

Our Link...

Note to the leader: This service revolves around three pivots: (i) Our World, (ii) Our Church and Mission, and (iii) Our Story and Future. Each section has ideas of what you may like to include in the service, and they all try to create an atmosphere of worship whilst discovering new facts about our world and our LINK, and being inspired by our faith in Christ. As worship leader you will know what suggestions suit your church congregation, so please feel free to shape the service to your needs. It is a service of worship, so we have included praise and thanksgiving, a time of confession, bible readings and teaching, intercession and reflection, but we have tried to do these whilst giving a flavour of Lesotho and inspiring people to think of how we as a worldwide Church can work and live together.

Welcome

Opening prayer

Father God, we thank you for gathering us together to worship you in the name of Christ, that we may delve deeper into the promise you have given to us, that we may be restored, renewed and refreshed by your Spirit. Help us to learn together about your universal vision, help us to seek a deeper belonging to the family of God, help us to leave here inspired to be channels of your grace; in Jesus' name we pray, Amen

Song We are marching in the light of God

An Act of Confession

O God, we come to you in repentance, conscious that we have failed to be the people you want us to be.

When we are self-satisfied, you expose our failure. Lord, forgive us:

save us and help us.

When we are self-assertive, you challenge our pride. Lord, forgive us:

save us and help us.

When we are self-opinionated, you show us we do not know everything. Lord, forgive us:

save us and help us.

When we are self-indulgent, you condemn our greed. Lord, forgive us:

save us and help us.

When we are self-centred, you take our peace away. Lord, forgive us:

save us and help us.

Give us a new vision of your holiness, make us worthy to be your people, and help us to live up to our calling in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Part One

Our World

Quiz

The idea is to get people to think about the world in which they live – and then ‘home in’ on Lesotho and Durham...

If there are young children ask them to come to the front and take part in the quiz – the leader can read out either two, three or all four of the options, and ask people to put their hands up for which one they think is right, after reading out the options once. Not all of these questions need to be used – the leader is free to choose from the selection below, being mindful of time!

The bark of which tree was originally used to make aspirin:

- a) Oak
- b) Blossom
- c) Horse chestnut
- d) Willow**

There are 2.5 trillion stars in the galaxies, but how many blood vessels are there in the human body?

- a) 250
- b) 250 thousand
- c) 250 million
- d) 250 trillion**

Lightning is a very powerful source of energy. A flash of lightning could light up a light bulb for how long?

- a) 3 hours
- b) 3 days
- c) 3 months**
- d) 3 years

Lesotho is surrounded by which country:

- (a) South Africa**
- (b) South America
- (c) South Pacific
- (d) South Park

Lesotho is surrounded by:

- (a) sea
- (b) elephants

- (c) **land**
- (d) snow

The percentage of young people unemployed is:

- (a) 20%
- (b) 40%
- (c) 60%
- (d) **80%**

There is a high rate of unemployment which has led to increased levels of poverty. The young people have thus been moving to other countries where they can find work, which means Lesotho is losing active people who can bring development and freshness to church and country.

Lesotho was founded by:

- (a) **King Moshoeshoe**
- (b) Queen Stilettoe
- (c) King Wellington
- (d) Queen Sandal

Life expectancy of people in Lesotho is:

- (a) **35**
- (b) 40
- (c) 60
- (d) 75

Over half the population are under eighteen years of age, about 120,000 children are orphans

Durham was originally called:

- (a) Dinny ham
- (b) **Dun Holm**
- (c) Doon toon
- (d) D'oh

Legend has it that in 995AD, after the monks had been wandering with St Cuthbert's coffin trying to find a resting place for him, one of the monks had a vision of St Cuthbert who told him to take the coffin to 'Dun Holm'. Dun means 'hill' and holm means 'island'.

Durham Cathedral was built in:

- (a) 1993
- (b) 903
- (c) **1093**

(d) 2003

The world's first train journey was in 1825 and began in:

- (a) Fatfield
- (b) Darlington**
- (c) Pennywell
- (d) Hartlepool

Mrs Clements, a resident of Durham, made the world's first:

- (a) Marmalade
- (b) Paste mustard**
- (c) Smoothy maker
- (d) Merangue

Hymn All creatures of our God and King

Part Two Our Church and Mission

This history of the Church in Lesotho, was written by Motselisi, a young girl from Lesotho who came to the Gaunless Valley to work as a youth leader for a year.

Lesotho is said to be a Christian country. However, in the beginning and during the time of the foundation of the Basotho nation, Basotho never knew anything about Christianity. Christianity was introduced in the country when it was under the authority and the rule of King Moshoeshoe I, in about 1833. King Moshoeshoe never knew how to read and write, but he attracted men from Europe who were Protestant missionaries. They were Thomas Arbousset and Eugene Casalis. Some time later Fr Joseph Gerard became the first Roman Catholic missionary, and King Moshoeshoe invited Bishop Twells from South Africa to also send missionaries from the "Queen's church". They were all from different denominations but their aim was to introduce Christianity and the Good News of Christ to the nation of Basotho.

These missionaries never introduced the good news about Christianity straight away – they first established the relationship to King Moshoeshoe I. They became good friends with him and they worked as his translators and writers. After this, they did manage to introduce the Good News to the King. And from that time Christianity became more popular in the nation. At first there were only three popular

denominations, namely: Roman Catholic, Anglican and Methodist. However, as time went by, many other denominations and other religions emerged.

Like other movements in society, the church in Lesotho has not been static and has changed a lot from the time when it was introduced. There are lots of transformations that can be recognised - for example, in some churches women can now be priests, although there are still very few. Some churches use musical instruments for their worship and use new Christian songs as well as traditional hymns, and the dress code has been relaxed in some churches (women in the past had to wear something to cover their heads and men couldn't wear shorts!). The church is also facing challenges – there are less people going to church, and many are not actively involved in youth and children's work. Therefore, young people and teenagers do not have places where they can go to socialise and meet other Christians, and so they are tempted in doing many other things and antisocial behaviour is very common as a result of this. There are also very few priests and those who are priests have many, many parishes to look after, often miles away from each other. Sadly, many of the churches are reluctant to talk about HIV/Aids and so there is still a stigma connected with it. Often, some Christians associate HIV/Aids as a punishment from God. Therefore, people are not open to talk about their status in fear of being stigmatised and judged.

This account of the church in Lesotho feels very similar to the church in our diocese! Although we do have to remember that the church in Lesotho is under 200 years old, and ours is – well, more than a thousand years old!

During exile on the Christian island of Iona, Oswald, King of Northumbria, learned about Christianity. He remained a pagan, but his defeat of the Welsh at Hexham in 634AD persuaded him to convert. Before the battle, he prayed to the Christian God for victory. His prayers were seemingly answered and as a result Oswald appointed a monk from Iona called Aidan to become Bishop of his people.

Aidan chose Lindisfarne, or Holy Island as it is known locally, as the centre of his bishopric. North East England is known as 'the Cradle of English Christianity' with Lindisfarne being home to England's first Christian community. Aidan was followed as Bishop of Lindisfarne by St. Cuthbert, who established the island as an important centre of learning.

Durham Cathedral was founded in 1093 to house Cuthbert's tomb. It also contains the tomb of the Venerable Bede, the Benedictine monk and scholar who became known as the 'Father of English History' for his written works.

Having said that, our diocese is experiencing great upheaval and faces many challenges – both churches in Lesotho and in Durham face the ongoing challenge of how to reach out to its people in sharing God’s grace and love, in making and nurturing disciples, in expressing faith in ways that speak to today’s generation. We’re going to think a bit more now on how we as a worldwide church can seek to be a living example of God’s grace now, and in the future.

Reading 1 Corinthians 9.19-23; 12.12-27

Gospel John 15:5-17

Short Talk Understanding each other; living in each other’s shoes; loving each other; serving each other; in order to live and share the Good News; we are the body of Christ.

Hymn/Song

Part Three Our Story – Our Future

We’re going to listen to a short story of the life of a young girl who was brought up in Lesotho:

My name is Motselisi CiciliaKokota. I am a Mosotho girl who was born in Lesotho. I grew up with my mum and dad, and my sister and three brothers. I live in the capital of Lesotho – Maseru. Growing up in a poor country where there are lots of things happening especially challenging issues was a really difficult thing for me.

I was raised up by both parents until the age of thirteen when my dad decided to leave my mum and us. At that time it was the worst thing ever that happened. He never said a word to anyone. The sad thing about this is that he left us when my sister was very sick (she later died). And at that time I had just started secondary school, one younger brother had just started primary school, and the youngest was just two years old. The elder brother was working at the Barber shop.

Since that time, my life changed a lot. I was no longer able to get things that a thirteen year old girl needed. It also became difficult for my mum to pay for my school fees and to bring enough food for us all as she was now head of the family. I have to say though, that there was not a single day when she didn’t manage to put food on a plate – but it was not easy. Being in this hard situation, my elder brother supported my mum and they managed to pay school fees for me and my younger brothers. I was able to finish my schooling, and I also went to university where I did a diploma and degree.

Because of my situation at home, I isolated myself from other kids. My self-confidence diminished, I felt like I was different and could not belong to the kids who

still had both parents, who could get things I could not. I did not have the life that other teenagers had.

As I tell you this little experience of mine, there are so many young girls and boys in Lesotho who did and who are experiencing what I went through. However, some of them are not as so fortunate as to be able to go to school and enjoy their childhood. Some of the children have seen both their parents die – and so many families have the oldest child looking after the younger ones. Some young girls have to drop out of school to become heads of their households when their parents become too ill or die. They sometimes work as maids to earn money to buy food for their siblings. Sometimes they even work on the streets at night and lose their own childhood and education. Young boys who become the head of their households sometimes become head boys and gardeners, and sometimes street vendors.

It is hard for the young people and children to see their parents suffering and going through difficult times. This can affect them psychologically, mentally, physically and emotionally. Because of the lack of resources, there are very few young people and children who can be helped whilst suffering from these problems.

My hope is that one day I can help children who have experienced terrible suffering. I have trained as a councillor, and would like to be there for children who have no one else. This is my prayer.

Our own story

Here there is time to reflect on our own story and think about how God has been present – maybe by using silence, maybe by listening to some quiet music, maybe by each person writing or drawing their life line. The leader is free to think about how this may work best in your congregation. If helpful, the following psalm can be used:

Canticle/responsory

Psalm 139.1-16

¹ You have searched me, LORD,
and you know me.

² **You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.**

³ You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.

⁴ **Before a word is on my tongue
you, LORD, know it completely.**

⁵ You hem me in behind and before,
and you lay your hand upon me.

⁶ **Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too lofty for me to attain.**

⁷ Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?

- ⁸ **If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.**
- ⁹ If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
- ¹⁰ **even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.**
- ¹¹ If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me
and the light become night around me,"
- ¹² **even the darkness will not be dark to you;
the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you.**
- ¹³ For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
- ¹⁴ **I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.**
- ¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.
- ¹⁶ **Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book
before one of them came to be.**

Our Future...

The Durham Lesotho LINK was started in 1986 as a partnership between the two dioceses of Lesotho and Durham, with the aim of making a difference in the lives of people at both ends of the LINK. It has set up a wide range of projects in Lesotho, including the building of a clinic, an education resource centre, woodland planting, and poultry units. It expresses what it means to be One Body in Christ.

For us in the so-called 'developed' world, the LINK provides a more focussed and personal insight into issues such as poverty, climate change, inequality, dependency and HIV/AIDS and how our fellow Christians, in places where they are most acutely experienced, are affected by them and respond to them.

The LINK in Lesotho runs a range of educational programmes for children and young people, who make up 60% of the country's population. Current programmes include SHAPE (AIDS peer educators programme, vital in a country with the third highest rate of infections), Active Learning courses using novel teaching methods, work with mentally and physically impaired children, street kids, and young offenders. Respite care holidays are given to child headed households, which are an increasing feature in Lesotho, caused by the AIDS pandemic.

We can get involved in the LINK in Durham through visits, exchange programmes, scholarships and schools visits. Senior schools use study of Lesotho to understand

developing world issues. Primary schools use LINK resource boxes in their art, geography and citizenship curriculum work and in school assemblies. Churches, organisations and individuals can offer hospitality to visiting Basotho, help to fund LINK projects and can keep up to date with developments through e-Moho, the quarterly electronic news update.

And everyone can pray for the LINK!

Prayers

- Give thanks for the different organisations that are working to improve the lives of young people and vulnerable children, both in this Diocese and Lesotho.
- Give thanks for all people and donors who are giving funds to different charities, schools, care homes, and churches, to carry out projects intended to improve life in Lesotho.
- Pray for the government to have transparency and take into consideration the needs of Basotho.
- Pray for all people who are infected and affected by incurable diseases such as HIV/Aids and diabetes. Pray to God for comfort, support and strength and hope. Most importantly, pray for their children who become careers of their parents, and of their siblings.
- Pray for the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, that they would understand the importance of employing professional counsellors and social workers in hospitals and care homes.
- Let us also pray for potential people who would like to make a difference to the lives of Basotho, to try and set up different projects for young people to give them a better and positive life.
- Pray for all public and civil servants to be actively involved in their work and that they could always remember to treat others with value and respect regardless of their status, race, or health.
- Pray also for the nation to realise the importance of respecting the rights of children, especially the freedom to be educated, to play, and be safe.
- Pray for people who come to Lesotho pretending to be helping but knowing that their aim is to exploit Basotho especially women and young girls.

(If a Eucharistic service, the Psalm may be omitted, the Peace follows the Prayers followed by Eucharistic Prayer, with the LINK prayer being used post-communion)

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn/Song

Blessing

LINK prayer: Morena Molimo (Lord God) we thank you for the LINK between your people in Durham and in Lesotho. We praise you for faith and perseverance through bad times and good. Help us to learn from one another. Keep us all in your love and grace as we work towards justice and peace and the coming of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.