

## Let us Praise God Together! Together?

### *A story from Sri Lanka*

References to slides relate to the PowerPoint available at [methodist.org.uk/GlobalRelationshipsResources](http://methodist.org.uk/GlobalRelationshipsResources), with slide 1 opening your service

Have you seen a protest march on TV? What were the people demonstrating about?

When people walk together, it can be to protest about something bad, or it can be to support something good.

Has anyone here been on a march?

Some churches in Britain have a walk of witness on Good Friday, to remind their communities of the events of the last week of Jesus's life. The people who walk are doing so to declare that they believe that God loves us so much that he sent Jesus to be our Saviour.

In many countries such walks take place on the evening of Good Friday, and are very quiet and sombre as people think about Jesus dying on the cross. But some countries have other traditions for walks of witness.

This photo [slide 2] shows the procession that started out from the Methodist Church in Moratumulla, Sri Lanka, on Palm Sunday.

On Palm Sunday, we celebrate when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, and the people along the way shouted, "Hosanna!"

Similarly, people shout and cheer as they walk the walk of witness. There were a lot of people walking, and a lot of neighbours and friends from other religions who came out to watch and wave to people they knew.

Probably the first thing you notice in this picture [slide 3] is the umbrella. It's being used as a parasol, because even though it was early in the morning, it was still very hot.

If you look at the shadows and above the people's heads further forward, you can see the green palm branches that people waved as they walked [slide 4]. It isn't easy to take good photos when you have an umbrella in one hand and a palm branch in the other!



*Slide 2: Procession in Moratumulla, Sri Lanka*



*Slide 3: Umbrella in procession*



*Slide 4: Palm branches waved*

All the people in the pictures are from the same church, and although it's so far ahead you can't see it, right at the front was a band. As we walked we were singing hymns the band played. These were mostly very lively, traditional hymns and songs of praise, and people sang joyfully and enthusiastically, praising God.



*Slide 5: Bands playing accompany the procession*

But then from behind there was different music [slide 5], not so loud at first, but gradually getting closer and closer, louder and louder. It wasn't just members from one church joining in this march, but members of six or seven churches, all with their own bands, and their own plans for what to sing as they marched. Everybody had started from their own church after early morning worship, and gradually all the smaller marches came together as one long procession.

Now, what happens when two different groups try to sing two different songs at the same time? Shall we try?

*Suggest two hymns suitable for a procession, for example StF 476 One more step, and StF 483 We are marching and ask half the congregation to sing each.*

How did you feel as you sang? Was it easy? It isn't always easy to praise God, but it's always good to try.

But even with a lot of bands coming close in the march in Moratumulla, it wasn't difficult to sing all the time. When the bands started to get near to each other, at first only the sound of the drums carried between the different groups, and it seemed that the drummers could hear the beat from other bands too, because the beats came together to drum in time with each other. Now when the beat is the same, even if the words and the tunes are different, it's much easier to have two songs sung together.

The hymn we're going to sing in a few minutes has the words, "Teach me to dance to the beat of your heart." Sometimes people really dance in worship! If you want to move as you sing, please do. But the hymn also means we're asking to live full of God's love, and praise God with our whole lives. Like the beat of the drum guided the bands and the singing, we want God's love to guide our praise and our lives. We aren't all the same, so we won't all praise God in the same way, but when we all love God, we can be different and still praise God together.

**Hymn:** *StF 477 Teach me to dance to the beat of your heart*