



Lightening the load

**Mothering Sunday activities for children
30 March 2014**

This Mothering Sunday we meet Naima, a mother in Iraq. As well as battling the everyday hardships of women in rural communities, Naima has had to carry her son throughout his life because he is unable to walk. Thanks to a wheelchair provided by Christian Aid partner REACH, life is a little easier, but Naima still worries for the future. Join us to lighten the load for mothers around the world. Extra activities follow this all-age talk.

All-age talk

You will need

- Balloons (already blown up)
- Pens (that will write on a balloon)
- A pin to pop the balloons!

Remember that Mothering Sunday can be a difficult day for people for all sorts of reasons. Do your best to be inclusive.

Presentation

Slide 1:

Ask for two volunteers, one child and one adult or older youth. Ask the child to think of things their mum or carer does for them. For each task that they mention, ask them to write it on a balloon. Ask the child to pass the balloons to the second volunteer until that volunteer can't carry any more.

Explain that our mums, or the people that care for us, often try to juggle lots of different tasks. They do more for us than we probably realise! Ask if anyone is planning to give their mum a break today by taking on any of the tasks mentioned. For every job that someone says they plan to do, pass the relevant balloon to them, so that it becomes easier for the volunteer to hold everything.

We can show our gratitude to those who do a lot for us by offering a helping hand. (Collect all of the balloons together and leave them in a visible pile. Ask your volunteers to sit down.)

Show slide 2:

This is Naima Said Kareem and her son Diyari. Naima lives in northern Iraq, a place that has experienced a lot of violence. At the moment the region is generally peaceful, but communities still face a great deal of work to rebuild their lives. As well as being a mum and having all of the usual worries that mums have about their children (point to the pile of balloons), Naima and the rest of her community used to have to worry about where to find enough water. They knew it was the thing that they most needed in order to live healthily and grow crops.



(Write WATER on another balloon and place it on top of the pile of balloons.)

Additionally, women in Naima's community have not always been treated and valued equally to men. Often they have not been listened to when decisions were being taken, and they were sometimes not allowed to leave their homes.

(Write INEQUALITY on another balloon, and add it to the pile, saying: 'On top of the jobs they do, mothers often have other worries.')

Naima's son Diyari was born with a disability that means he has never been able to walk. **[Show slide 3.]** For his entire life, Naima has had to carry Diyari everywhere he needs to go, including to and from school every day and to the hospital, which is a long way away. When Diyari graduated from his local primary school, the nearest secondary school was too far for his mum to carry him all the way there. He had to drop out and he missed two years of school.

(Write DISTANCE on another balloon and add it to the pile.)

REACH is a local organisation that is supported by the charity Christian Aid. They have been working with Naima's community to help make things better. REACH helped the community to lobby their local government to connect the village to clean water and put in a special watering system for crops.

(Pop the balloon labelled WATER.)

REACH has also helped organise a community group to come together to work to solve the problems that they face. In this space, women are encouraged to speak up about their needs and learn about their rights. This means that women have become much more active in the community and are able to make decisions that affect them. They even organised an event for International Women's Day to celebrate wonderful women!

(Pop the balloon labelled INEQUALITY.)

Diyari's sister Ashti, who belongs to the community group, realised that REACH might be able to help Diyari too. REACH provided Diyari with an electric wheelchair and now he feels much more independent. He can go to places by himself, without his mum having to carry him. 'Even the hills in the village are not a problem!' he said. Diyari is now back at school, and keen to continue his education and go to university.

(Pop the balloon labelled DISTANCE.)

Show slide 4:

Life is easier now for Naima and the other women in her community. But Naima still worries about the future, and what will happen when Diyari's brothers and sisters have all left home. Diyari still needs lots of support, and as Naima gets older it will be harder for her to lift him.

In the life and example of Jesus, and throughout the New Testament, we are reminded to care for others instead of just caring for ourselves. Philippians 2:4 says that we should not just look to our own interests, but to the interests of others; and in Galatians 6 we are told to carry each other's burdens. This is why we celebrate mums and other carers; they are usually very good at looking after other people beside themselves. But we are all part of God's family, and so we are called to look after the interests of all people, not just our own friends and family. We can remember Naima and Diyari in our prayers, and support organisations that lighten the load for women everywhere.

(Pick up the burst balloons in one hand.)

We can make people's burdens easier to carry.

We will never be able to stop our mums or carers worrying about us completely, but by remembering to look out for the interests of others as well as ourselves, we can help to support each other as God wants.

(Throw the rest of the balloons into the congregation.)

Extra activities

You will need

- Three kettles, teabags, water, milk, sugar and mugs
- Balloons, pre-prepared with sentences inside
- Milk chocolate, pretzels and lollipop sticks (or wooden skewers), greaseproof paper, edible decorations
- Colouring pens/pencils and paper or card

Time for Tea

• Ask the group if anyone started the day by offering to make a cup of tea for their mum or anyone else in their family. Say that you want to find out who makes the best cup of tea and challenge three volunteers to have a cup-of-tea-making competition. Provide three kettles, teabags, milk and sugar, water and mugs. Don't plug the kettles in or provide any electricity sockets. Now start the challenge, asking the volunteers to make the best cup of tea they can! Ask for a volunteer to taste the teas made with cold water and pick a winner. Explain that having the right equipment enables us to achieve all sorts of things, and that the wheelchair was the equipment that Diyari needed to be able to go back to school.

Pop that balloon!

• Before the session, write down on some small pieces of paper the many things that our carers do for us. (For example, prepare our food, do the shopping, washing up, washing our clothes etc.) Roll up the pieces of paper and put them inside the balloons, then blow up and tie them as normal.

Give everyone in the group a balloon on a string and ask them to tie it close to their ankle. The competition is to pop somebody else's balloon without letting your own be popped. Each time a balloon is popped, ask everyone to stop until the message inside has been read. Ask them to shout out a very quick prayer of thanks for the person in their lives that supports them by doing that task.

Chocolate pretzel pops

• Make simple chocolate 'pops' to give to the carers in your church or community, or for the children to take home and give to their parents. (This could get a little messy!) Melt milk chocolate in a microwave or bain-marie. Line up wooden lollipop sticks or skewers on some greaseproof paper. Ask the children to dip pretzels into the melted chocolate and then to place them on the greaseproof paper at the top of each stick to make heart shaped lollipops. Add decorations, such as sugar sprinkles. Leave the pretzels to set (in the fridge if possible). Once the chocolate has solidified you will have simple chocolate pops! You could sell additional pops to raise money for Christian Aid.

Feeling thankful

• Ask the children to draw a picture of themselves holding a bunch of balloons and to write something they are thankful for on each one. Turn the pictures into cards to give to their parent.

Pray together:

- For Diyari and his mum Naima, that life continues to get easier
- For mums all around the world that are living in difficult situations
- For you and your family, that you will look after each other's interests and not just your own.