

UNBOUND

a **gospel** that **breaks barriers**

Easter Offering: Leader's Notes



Methodist Women
in Britain

for women, for justice, for Christ

The **Methodist** Church 

Easter Offering: Leader's Notes

Introduction

Thank you for organising a service to mark the Easter Offering of 2026. The Easter Offering is an important fundraiser for the Methodist Church's Global Relationships work, with all money raised going to the World Mission Fund. (Please see page 6 of the Order of Service for a video explaining the work of the WMF.) It is part of our celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus and the new life offered to us all. It does not raise money for Methodist Women in Britain (MWiB), but it is closely linked as MWiB have, for many years, prepared the Easter Offering resources.

This year's service focuses on freedom. Jesus talks about God's kingdom as a place of release from captivity, and ***Unbound: a gospel that breaks barriers*** tells stories of how this is true. Combining Bible study, worship and stories from across the world, the service offers inspiration and prayer for all those struggling for liberation.

These notes should provide you with everything you need to explore the theme and prepare for the service itself. Please see the Finance/Gift Aid section for details of where money that is collected as part of this service, either using the special envelopes or in a general collection, should be sent.

Order of Service

As far as possible, this is a ready-made service. However, people will want to use the materials in different ways and at different times. All of that is very much to be encouraged! But it does make it difficult to produce a 'one-size-fits-all' order of service. Additionally, we are challenged to reduce our reliance on paper resources, hence this year's materials being only available online. Because of this, the materials are more flexible and can be adapted by you, the user, to your situation. Therefore, the Order of Service is provided in Word format, making it easy to edit and print if required. It is also designed so that members of the congregation do not necessarily need a printed copy each: you could project the service via PowerPoint or simply print a single sheet with the prayers if preferred.

The service has spaces for two World Church stories to be included and there are several to choose from in the Appendix. A Bible passage has been included as the first 'story' of the service, as it's important to ground the worship in biblical teaching. Some of the stories come with questions, which leaders can use to stimulate discussion or just for quiet reflection. There is also a story in the Appendix that includes a picture-based reflection – feedback

suggests that people appreciate the variety that comes with images and meditation. We hope you will use these stories, if you can, to broaden engagement in the worship.

If the format of the service is Café Church, different groups could look at different stories, each one with a different text and some stimulus questions.

World Church stories provided are:

- A story and reflection that looks at the limitations faced by someone in the former East Germany, considering the ways we may be constrained by both political circumstances and the weight of the human condition. This includes a link to a video about the church featured in the story.
- Two stories of seeking freedom from a nation's past – from the Methodist Church in Sri Lanka and the Methodist Church in Rwanda.
- A story of struggling for release from poverty – from Bolivia.
- A story someone of being held back by their own past and by the actions of others, from a Methodist prison chaplain in the UK.

- A story of life-limiting gender-based violence – from MWiB’s work with the United Nations.

Please note:

- There are some leader’s notes in italics throughout the service. Otherwise, the words in standard type are for someone to read out and the words in bold are responses. These have been kept to a minimum for churches that do not have easy access to projection.
- Some communities mark the Easter Offering very close to Easter while some will gather after Pentecost. There is an either/or in one of the prayers which attempts to allow for that – whether the Holy Spirit is ‘awaited’ or ‘has come’.
- The Lord’s Prayer has not been included, so you can add it where you feel it works best. As this is a service celebrating the global Church, it is a good occasion to encourage people to say it in the ‘language of their heart’. Or maybe the whole congregation could say the prayer in a different language if there is a speaker in the congregation who could lead this.
- There is a list of suggested hymns to choose from in the Appendix.

Before the service

- Arrange for the Easter Offering collection envelopes to be distributed in each church in your circuit during Lent, and particularly on Easter Sunday. To order envelopes, please visit methodistpublishing.org.uk/features/easter-offering
- Ensure that church and circuit treasurers have a copy of the guidelines/finance instructions included in these notes.
- Download the poster from methodist.org.uk/EasterOffering to

advertise the service. You can fill in details of when and where your service will take place before printing the poster, or you can print the poster and write details on.

- Advertise your service in your local church magazines. Let everyone know they are welcome.
- Contact your MWiB District Trustee with details of your service, so that this information can be included in the list of all local services in your district.

Finance/Gift Aid

Please read through and ensure these instructions are passed to your church treasurer, Gift Aid secretary and, importantly, the circuit MWiB treasurer.

Instructions for collecting Gift Aid and sending in donations using the Easter Offering collection envelopes can be downloaded as a separate sheet from the Methodist Church website: methodist.org.uk/GiftAid

These instructions apply to individual church collections. However, we recognise that most Easter Offering services are held as circuit-wide dedication services, in which case local churches may take a separate collection, with donations being received by circuit officers.

In keeping with the HMRC guidance with respect to best practices on handling and banking donations, we recommend the following options for collecting and sending in donations using the Easter Offering collection envelopes.

Local Methodist churches are able to claim Gift Aid on their Easter Offering, either by using our Gift Aid Bureau Service, directly from HMRC, or through another third party churches may use to claim Gift Aid, if the following conditions are met:

1. Local churches bank these donations into their accounts.
2. Local churches forward the Gift Aid money to the World Mission Fund.

This advice to Methodist churches for claiming Gift Aid on their Easter Offering is therefore based on the understanding that local churches have exercised their discretion to set up a fund to support the World Mission Fund.

HMRC guidelines on church collections and Gift Aid are available on the GOV.UK website via bit.ly/churchcollections

OPTION 1

A. Collecting donations AND Gift Aid

1. In the same way that other special collections are received (eg All We Can, MHA or Christian Aid) please ask your church officers (Gift Aid secretaries or equivalent) to collect the sealed and completed Easter Offering collection envelopes (with cash/cheque donations enclosed) received from their congregation. The envelopes should then be opened, and the total sum handed to the church treasurer (or equivalent) to pay the donations into the church bank account.
2. If the church has received and banked the donations into the church bank account, the church officers are to keep the empty Easter Offering collection envelopes for audit purposes and include banked donations on their church's Gift Aid claim form that is submitted to the Gift Aid Bureau Service.¹ These envelopes should NOT be sent to the Finance Department at Methodist Church House unless your church is unable to claim Gift Aid (see Option 2). Each church should keep these envelopes for six years, in line with Gift Aid record-keeping requirements.

We would encourage all churches to adopt this option where possible in order to claim Gift Aid on donations.

Sending in donations to the World Mission Fund

Once a church has collected and banked their donations into the church bank account, they can then do one of the following:

- The church treasurer can write a cheque, made payable to 'Methodist Church World Mission Fund' for the total amount donated (a further cheque will need to be sent when the Gift Aid amount is refunded). The cheque for donations made can then be brought (or sent) to the MWiB Treasurer at the circuit-wide Easter Offering dedication service. All cheques should then be collected by circuit MWiB treasurers and banked using the '02' paying-in books.
- If churches cannot get in touch with their circuit MWiB treasurer, cheques may be sent to the Finance Department at Methodist Church House with a covering letter indicating the circuit's name and ID number, so that those donations can be properly attributed.
- Alternatively, the total donation can be paid by BACS transfer directly into the World Mission Fund account using the following information:

Sort code: 40-02-06

Account number: 70951706

If making a payment using this method, be sure to include your circuit reference followed by 02. For example circuit number 18/9 would use the reference 180902. If there is space, please also include your circuit name. This information ensures that your donation is attributed to the correct circuit.

¹ The Gift Aid Bureau Service of the Methodist Church processes Gift Aid claims for about 3,700 churches every year, reclaiming about £9 m from HRMC on behalf of those churches. Once processed, the Bureau Service will transfer the relevant Gift Aid rebate to each church.

OPTION 2

If the church is unable to claim Gift Aid through the Gift Aid Bureau Service, or if cheques have already been made payable to the World Mission Fund, then follow the instructions below:

Collecting donations

- Church officers (Gift Aid secretaries or equivalent) collect the sealed and completed Easter Offering collection envelopes (with cash/cheque donations enclosed) received from their congregation.

Sending in donations

1. The donations (cheques/cash) and Gift Aid envelopes should be sent to the circuit MWiB treasurer, who will then bank the donations using the 'O2' paying-in book and send envelopes to the Finance Department at Methodist Church House, with a covering letter stating the donations banked, circuit name, circuit ID number and the date they were banked.

2. If churches cannot get in touch with their circuit MWiB treasurer, they can send donations and envelopes directly to the Finance Department at Methodist Church House.

Note: If you choose to follow this option, churches cannot claim Gift Aid as they have not banked donations into their own accounts.

In both cases, any cheques should be made payable to 'Methodist Church World Mission Fund' and not 'MWiB' and should not be sent to Methodist Women in Britain.

For more information about claiming Gift Aid, Gift Aid rules, and frequently asked questions on Gift Aid, please contact your church Gift Aid secretary.

Please do not send the Finance Office cash donations by post. Deposit cash into your church account and send in a cheque or transfer by BACS for the same amount payable to the 'World Mission Fund'.