



## On your marks

You may recall Tim Sledge's cathedral-sized Christingle, involving miles of red ribbon and eight foot poles. This is a slightly - but not much - smaller version, easily doable in a parish church, which was used in Christ Church Downend's Christingle service just before Tim's - honest!

The theme we took was that of 'giving' and the talk was in two parts.

## Get set

You'll need a normal Christingle, four broom handles (about £2.50 from places like Wilkinson's), a few stuffed animals, a fish, a bird, a plant or flower, a sun and moon big enough to be visible from all over your church, gift ribbon, a flashlight, two balls of red wool, cut into lengths and re-rolled into new balls so that you have about 15 new balls.

## Go!

1 Before the service, make the four broom handles into the equivalent of the cocktail sticks with the fruits on- you will of course use your own ideas here, but I linked the idea of 'God's gifts' to the creation story from Genesis and had as follows:

Stick 1—a large fabric flower tied onto the handle for the gift of Day 3—flowers and plants of all sorts

Stick 2—a large sun and moon made from holographic paper on card to stiffen them for the sun and moon of Day 4

Stick 3—a soft fish and soft bird for Day 5's swimming and flying creatures

Stick 4—a cuddly sheep for Day 6's animals

2 Hold up a normal Christingle and be perplexed about what a strange symbol it is: you know all the bits of it stand for something, but you can't remember what they stand for—who can help you?

Encourage everyone to remind you about the world being round like an orange, the four gifts from the seasons, Jesus the light of the world and Jesus' blood or love flowing round the world.

3 Say that this Christingle is a perfect size for taking home, but in church it looks very small. Maybe you could all make a huge Christingle - a church-sized Christingle? Ask for four volunteers.

4 Tell the story: God made the world. He poured out all his gifts on the world. He gave it light and water and sky. Then he gave it plants of all sorts (Hand out the first stick to a volunteer and ask them to stand in one corner of the building)... the sun and moon to mark out the seasons (give out the second stick and send them to another corner of the building)... swimming things and flying things (same with the third stick)... and animals of all kinds—and people! (same with stick four). God gave these gifts to the world and he gave people to the world to look after it, and he gave the world to the people to enjoy and he gave the people to each other to care for each other—what a lot of



giving. Look at the person next to you: they are God's gift to you! (Lots of sniggering at this point will ensue.)

But some people forgot that they were supposed to be generous givers just like God, and they started grabbing greedily for themselves. (You could add some hand actions here for everyone to do, showing giving out and grabbing in.) And that isn't how the world was made to work. So God sent Jesus to light up the world and show people how they could change from being greedy grabbers to generous givers. (Ask another volunteer to stand in the middle of the church and shine the flashlight around.) And Jesus knew that the only way to give God's love to everyone in the world was to die on the cross so that his love could flow all round the world. (Explain that you're going to give out balls of wool, and that people should hold on to it as it comes to them, but that they should throw the rest of the ball on to someone else—either throw it as far as they can or pass it quietly to someone nearby. Just like we need to pass on God's love to people far and near. You should end up with a web of love / wool criss-crossing the congregation.) What a beautiful web of love! Let's say a prayer as we hold onto this love.

Dear Lord God, thank you for all your gifts to us, and especially for your gift of Jesus. Please help us to share your love with other people who need it. Amen

5 As you sing the next song, the wool can be gathered in before someone gets strangled. After the song, you may want to continue with this part of the talk. I don't know where the story comes from. Apologies if I have inadvertently stolen it! Please let us know so that we can credit it to you.

A man had a dream in which a voice said to him, 'Go onto the mountain and there you will find someone who will give you a treasure beyond your wildest dreams.' Next morning the man woke up and rushed up on to the mountain to search for someone who could give him this treasure, but the only person there was a scruffy old tramp. He searched all day, and in the end sat down next to the tramp. 'You're looking depressed,' said the tramp. 'What's up?' The man explained that he'd had a dream and heard a voice saying, 'Go onto the mountain and there you will find someone who will give you a treasure beyond your wildest dreams.' 'Oh!' said the tramp, 'It must have meant me!' And he fished into his pocket and brought out a huge diamond. 'I found this yesterday, so take it - it must be for you.' The man grabbed the diamond and thanked the tramp and rushed home in glee. But that night he couldn't sleep, and the next morning he went back up the mountain. He handed back the diamond to the tramp and asked, 'Please can you give me the treasure that lets you give away something so precious?'

Someone who found that treasure was a greedy man who lived long ago. His name was Zacchaeus. Tell the story in your own words or use a version like the rhyming one in [The Gospels Unplugged](#). Zacchaeus met Jesus and found that giving is far more satisfying than grabbing.

And not only Zacchaeus but people and organisations today have discovered that giving is better than grabbing - the gifts for The Children's Society today will help thousands of children across the UK and by giving today you are helping this love flow into places it couldn't go before.