

# AROUND THE WORLD: CELEBRATING AND REMEMBERING

Methodists around the world have shared some stories of how they celebrate milestones and remember loss in their lives or community. Read these stories below and then use the questions for discussion and suggested activities that follow.

## CELEBRATIONS

### Guatemala

“A 15<sup>th</sup> birthday is a big celebration for girls; it’s called *quinceañera*. The celebration starts in the home and processes to the church. It is a bit like a bridal party – the birthday girl is accompanied by flower girls and guys in suits. There is then a worship service and a big ceremony in the church. As part of this, the girl’s father takes off her shoes and puts high heels on her. This is to say that she is now old enough to get married. People process up to girl to give her gifts and a hug.”

### Ghana

“When a child is born the family holds a naming ceremony exactly one week later to celebrate the birth of the child. All relatives wear white clothing. Then food such as otonono (mashed yam and boiled eggs) are eaten on the day with other refreshments.

Ghanaians often like to wear white on special occasions (e.g. births and celebrations).

Most households raise chickens and goats, which are reserved for special occasions, such as christenings, weddings, traditional festivals, and Christmas.”

### **Germany**

“In Germany birthdays are a big deal – much more so than in the UK. People will phone, email, text, Facebook you, but not just to say: ‘Happy Birthday; have a nice day.’ They will make a little speech about all that they wish for you... wishing good health in the coming year, wishes relating to work and family, etc. If it's your birthday, you might get presents, but you are also usually expected to treat everyone and you pay for the meal and the drinks!”

## **REMEMBERING LOSS**

### **Zambia**

“In Zambia following a death, all the furniture, apart from carpets, is moved out of the house to the garden. A fire is then built in the centre of the circle of chairs. When people visit, the women go and sit inside with women relatives, and all the men sit outside. Often they sing hymns and sometimes there is a great deal of crying. Church choirs often visit and sing. After the burial a meal is prepared for all who visited. This can often be in the hundreds.”

### **Japan**

“In Nagasaki the siren goes off for a minute of silent remembrance at both 8:15am on 6 August and 11:02am on 9 August, to remember the dropping of the atomic bombs. The siren also wails at 12pm on 15 August, marking the end of the War. Many people stop in the streets and observe this.”

### **Ghana**

“Death is one of the most important events in society and is marked by elaborate and lengthy funeral observances that involve the whole community.

When a family member dies, the family tend to wear dark/black clothes. On the day of the funeral, close family members of the deceased will wear red. Extended family members come to visit them to express their condolences. There is also the 'one week' family gathering where the date for the funeral is confirmed. The funeral normally takes place over the course of the weekend, including the wake (viewing of the body and paying last respects); the funeral and burial service are followed by the thanksgiving service on Sunday."

## Questions for discussion

Read the stories with your group. Then discuss the following:

1. What did you like in the stories?
2. How do the stories make you feel?
3. What do you recognise as similar to your own story?

## Further activity

Create your own celebration for a 'milestone' (such as a birthday, marriage, or becoming an adult). What traditions would you like to have and why?

Create a tradition for remembering loss. What would you like to do and why?