microbeads – end up in our oceans each year. That's a truck load of rubbish a minute.<sup>12</sup>

I wonder, how you use creation to heal?

I wonder, how you can help heal creation?

**Prayer**

Dear Lord, thank you for being my shepherd and leading me to lie in green pastures.

I praise you for the creation which I enjoy Amen



<sup>11</sup> <https://www.greenpeace.org.uk/what-we-do/forests/indonesia/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.greenpeace.org.uk/what-we-do/oceans/plastics/>



**Song<sup>13</sup>**

She is the tree of life

Suggested tune: THE SERVANT SONG

1. Tree of wisdom, give us shelter,  
shade beneath your branches wide,  
tree of life as God our maker,  
comforted at Jesus' side.
2. Branches reaching out in wonder,  
tree of life with such strong frame.  
Help us cast our pains asunder,  
claim our lives in your sweet name.
3. Springtime's days with such fresh promise  
daring buds to quest and grow.  
Resurrect our sense of homage,  
shoots of green from what you sow.
4. Canopy of radiant splendour,  
blossom, fruit and leaves and birds.  
Fullest shape of greening wonder.  
Tree of life, we love your Word.
5. All the colours of sweet autumn  
show us hues of Godly change.  
Help us greet this phase of waiting.  
We are yours to rearrange.
6. When we see great change before us,  
challenges we must endure.  
Give us roots in your deep wisdom  
help us, God, to be secure.
7. Glimpsing heaven through the treetops;  
canopy of love and space.  
Help us build your wisdom earthwards,  
golden leaves of peace and grace.

**Sara Iles (1967- )**

**Do**

Arrange a visit for your church or a group to the countryside or seaside and enjoy creation.

Find out more about Eco products – <https://www.ecover.com/>

Find out more about aromatherapy and healing properties of plants <https://aromatherapyforchristians.org/>

**Share**

Invite someone from Green Peace or your local Wildlife Trust<sup>14</sup> to come and talk about how your church can support them.

**Prayer**

Dear Father

We thank you for creation, we thank you we can enjoy creation. Thank you for the healing powers within creation that renews and refresh us.

Forgive us Lord for not always caring for our world as we should, for wasting or damaging unnecessarily

Show us ways in which we can care for our earth

Show us ways in which we can support others

Allow creation to heal us

Allow creation to help us rest

Allow creation to bring us closer to you

Amen

**Written by Yvonne Campbell**

<sup>13</sup> Inspired by Proverbs 3:18, 'She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called happy.' NRSV

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/>

# ‘Those of us who pay the price, c



“ We affirm that the value of a human being is not determined by their wealth or their economic activity. We assert that wealth is not always created by hard work or honest means. We believe that inequality is itself a challenge to kingdom values and desire a structure that requires all the wealthy to be contributing to the good of the whole of society.<sup>15</sup> ”

## Gathering activity

*Lyrics from Harvest for the World by The Isley Brothers*

All babies together, everyone a seed  
 Half of us are satisfied, half of us in need  
 Love's bountiful in us, tarnished by our greed  
 When will there be a harvest for the world?  
 A nation planted, so concerned with gain  
 As the seasons come and go, greater grows the pain  
 And far too many feelin' the strain  
 When will there be a harvest for the world?

Gather everyman, gather every woman  
 Celebrate your lives, give thanks for your children  
 Gather everyone, gather all together  
 Overlooking none, hopin' life gets better for the world  
 Dress me up for battle, when all I want is peace  
 Those of us who pay the price, come home with the least  
 Nation after nation, turning into beast  
 When will there be a harvest for the world?

<sup>15</sup> Extract from the Kingston Declaration January 2017



# come home with the least.'

## Read the word

2 Corinthians 9 v 6-11 NIV

“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.” Verse 6

## I wonder ...

As the song asks, when will there be a harvest for the world? The planet is such a huge place with a population of over 7 billion women, men and children. We might ask how can we possibly ensure that each and every person, not one human being excluded, has a feeling of harvest and at least enough in their life? All great movements for change for the better begins with us – you and I caring and committing to reaping what we sow; not just in the literal sense of farming but in the sense of that which we give we get back. If we give more love, the world is a richer place; if we give more grace, the world is a more peaceful place; if we give more compassion then the world is more cherished.

If we act in a miserly or unkind way, we will reap the same kind of behaviour in return. If we have the courage and care to act in a kind and generous way we will be rewarded generously. Cultivating an ‘attitude of gratitude’ and loving our neighbour as ourselves reaps so much more harvest for us all. We benefit from a feel-good factor and those around feel more cared for and appreciated – good news and kind behaviour are contagious!

Paul was writing to the young church in Corinth and the whole of chapter 9 is about generous giving and with a joyful heart. He was talking about money and also all other ways we give, more importantly when we give of ourselves. And it wasn't something he wanted us to take lightly. He starts verse 6 with a note to the reader – remember this, he says. He is pointing us to something particular we need to act on, so, remember this:

If we want to cultivate a harvest for the world, then we need to think about our actions, as citizens, shoppers, church members, neighbours, parents, friends, workers... perhaps we could ask ourselves the simple question? Can something good grow from what I have done? Can someone flourish and thrive from what I have done? Cheerful giving transforms the giver and the whole earth. We reap what we sow, in our hometown and on our planet.

## Prayer

Loving God, please help me to live in a generous and cheerful way.

Help me to do this even if I am feeling low or overwhelmed.

Living God, create in me a generous heart that gives abundantly, freely and with your purpose at the root.

For I know that you will bless me in this and bless others who have been touched by my generosity

Whether it is a smile, a kind word, a thoughtful deed or listening with a caring heart.

I ask this in the name of Jesus, our guide and our saviour,

Amen.

## Song

Give thanks with a grateful heart  
 Give thanks to the Holy One  
 Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Son  
 Give thanks with a grateful heart  
 Give thanks to the Holy One  
 Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Son  
 And now let the weak say, "I am strong"  
 Let the poor say, "I am rich  
 Because of what the Lord has done for us"  
 And now let the weak say, "I am strong"  
 Let the poor say, "I am rich  
 Because of what the Lord has done for us"  
 Give thanks with a grateful heart (with a grateful heart)  
 Give thanks to the Holy One (to the Holy One)  
 Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Son  
 Give thanks with a grateful heart (with a grateful heart)  
 Give thanks to the Holy One (to the Holy One)  
 Give thanks ...

© Dan Moen (1950- )

## Do

Smile  
 Listen deeply  
 Make use of some of the Appreciating Church resources<sup>16</sup>  
 Freely give to others, not feeling under demand or rules  
 Conduct a self-audit - what do we give and who to?  
 Give of ourselves our gifts, our time and our love  
 What could you do?

## Share

I was reading and reflecting on a Bible study from a Baptist college in the United States recently – they summed up this verse from Paul as – Action >> Attitude >> Abundance.

How can we act in a way that will give generously? What can we do to make the world more bountiful and blessed place? What each one of us does, affects the world. Action speaks louder than words – so... Actions without the right attitude can be empty and fruitless, so a joyful generous attitude matters! What kind of attitude could we cultivate to spread love and goodwill to all? And if we give with a cheerful heart – our time, our love, our energy, our care – then this will reap abundantly in our neighbourhoods, churches and nations.

In your church, why not have a regular time of reflection prayer on how you might learn to help others flourish...? It could lead to mission ideas, encouraging each other and finding other ways of sowing more seeds of love in your communities....

## Prayer

Living God,

Please use me as a blessing to someone else and in sowing a seed of kindness and I know that in blessing others, I will reap a bountiful harvest. I pray that my church will sow seeds of love and compassion in my community and across the nations, so that all might live well.

Loving God, holy creator of all, I pray that you will give me the wisdom, kindness and courage to be the sow the seeds of love generously, so the wider world can reap a bountiful harvest. Amen

**Written by Sara Iles**

<sup>16</sup> <http://appreciating.church/>





# Money talks



“ We are scandalised that the wealth of the world’s 8 richest men is equivalent to the earnings of the 3.6 billion poorest persons in the world, equivalent to half the world’s population. We hear again Jesus forcing us to choose between Caesar and God in the ordering of our money. We cannot affirm the accumulation of wealth as an end to be desired, we must desire an Economy of Life that desires life in all its fullness for all God’s creation.<sup>17</sup> ”

## Gathering activity

Take out your purse or wallet - have a look at the coins and notes what is on them, what year are they from? Maybe do some pencil rubbings or reflect on all the places the notes and coins may have travelled.

## Read the word

Mark 11 v 15 -17 NIV

“On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courts and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. And as he taught them, he said, “Is it not written: ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations’? But you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’”

Verse 15

<sup>17</sup> Extract from the Kingston Declaration January 2017

## I wonder ...

Why did Jesus talk so much about money? The widow's mite Luke 21:1-5; You cannot serve both God and money Matthew 6:24; The money lender Luke 51:43; The rich young man Matthew 19:16-22 and many more.

Money doesn't matter and yet it seems to have featured in Jesus' ministry a lot. Well of course it's not the money that matters, it's how we relate to it.

God loves us all whether we have a big bank balance or not, the story of the rich young man continues with the well-known saying about it being harder for a rich man to go to heaven than a camel going through the eye of a needle. The verse that is often overlooked, but perhaps one of the most important verses in the New Testament is Matthew 19-26; "with man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" therefore through faith and trust in God it is possible to be much more ethically inclined than we are.

Jesus was shouting about corruption of second or third hand investments, is this what he was angry about? Not that money changers (bankers) existed, but that they had become corrupt to the point of using sacred ground to house their corruption?

The relationship between money and stealing is something that Jesus was trying to teach us. We all need money to survive in our society, but must we use it in such a way that we steal from others? This is a thought that would provoke many a protest in the banking world, but we only have to note the PPI scandal or extortionate banking charges, before we even consider the ethics of investment and what our money is actually promoting.

I wonder what you can promote with your money?

I wonder what the source of your income is?

I wonder what your attitude towards money is?

## Prayer

Lord God, send Your Holy Spirit upon us to give us the strength, fortitude and moral courage to follow the teachings of Jesus on the importance of serving You rather than money. Amen

## Song

Take my life and let it be

Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.

Take my moments and my days,

Let them flow in endless praise.

Take my hands and let them move

At the impulse of Thy love.

Take my feet and let them be

Swift and beautiful for Thee.

Take my voice and let me sing,

Always, only for my King.

Take my lips and let them be

Filled with messages from Thee.

Take my silver and my gold,

Not a mite would I withhold.

Take my intellect and use

Every pow'r as Thou shalt choose.

Take my will and make it Thine,

It shall be no longer mine.

Take my heart, it is Thine own,

It shall be Thy royal throne.

Take my love, my Lord, I pour

At Thy feet its treasure store.

Take myself and I will be

Ever, only, all for Thee.

© By Frances Ridley Havergal (1836 -1879)



## Do

Who do you bank with? Do they have an ethical banking policy?

Would you consider changing banks if you thought it was a wise ethical move?

## Share

Lots of churches work with CAP<sup>18</sup> (Christians Against Poverty)

Find out some more information about their work and other local debt advisory services

Is this something your church could do or support locally in some way?

## Prayer

Almighty God,

It is easy for us to make excuses for why ethical banking is not possible, give us we pray the wisdom to challenge the status quo, to find ways to bear the cost of doing things your way and not the secular way.

Help us make a stand for integrity and principles no matter what the barriers, in the name of Jesus. Amen.

**Written by Peter Butler**

<sup>18</sup> <https://capuk.org>



# Always giving you Xtra!



“ There are radical alternative currencies we will wish to explore. There is also the radical availability of CASH: Compassion, Association, Selflessness and Heart. This CASH can be a mechanism to shape our service.<sup>19</sup> ”

## Gathering activity

If someone gave you £100 today, what would you do with it?

## Read the word

Matthew 25 14 – 30 – New International Version

“Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.”

Verse 27

## I wonder ...

I wonder where you are in the story?

I'm sure you would like to think you would be one of the people who made more money. I mean isn't that what life is about just look at the antique shows on TV the aim is to make money.

I wonder where Jesus is in the story?

I've always understood the parable to be about talents, responsibilities even, use your talents, share your gifts, don't lack confidence and hide away but what if...

What if Jesus is the one who buries the money because he won't conform to a world of corruption and greed.

How did the others make their money – what did they invest in? Antiques? Housing? Drugs? Slavery? Prostitution? What makes money these days?

Investments are complicated the more research you do. Our investment should be in God, investing in His word and investing in his Kingdom building work.

## Prayer

Dear Lord

We invest in you – send your Holy Spirit upon us and let us overflow with blessing.

Amen

## Song

For I'm building a people of power  
 And I'm making a people of praise  
 That will move through this land by My Spirit  
 And will glorify My precious name  
 Build Your church, Lord. Make us strong, Lord.  
 Join our hearts, Lord, through Your Son  
 Make us one, Lord in Your Body  
 In the kingdom of Your Son  
 Build Your church, Lord. Make us strong, Lord.  
 Join our hearts, Lord, through Your Son  
 Make us one, Lord in Your Body  
 In the kingdom of Your Son

©Dave Richards, written in 1977

## Do

Who do you invest in? Is there someone you need to give a word of encouragement to – why not send a card, make a phone call or make a date

## Share

Find out more about banking investments, ask someone from your bank to come and give a talk at your church.

## Prayer

Dear Lord

The world of banking and investments can often confuse us – we are sorry if we have made money through investments that have damaged others. Protect those who are at risk from unethical investments throughout the world. Give us wisdom in our choices and decisions in banking and purchasing matters. Amen

**Written by Yvonne Campbell**

# Patterns of the world...



“ Our love for one another, and the pain it causes to see our neighbour in pain can mobilise the resources of the present age.... In all we do, we look to Jesus who spoke so often about money, was never complacent concerning economics and does not desire us to be complacent about the economics of our age.<sup>20</sup> ”

## Gathering activity

What was the last thing you bought for yourself and why?

## Read the word

Romans 12 v 1-8 New International Version

“Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Verse 2

## I wonder ...

I saw an advert recently which showed a lady holding a bag “Don’t buy that £300 bag and have nothing in it, buy that £10 bag and have £290 in it. Don’t go broke trying to look rich.”

We can often fall into this trap, can’t we? Keeping up with the latest trends or newest thing or conforming to want a particular brand.

I know I have fallen for the latest new things sometimes and had to try them out because everyone seems to be talking about it – yet this passage in Romans says, “we must not be conformed to the patterns of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”



I wonder what the pattern of this world is?

I wonder, do you need your mind renewing?

God's will is perfect; His way for us in this world is good, we all like to feel secure and accepted and sometimes "keeping up the Jones's" is the way we do that but we must resist being influenced by the world and by others and be influenced by God.

## Prayer

Dear Lord

We seek you, we knock at your door and thank you for accepting us and loving us just as we are with or without the latest trends

Amen

## Song

Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness;

And all these things shall be added unto you, Allelu, alleluia!

Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word

That proceeds from the mouth of the Lord, Allelu, alleluia!

Ask, and it shall be given unto you, Seek, and ye shall find.

Knock, and the door shall be opened unto you, Allelu, alleluia!

© **Music:** Karen Lafferty (1971)

## Do

Have a sort out and donate some items to a local charity shop.

## Share

Volunteer at a local charity shop for a couple of days.

Pray about organising a uniform or clothes swop evening at your church .

## Prayer

Dear Lord

We have so much choice from what and how and where to shop. Help us to choose wisely, stop us from the impulse buying or shopping to impress others – give us and our families discernment in our choices so we can be transformed by the renewing of our minds and approve what God's good, pleasing and perfect will is.

Amen

**Written by Yvonne Campbell**



## Messy Vintage

### Session 6

# Messy Harvest

## Bible reference

Mark 4:26–29

## How does this session help people grow in Christ?

This session is ideally presented at Harvest time, when the work of the scarecrow is complete, having watched over the crops from sowing to reaping. The parable of the growing seed helps us to think about the many ways in which God has watched over us from childhood, through both good and challenging times, even though we are often unaware of his presence.

## Messy team theme

- Talk about childhood memories.
- Encourage sharing of life experiences/family/work/hobbies.



## Activity

**You will need: thin garden canes; green garden tape; round polystyrene balls; cupcake cases; wool; eyes; peppercorns; raffia; material; ribbon; funky foam or material scraps; scissors; double-sided sticky tape or glue stick.**

With two pieces of garden cane, form a cross approximately 30 cm x 22 cm and secure with green garden tape or sticky tape. Cut a piece of material 50 cm x 20 cm and double it over. Cut a small hole in the top centre and place it over the stick. Place a polystyrene ball on top and construct the head by securing hair (wool) and a hat (cupcake case) with double-sided tape or a glue stick. Stick on the eyes and peppercorn nose, and draw on a mouth. Make raffia hands and secure with sticky tape. Decorate the tunic with scraps of foam or material. Add a ribbon tie and a raffia belt.

## Celebration

You might choose one of the following:

Retell Jesus' parable in your own words. Talk about the cross underneath the scarecrow's clothing and the way we are watched over as we grow to ripeness.

Tell a story of a time when you felt watched over and protected, then share Jesus' story and remind people of God's ever-present watchful love for each person.

Bring in half-grown seedlings and talk about what they have come from, what they might become and how they need nurturing throughout their existence; then talk about Jesus' parable and God's invisible presence.

## Song suggestions

We plough the fields  
Now thank we all our God  
Great is thy faithfulness  
For the fruits of his creation



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## Messy Vintage

### Session 7

# MEGA GOD – micro me

## Bible reference

Genesis 1:26–31

## How does this session help people grow in Christ?

Although minuscule compared to the world, we are – each one of us – beautifully and uniquely created in the image of God, to be guardians of his amazing world. He knows us ‘inside out’, yet, despite our faults, trusts us to care for his creation. Each of us can make a difference.



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## Messy team theme

- Talk about environmental issues: recycling, community projects, etc.
- Talk about travel: places people have visited, places on their bucket lists, cultural differences...
- Talk about food miles, countries where there is food shortage, food banks, soup kitchens, etc.

## Activity

**You will need: ‘MEGA GOD – micro me’ worksheets printed on medium or heavy-weight card; blue tissue paper, in different shades if possible; various seeds and lentils in small containers; all-purpose glue; glue spreaders; coloured pencils**

Tear tissue paper into small pieces and paste on the sea areas of the worksheet. Glue seeds and lentils on the land mass. Draw yourself in the small box using coloured pencils.

## Celebration

Read the passage and talk about being created ‘in God’s image’. Do we reflect his love in our everyday lives? Then choose one of the following:

Show a clip about Fairtrade ([youtube.com/watch?v=PLKTGWH398Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PLKTGWH398Q)) or encourage interactive sharing about community projects; recycling centres; food banks; soup kitchens; shelters for the homeless.

Display a large world map or a globe. Give each person a Post-it note and invite them to write or draw a picture of their prayer for either a particular area/person or for a worldwide situation, then stick the notes on the map/globe. Pray over them.

Invite someone from a charitable/environmental organisation in your area to talk about the project in which they are involved.

## Song suggestions

O Lord my God (How great thou art)  
He’s got the whole world in his hands  
Lord, the light of your love (Shine, Jesus, shine)  
The right hand of God is writing in our land  
God in his love for us lent us this planet  
Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided

[thegiftofyears.org.uk](http://thegiftofyears.org.uk)

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# Creative Prayer Ideas<sup>21</sup>

## Seed Prayers

You will need: seeds (herbs can be grown indoors throughout the year), potting compost, small plant pots.

Hold some seeds in your hand, think/talk about some of the issues facing farmers in the UK and across the world.

Maybe someone in your congregation is a farmer or knows a local farmer.

Imagine how it would feel to live as a farmer in different communities. What are the challenges you would face? What are the things you would be grateful for?

Play a quiet piece of background music and pray quietly for farmers, their communities and other farming across the world.

As a sign of your prayers plant the seeds in your hand into a pot. Nurture the plant, praying for farmers as they do this and as they enjoy their own small harvest.

## Map Prayers

You will need: a large drawn or printed map of any country you wish to pray for maybe your own country or a country you have links with (this doesn't need to be detailed, an outline would be sufficient), post-it notes, pens.

Find out/think and talk about some of the issues facing the country you have chosen

Imagine how it would feel to live in a different community. What are the challenges you would face? What are the things you would be grateful for?

Move to the map and to write prayers on it for people, communities, businesses, wildlife. The prayers do not need to be long and could be drawn if preferred. Depending on the size of the map and the space around it, prayers could be written on post-it notes and then stuck on. When all the prayers have been made, end the prayer time by lifting them to God.



## Modelling Clay Prayers

You will need: a piece of modelling clay for each person.

Share/think and talk about some of the issues facing yourself, your town or city, your country, or even the world. Highlight the challenges of climate change, the benefits of planting trees and flowers, the concerns about packaging and plastics. As you talk, invite the congregation to model something e.g. the sun, birds, tools, plants, people, coins. Invite everyone to turn to the person sitting next to them and to share their models. Then say a prayer together for the world.

<sup>21</sup> Based upon the Christian Aid Harvest for the World appeal 2017

# Creative Prayer Ideas

## Prayer diary

### Monday

Pray for all those who are living in poverty in the UK and abroad. May they find the help, support and advice they need to live well. Bless them with wisdom in spending and protect them from illness, crime and high interest loans. We pray for all those who work in helping other especially those with Christian Aid. Give the workers and the organisation the vision, the resources and the opportunities to change lives.

### Tuesday

We thank God for the work of Fairtrade. We pray this work continues to be blessed so more farmers experience justice. Prompt us to buy and promote Fairtrade products wherever we go.

### Wednesday

We pray for the world of banking and investments. We pray for moral and ethical values. We pray for all those who struggle with money either to manage it, earn it or spend it. We pray for those vulnerable in the world because of money especially those living in poverty, we pray protection, healing and strength for them.

### Thursday

We pray for all those who look after our world, farmers, forests, conservationists. We pray for all those who promote caring and protecting our world. Provide them with the resources and skills they need. Help us to be more proactive in recycling, picking up litter, conserving energy and helping wildlife

### Friday

We pray for world leaders and those in positions of power to change policies and make policies. We pray wisdom in decision making about climate change, trafficking, pollution, economy and conservation

### Saturday

We thank God for life, for all the good things in life, for blessing us with homes and families, for supermarkets with an abundance of food, for clean water in our taps and good sanitary facilities.

We thank God for animals, for pets, for local wildlife. We thank God for the beauty of the earth, the countryside and the seaside. We thank God for the seasons and harvest time. We thank God for making us in His image.

### Sunday

We thank God for rest and we pray, help us to rest Lord. We pray for peace in our world, in wars, in fighting and in our hearts.



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To all our writers

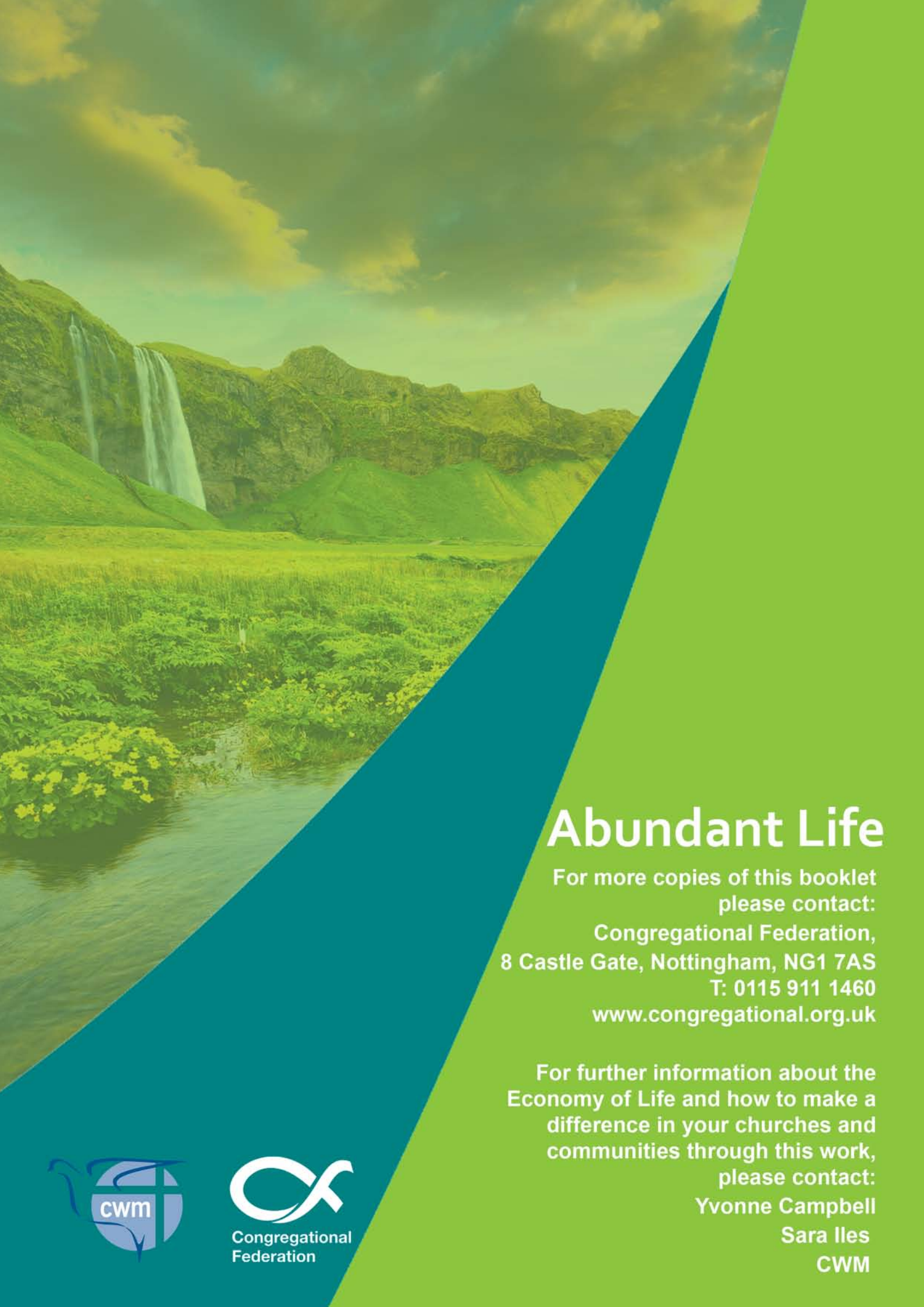
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