



A better way

A service introducing All We Can's campaign
for 2023 - Communities in the Driving Seat





Welcome

2023 is a big year for All We Can.

In 2023, we are shouting boldly about what we have previously whispered shyly.

More than ever before, we are being vocal about the problems with how poverty has been tackled, more than ever we are advocating for a better way, more than ever we are speaking passionately about what the church can learn from our partners.

For the whole of this year, All We Can will be telling stories from our partner in Malawi - Eagles.

Eagles have a distinct ability to see poverty in a different way - to apply a new lens to an old problem and transform communities in the process. We want to show you this lens, not just so you can see communities in low-income countries in a new light, but so you can see your own community differently.

We are calling this year-long campaign '*Communities in the Driving Seat*'

We believe this is not just a mantra for international development, but a principle for mission.

We'd love to bring you and your church with us on a journey this year with the people of Chikwawa, Malawi. This service is the starting point - an introduction to Eagles and their Kingdom-building approach. We hope you'll also join us at other points in the year - Lent, Harvest, and Advent, to check in with these communities and learn more about how to transform your own.



Explanatory Notes

At All We Can, we are committed to making our resources as easy to use as possible in many different contexts.

We know that some preachers and leaders prefer to use a full script - so we have provided one. We know that others prefer to be more flexible and use notes - so we have provided these as well. The content is the same, just presented differently. Please use whichever version is more useful to you.

We are very excited about our campaign this year, so we would love as many churches as possible to show our main campaign film and start having conversations about putting communities in the driving seat of international development and mission. If a full All We Can service would not fit in your current church calendar, then we would still love for you to spare 15 minutes of a service to show the film and have some short discussions as a congregation. If this is what you can manage, then please use the "Short Element of a Wider Service" section of this resource. If you are happy to use a full service, then please combine this opening element with the other service materials found later in the resource.

Short Element of Wider Service

(Script)



For those who do not know, All We Can is the international development charity of the Methodist Church which partners with local organisations in low-income countries to tackle local problems with local solutions.

In 2023, All We Can are being more vocal than ever about the problems with how poverty has been tackled in the past and how a better way is possible. All year, they are going to be sharing about the work of one of their partners in Malawi called Eagles, who turn traditional approaches to community transformation on their head. Rather than trying to solve problems for people, they train communities to analyse and tackle problems themselves.

All We Can believes that not only is this work that the UK Church should be supporting, but work that the church can learn a lot from, and they want to bring churches on a journey with these communities this year.

We are going to show a video now which introduces us to this innovative approach to engaging with communities.



[Show video](#)

Questions for Discussion

You could ask people to discuss these all at once or one at a time.

What stood out to you in the film? Did it challenge any assumptions you had about engaging with communities experiencing poverty?

Do you think the way we tackle poverty matters?

The film talks about why putting communities in the driving seat is important in international development, can you see how the same ideas might apply elsewhere?

If these are questions you are keen to explore more as a church, then All We Can have a number of resources we can use throughout the year to dig deeper, starting with a lent resource which explores how the principles All We Can and Eagles use in their work can be applied in mission and ministry.

Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank you that you are a God who humbly gave up power and acclaim to draw near to us and come alongside us. In our mission and ministry, may we do the same.

Lord we know that you care not only about our physical and material needs, but our whole being. In our mission and ministry, may we do the same

Loving God while you have the power to impose your will on us you choose to build your Kingdom with us, not for us. Not through forceful imposition but through trust and partnership. In our mission and ministry, may we do the same.

We pray for All We Can as they seek to put communities in the driving seat of development and fulfil the church's calling to serve the vulnerable and marginalised. We pray for All We Can's partners on the ground – that they would be respected as the true experts in their contexts.

We pray for ourselves and our engagement with the surrounding community, may we model humble, locally-led, empowering relationships.

In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord,

Amen.

Short Element of Wider Service

(Notes)

- All We Can is a charity of the Methodist Church that partners with local organizations to tackle local problems in low-income countries.
- In 2023, All We Can is going to be more vocal about the problems with past approaches to poverty and sharing about their partner organization in Malawi – Eagles.
- Eagles uses a community-driven approach to transformation which trains people and churches to tackle problems, rather than trying to solve problems for people.
- All We Can believes that this work should be supported by UK churches, but that the approach also has something to teach the Church.
- The video you will show introduces these concepts.



Questions for Discussion

What stood out to you in the film? Did it challenge any assumptions you had about engaging with communities experiencing poverty?

Do you think the way we tackle poverty matters?

The film talks about why putting communities in the driving seat is important in international development, can you see how the same ideas might apply elsewhere?

- If we want to explore these questions more, All We Can have more resources throughout the year to help us do that
- Lent resource explores how the principles All We Can and Eagles use in their work can be applied in mission and ministry.

Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank you that you are a God who humbly gave up power and acclaim to draw near to us and come alongside us. In our mission and ministry, may we do the same.

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We pray for ourselves and our engagement with the surrounding community, may we model humble, locally-led, empowering relationships.

In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord,

Amen.

Further Service Ideas

(Script)

Opening Prayer

Father,

Thank you that nothing can separate us from your love.

Thank you for the life, freedom and healing we have in Jesus.

We believe that you can do more than we could ever think of or imagine, and we are ready for something new, a new way of thinking and new way of living that brings love and hope to those most marginalised in the world. We can only do this in your strength, so we put our trust and hope in you today. As we join with our brothers and sisters across the world, we wait for you, would we experience your presence lifting us up on wings like eagles, to run and not grow weary and to walk and not grow faint. Please lead us and guide us for your glory and the expansion of your Kingdom today.

In Jesus name,

Amen.

All Age Activity

What you need:

- 2 volunteers
- An obstacle course of things easily available in church. (Ease of course is dependent on who your volunteers are – if possible, take the course into the congregation for maximum engagement).
- Possible props which might help complete the obstacle course, for example: a stool, a trolley/cart, string, a stick etc.
- Blindfold.

To illustrate the difference between a failed way of doing international development and community engagement and the better way that All We Can advocates for, I'm going to need a couple of volunteers to complete an obstacle course.

The Failed Way

Blindfold Person 1. Ask members of the congregation to construct an obstacle course out of chairs and whatever else you have at hand. Once it is constructed, allow Person 1 a minute to become acquainted with it.

Move the blindfold from Person 1 to Person 2 and have them both stand at the start of the obstacle course

Get Person 1 to guide person 2 through the obstacle course with verbal instructions. Person 2 has to do what Person 1 says – they can't do things their own way.

Person 1 has access to props which may help Person 2 complete the course, but Person 2 cannot ask for particular props.

Person 2 takes off blindfold.

Ask the congregation:

- What is good about what person one is doing?
- What is less helpful?
- Who made the decisions?

If people are struggling for answers, you might suggest that because Person 1 wasn't experiencing the obstacle course, they were not best placed to tell person 2 how to complete it. Person 1 already knew the course but wasn't allowed to take the lead on how to complete it.

Ask Person 2:

- How did it feel to be blindfolded? Did you feel in control of the process? Did it feel like your achievement or Person 1's?

A Better Way

This time, neither player is blindfolded.

Instead of telling Person 1 what to do, Person 2 asks helpful questions and provides help when asked for. Give Person 2 these example questions before they begin:

Questions for Person 1 to ask:

- What is in front of you?
- What tools or resources would help you complete this course?
- What might I be able to do to help?

Once they have finished the obstacle course for the second time, get everyone to give them a round of applause and ask these questions:

Questions for the congregation:

- What was different that time?
- Which approach was better and why?

Question for person 2:

- How did it feel different to the other way?
- How did it feel to be in control rather than being told what to do?

Explanation:

This exercise goes some way to explain the way that All We Can is trying to change the conversation around poverty and development – doing away with the assumption that Western charities are the experts telling people in low-income countries what they really need, and moving towards a model where the people facing obstacles are the ones deciding how they get solved.

If we do for someone, they will always be reliant on our help. If we do to someone, we are in danger of adding obstacles and difficulties to their journey or preventing them from learning. However, when we have the attitude of assuming somebody knows the answers and can assess the obstacles themselves, then they will continue to learn to navigate the difficulties in front of them, building capacity and resilience. This approach works for empowering children, for people living with dementia and for people who have all the obstacles that living in poverty creates. People have potential, our attitude towards them can hinder or empower it.

Readings

- 2 Timothy 1:3-7
- John 15: 15-17

Sermon – Fan into Flame

A better way is possible.

A better way is possible because there is so much potential already in our communities just waiting to be tapped into.

When reading most of Paul's letters, it would be easy to categorise him as harsh, demanding, and direct. But in 2 Timothy we see Paul's more pastoral side, and he gives us an excellent model of how to empower others, how to humbly step back, and how to trust the Holy Spirit.

Paul cares massively about what happens in the churches he has visited and helped to set up – he cares about the spread of the gospel, he cares about discipleship, he about the wellbeing of the people. No one who writes that many letters can be said to be apathetic.

Paul obviously can't have total oversight over all the churches he has been involved with which is why he builds up people like Timothy to be leaders of churches throughout the region.

Because he cares so much, it would be very easy for Paul to slip into micro-managing all these local leaders – telling them exactly what to do and using them simply as vessels for his own ideas. But that is not what Paul does.

Paul does not see Timothy just as an implementer of his plans, he sees Timothy as a partner in the gospel, and his letter is full of encouragement, advice, and care, but very little direct instruction on how Timothy should run his church.

Paul evidently really cares about Timothy as a person, not just about what he does or the end-point of his work. Paul recognises that Timothy is now the expert in his local context, so Paul's role is to offer encouragement and support, not dictats from hundreds of miles away.

The most revealing line here is verse 6 where Paul says "I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God which is in you". Paul knew he did not need to micro-manage because Timothy had so much God-given potential already in him

Timothy was not an empty vessel that Paul needed to turn into a mini-me. He had great potential which Paul needed to invested in and "fan into flame."

You'd be forgiven for thinking this sounds like business advice, but in reality this principle of investing in and encouraging what the Holy Spirit is already doing is a vital one for the church to be following.

And yet in our lives we do not always follow this example of how to invest in people and communities.

When All We Can talks to its local partner organisations, it often encounters stories of Western agencies coming in and setting up totally new projects, rather than using the expertise and initiatives which are already present in the community. Charities, either by presuming they must know best or being desperate to show they are the ones making an impact, use local organisations to implement their own ideas, rather than investing in what is already happening. These are controlling instincts which Paul shows us to resist.

Charities by their very nature, care massively about the work they are involved with. But caring greatly can easily lead to a reluctance to release others in the way Paul releases Timothy.

It's a reluctance that shows up in church life as well. Churches can be very keen to start new initiatives or projects without establishing what is already going on in a community. Churches can often feel detached from their communities because they do not join in or encourage what is already happening.

I wonder if you have heard the concept of desire lines. You know when you are walking through a park or across a field and there is a nicely paved path laid out for everyone's use, but there is an 'unofficial' path which has been forged through use over time because it is shorter or more convenient. These 'unofficial' paths which reflect how people actually use a space, rather than what the people who designed the space presume people need, are often called desire lines. And there has been a trend in recent years among landscapers and town planners to allow these natural paths to emerge in a new park and then paving over the routes that the people using the space have created.

This is how All We Can views its role – making stronger what is already present in a community, fanning into flame the Spirit of God which is already at work. It is a helpful image for the Church for how we interact with our local communities.

A better way is possible because fear does not have to drive us.

What is it that prevents us from engaging with communities in humble partnership? Paul talks about a 'Spirit of fear' being something that prevents Timothy from making the most of the gifts he has, and it is something which prevent us from stepping out to put others in the driving seat.

If you have ever seen the Pixar film "Inside Out" you will know that Fear is one of the five personified emotions which sit in the control room of the main character Riley's head. At various points in the film, different emotions end up in the main control seat which dictates Riley's response to certain events. The film shows that fear can actually be a really positive emotion in the right doses – the fear of pain prevents Riley from tripping over wires or eating something that would be harmful to her. But the film also shows what happens when fear becomes the driving emotion, the one with the most control, in situations when it shouldn't be. Riley's relationship with her parents breaks down because she pushes them away out of fear of being honest with them.

There is a clip from Inside Out in the PowerPoint which accompanies this resource that you can show. Please note: All We Can does not own the copyright to these materials. Please check your own licensing and/or contact the copyright holders before using this in public worship or online.

Fear is a useful check and balance, it is not a useful driving force.

I think that is the Spirit of fear which Paul is guarding us against. A fear which shuts off the possibility of deeper, more meaningful relationship in favour of perceived self-protection.

Again, this is something that All We Can encounter in their work. Organisations who are scared to put communities in the driving seat because they fear departing from inherited norms, because they fear not being in control, because they fear not being perceived as the expert. Too often fear, rather than community needs, is in the driving seat.

Who is in the driving seat? Is not only a good question to ask of who is taking charge of community development, of social action or of evangelism. It is also a good question of ourselves in terms of which emotions and instincts are driving our decision-making.

Who is in the driving seat? Your own fear and insecurity or the simple desire to see other people's potential fulfilled?

Paul tells us that "God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control."

When we partner with the Holy Spirit, the Spirit displaces fear from the driving seat and puts love and self-control in its place. It takes a brave step to allow the Spirit to do that work in and through us.

What would it mean for us as a church to remove fear from the driving seat of our decision-making?

All We Can made the brave decision a number of years ago to displace the fear of not being in control from their decision-making, in order to pursue partnerships with local organisations in low-income countries which allow them to take the lead. It was a decision which required Spirit-guided self-control and restraint, and it is a decision which God has blessed manyfold.

By stepping back, All We Can has allowed communities to take ownership of their own development. Pastor Christopher is one of the church leaders who received training from All We Can's partner Eagles in Malawi which helped him mobilise his church to be a catalyst for change in the community. Recently a fire destroyed the house of someone in the village and Christopher said of his congregation "on their own, they collected things they had and gave them to the victims. On their own they took action. In the past they wouldn't have done that on their own." By fanning into flame the potential that was already present in the community, the people there are far more resilient.

A better way is possible because Jesus calls us friends.

This is not an approach or principle that Paul has pulled out of thin air, it is an approach he takes because it is the one we see modelled in Jesus.

Jesus says to his disciples "no longer do I call you servants...I call you friends" (v.15)

If Jesus calls us friends, comes to our level and speaks to us with a respect we do not deserve, how could we ever be bold enough to patronise or speak down to others? How could we ever be bold enough to impose solutions on others? How could we ever be bold enough to maintain a sense of superiority over others?

Too often in international development, local partners have been seen as servants, not friends. Too often in the Church, other organisations in the community have been seen as competitors, not friends. Jesus and Paul invite us to reduce power imbalances wherever we see them.

This is not about saying that we take on Jesus' role in our interactions with others, but that the principles of giving up power, releasing others, trusting others, are ones we should replicate in all we do.

A better way is possible. Will you help build it?

Prayers of Intercession

For these prayers you will require a candle (anything from a tealight to a pillar candle) and the flash paper provided with the physical service pack. It might be apt to light the candle at

the start of the service and draw attention to it at this point, to emphasise that we are fanning into flame something which has already been present. If you are using the online version of this resource, feel free to order some flash paper yourself.

It may be appropriate to conduct your own risk assessment of the use of open flame. The flash paper should totally burn up within a second and therefore be safe to hold even when aflame. For extra reassurance, you may wish to have a bucket of water close at hand in case of any issues.

The flash paper may be wet when you first open it. If so, allow it to dry for a few hours before use.

Each time the congregation says “help us fan them into flame”, ignite one of the sheets of flash paper

Before beginning the prayer, you may wish to offer some explanation:

During our prayers, we are going to pray for the world and for ourselves. As part of that, we are also going to demonstrate how much easier it is to fan into flame something which is already present, rather than starting from scratch.

Heavenly Father,

We thank you that you are a God who is already present and working in the world. Help us to open our eyes to how your Spirit is moving.

We pray for all those working to build peace and justice throughout the world, particularly for those who do not get the acclaim or recognition they deserve.

Help us to identify where we can join in with what you are already doing – not trying to create new fires, but fuelling what you have already started.

Lord, where we find sparks
Help us fan them into flame

Lord, we regret that too often the potential of people experiencing poverty has been ignored. Help us to call out approaches which impose foreign solutions on communities, rather than allowing communities to be in the driving seat.

We pray for the work of All We Can and their local partners, as they seek to practise a better way of tackling global poverty. Energise and inspire them as they continue to try and model your partnership with us in their partnerships with local communities.

Lord, where we find sparks
Help us fan them into flame

We pray for this community. We thank you for how you have worked and will continue to work in this church and this area.

We ask for your help and guidance in our evangelism, social



action, and community engagement. Help us to keep fear away from the driving seat of our decision-making in favour of love and self-control. In doing so, help us to engage with our communities humbly – willing to give up some of our own power in order to release the potential of others.

Lord, where we find sparks
Help us fan them into flame

Amen.

Offering Prayer

If you feel it is appropriate, you may wish to donate your offering, or part of it, to All We Can.

Lord of abundance,

Thank you that you pour out your Spirit so freely that her sparks are everywhere, just waiting to be harnessed.

We pray that our offering to you may be equally generous, loving, and open to collaboration.

In the name of Christ,

Amen.

Blessing

As we go from this place, may the God who releases and trusts us to be the builders of his Kingdom, inspire us to trust and release others – fanning into flame the potential which is all around us.

Amen

Further Service Ideas

(Notes)

All Age Activity

What you need:

- 2 volunteers
- An obstacle course of things easily available in church. (Ease of course is dependent on who your volunteers are – if possible, take the course into the congregation for maximum engagement).
- Possible props which might help complete the obstacle course, for example: a stool, a trolley/cart, string, a stick etc.
- Blindfold.

Explain that the activity is to illustrate the difference between a failed way of doing international development and community engagement, and the better way that All We Can advocates for.

The Failed Way

Blindfold Person 1.

Ask members of the congregation to construct an obstacle course out of chairs and whatever else you have at hand. Once it is constructed, allow Person 1 a minute to become acquainted with it.

Move the blindfold from Person 1 to Person 2 and have them both stand at the start of the obstacle course

Get Person 1 to guide person 2 through the obstacle course with verbal instructions. Person 2 has to do what Person 1 says – they can't do things their own way.

Person 1 has access to props which may help Person 2 complete the course, but Person 2 cannot ask for particular props.

Person 2 takes off blindfold.

Ask the congregation:

- What is good about what person one is doing?
- What is less helpful?
- Who made the decisions?

If people are struggling for answers, you might suggest that because Person 1 wasn't experiencing the obstacle course, they were not best placed to tell person 2 how to complete it. Person 1 already knew the course but wasn't allowed to take the lead on how to complete it.

Ask Person 2:

- How did it feel to be blindfolded? Did you feel in control of the process? Did it feel like your achievement or Person 1's?

A Better Way

This time, neither player is blindfolded.

Instead of telling Person 1 what to do, Person 2 asks helpful questions and provides help when asked for. Give Person 2 these example questions before they begin:

Questions for Person 1 to ask:

- What is in front of you?
- What tools or resources would help you complete this course?
- What might I be able to do to help?

Once they have finished the obstacle course for the second time, get everyone to give them a round of applause and ask these questions:

Questions for the congregation:

- What was different that time?
- Which approach was better and why?

Question for person 2:

- How did it feel different to the other way?
- How did it feel to be in control rather than being told what to do?

Explanation:

- Illustrates how All We Can is trying to change the conversation around poverty – not Western charities telling local people what they need from afar, but local communities taking charge of their development.
- The empowered approach of the second demonstration is more sustainable because people have ownership of the problem and solution, more effective because the people facing the problem are the real experts, and more appropriate because it does not reiterate stereotypes about who the saviours are.

Readings

- 2 Timothy 1:3-7
- John 15: 15-17

Sermon notes/ideas

Point 1 – Fanning into flame what is already present

- 2 Timothy shows us the more pastoral side to Paul and a good model for how to step back and empower others.
- Paul could have easily micromanaged Timothy and turn him into a mini-me, but he sees Timothy as someone to encourage and invest in, not just an implementer of his plans
- “I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God which is in you” – Paul is investing in the God-given potential already present in Timothy
- All We Can tries to invest in the potential its local partners already have, rather than using local partners to implement plans concocted in the West. Paul trusts Timothy to be an expert in his local context. All We Can trusts its partners to be experts in their context, and therefore to be in the driving seat of development.
- The same applies for churches which are often guilty of starting new projects and initiatives rather than investing in, and being led by, the local community.
- Analogy of ‘desire lines.’ These are unofficial paths which appear in parks and fields which show where people actually choose to walk, rather than where planners decided they should. There is now a trend to let desire lines form and then pave over them – fanning into flame what is already present.

Point 2 – Displacing Fear from the Driving Seat

- Paul identifies a ‘spirit of fear as something which would prevent Timothy making the most of his gifts
- Inside Out film illustration – fear can be very useful in small doses (prevents you from hurting yourself) but when fear is in the driving seat it harms relationships. Fear is a useful check and balance, but not a useful driving force. This is what Paul warns Timothy against.
- All We Can encounter similar organisations who are scared to put communities in the driving seat because they fear departing from inherited norms, not being in control, and not being perceived as the expert. All We Can take the brave step to move past that fear to pursue locally-led partnerships.
- What emotions are in the driving seat of church decision-making? fear and insecurity or the simple desire to see other people’s potential fulfilled?
- God gives us “a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.” The Holy Spirit displaces fear from the driving seat
- Giving up power and releasing others requires self-control, but pays dividends

- All We Can story - Pastor Christopher is one of the church leaders who received training from All We Can’s partner Eagles in Malawi which helped him mobilise his church to be a catalyst for change in the community. Recently a fire destroyed the house of someone in the village and Christopher said of his congregation “on their own, they collected things they had and gave them to the victims. On their own they took action. In the past they wouldn’t have done that on their own.” By fanning into flame the potential that was already present in the community, the people there are far more resilient.

Point 3 – Jesus is the model

- Paul’s interaction with Timothy is based on the model he sees in Jesus
- “No longer do I call you servants...I call you friends” (v.15)
- If Jesus calls us friends and comes to our level, how could we ever be bold enough to patronise or speak down to others? How could we ever be bold enough to impose solutions on others? How could we ever be bold enough to maintain a sense of superiority over others?
- Too often in international development, local partners have been seen as servants, not friends. Too often in the Church, other organisations in the community have been seen as competitors, not friends. Jesus and Paul invite us to reduce power imbalances wherever we see them.
- Will you join All We Can in seeking a better way for international development and community engagement this year?





Prayers of Intercession

For these prayers you will require a candle (anything from a tealight to a pillar candle) and the flash paper provided with the physical service pack. It might be apt to light the candle at the start of the service and draw attention to it at this point, to emphasise that we are fanning into flame something which has already been present. If you are using the online version of this resource, feel free to order some flash paper yourself.

It may be appropriate to conduct your own risk assessment of the use of open flame. The flash paper should totally burn up within a second and therefore be safe to hold even when aflame. For extra reassurance, you may wish to have a bucket of water close at hand in case of any issues.

The flash paper may be wet when you first open it. If so, allow it to dry for a few hours before use.

Feel free to use whatever form of intercession which is natural in your context. One suggestion would be to have three sets of prayers (perhaps for the world, your community, and open prayer for individuals) and after each set say a prompt such as: "Lord, where we find sparks," and having the congregation respond "Help us fan them into flame." Each time you would hold the flash paper to the candle and watch it burst into flame, to illustrate that it is easier to expand an existing flame than start a new one

We would love if you could pray for All We Can's work and our commitment to putting communities in the driving seat, and for similar principles to be enacted in your church's mission.



allwecan.org.uk/fundraising

    @allwecanuk

All We Can is the operating name of The Methodist Relief and Development Fund, a charity registered in England and Wales, number 291691
Image: A young girl in her school uniform in Uganda.