Baptist Union of Wales
Timothy Richard Appeal
Service Resource

The purpose of this resource is to help your church to raise money for the Baptist Union of Wales 2019-2020 appeal for Syrian refugees in Lebanon. This appeal commemorates Timothy Richard, a missionary from Carmarthenshire who died a hundred years ago but whose legacy lives on in the work of BMS World Mission. The service resource includes everything you need for the service but please feel free to adapt for the style of your church, e.g. if you have a time of extended worship usually, please re-arrange the service accordingly.

The video and PowerPoint which are part of this service can be downloaded from www.bmsworldmission.org/BUWappeal

Please send all donations towards the appeal to BMS World Mission, PO Box 49, 129 Broadway, Didcot, Oxfordshire, OX11 8XA.

Call to worship: “My name will be great among the nations, from where the sun rises to where it sets. In every place incense and pure offerings will be brought to me, because my name will be great among the nations,” says the LORD Almighty. (Malachi 1: 11)

Hymn suggestion: To God be the Glory, great things he has done!

Readings:

莱维提斯 19: 33-34
When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt.

出埃及记 10: 18
He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing.

马太福音 25: 35-36
For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.
**1 Corinthians 12: 12-14**

*Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.*

**Galatians 5: 14**

*For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbour as yourself.”*

[At this point – if you have the facilities to do so – please show the Timothy Richard Appeal video available to download from www.bmsworldmission.org/BUWappeal]

**Prayer**

Almighty and merciful God,
whose Son became a refugee and had no place to call his own;
look with mercy on those who today are fleeing from danger,
homeless and hungry.
Bless those who work to bring them relief;
inspire generosity and compassion in all our hearts;
and guide the nations of the world towards that day when all will rejoice in your Kingdom of justice and of peace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We thank you for the people you have called throughout the centuries;
for the people who have followed your call and have been witnesses to your Kingdom on earth.
People like Timothy Richard who left Carmarthenshire to serve you and the people of China.
We thank you for his vision and passion to see a country transformed by your love and justice.
Father, we ask you today to lift up your church to respond to the crisis of today, and to respond in prophetic ways which will glorify your name.
Help us make Jesus’ grace known to all people of all nations;
Fill us with the Holy Spirit so that we are led by you and not ourselves;
Guide us in our weakness, to be the pioneers the Church needs today.

We pray for Syria and the surrounding countries receiving refugees; we pray for God’s kingdom to come in these places, for peace to reign and stability to be restored. We pray for those in authority, those who make policy, that they have wisdom and compassion to handle this complex and difficult situation with grace and mercy.

We pray for those that are fleeing, for those who have had to leave their homes, their communities, their country.
Help us not to fear the people in front of us, but to love regardless of background or status;
Not to judge, but to be merciful;
Not to turn away but to be sacrificial in our giving and support.

Amen.

Hymn suggestion: Here I am Lord (Dan Schutte)
**Timothy Richard:**

Imagine a young man on board a ship a hundred and fifty years ago. As he looks into the horizon, the cold wind of the open sea in his face, he knows little about the world he is about to enter. He probably knew how strange and alien it would be for a man who had mainly lived in rural Carmarthenshire, but he was ready for the challenge ahead, to serve the country to which he had been called by God. He would make good use of the three months that was ahead of him on the ship and devoted himself to learning the Chinese language. His name was Timothy Richard.

It was 17 November, 1869. His father had travelled all the way with him to Liverpool to board the S.S. Achilles. But Richard didn’t let him stay to see the ship sail; concerned for his health, he made sure his father was safely on the train before he boarded the ship.

It seemed that Richard’s whole life had been leading up to this point. Born in the noise of the smithy’s hammer, his family were passionate about learning and were interested in a range of topics from local medicines to debating. It wasn’t a surprise that the desire of the ninth child of Timothy and Eleanor Richard was to continue his school education rather than start farming. He became a teacher when he was still a pupil himself, and later attended grammar school in Llanybydder and Swansea before starting a teaching post in Cynwyl Elfed.

In 1859, the year in which he was baptised, Wales was shaken by a powerful Christian revival. Richard was only 15 at the time but felt a calling to mission when he heard a sermon on the verse – “Come over...and help us” (Acts 16: 9). He became a member at Salem, Caio following his baptism (he was the first of 52 to be baptised in the nearby stream on that day), and he was ordained and commissioned as a missionary in the same church. He started a three year course in 1866 in the Baptist College in Haverfordwest, and came under the influence of Professor Rouse who had been a missionary in Bengal, India, and also heard about the work of the China Inland Mission through Mrs Grattan Guiness. He was accepted by the Baptist Missionary Society in 1869 and started to plan his journey.

No college could have prepared him for the adventure, the trials and challenges of the life in front of him, or that he would spend a lifetime advancing God’s mission in this land. Little did he know as he watched Liverpool vanishing on the horizon that he would be described as the greatest missionary ever sent by any branch of the Christian Church to China.

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Timothy Richard was ready to endure hardship as he travelled into the rural areas and devoted himself to evangelism, teaching, and writing. A few years after arriving in China, a great famine broke out and devastated the lives of millions of people in the district of Shanxi. It hadn’t rained for two years, the crops were destroyed and the people were suffering. This crisis had a profound effect on Richard’s mission and how Richard saw the gospel as holistic in its message and practice. To care for the sick, battle famine, work for peace and justice, preach the gospel were all becoming features of his integral mission to the Chinese people. During the 1876-78 famine, he didn’t shy away from the crisis engulfing the people but set up a committee (how very Welsh!) to try and co-ordinate the alleviation of famine in Shanghai, and he traveled through the frosty conditions of winter in Shanxi to see for himself where help was needed. What he saw was so terrifying, his companions turned back and he continued on his own, and the government officials also tried to stop
the help he was offering. He was determined to carry on travelling around the villages, and witnessed horrifying scenes of people dying in front of him. He wrote about how he thought he sometimes was delirious after seeing so many distressing sights of dead bodies on the roadsides. After returning to the main city of the district, he campaigned and raised awareness and wrote to the mission agencies back home appealing for help. The Chinese officials were confused by the work of the missionaries. When Richard approached an official with a donation towards the famine relief, the official greeted him by saying Kwei-tze Ta Ren (His Majesty – the devil)!

Richard discovered that usual conventional, Western mission practices weren’t reaching the people of China. Preaching on the streets or in the chapels wasn’t bearing fruit. He turned to the New Testament and found direction which would stay with him for the rest of his ministry. They are Jesus’ instructions to his disciples: “Whatever town or village you enter, search there for some worthy person and stay at their house until you leave” (Matthew 10:11). He concentrated his efforts to reach influential people in Chinese society. He engaged in dialogue with government and religious leaders and even adopted Chinese forms of dress. Richard saw education as the way to avoid suffering for future Chinese generations. After the famine, he became a justice campaigner against the practice of foot binding women and children.

He was of course criticised for breaking away from convention, although today we would consider his practices as foundational to any mission work overseas. He sought common ground in order to demolish old prejudices between peoples and religions. His energy was incomparable – as he is exemplified by some of his other accomplishments: establishing and becoming Chancellor of a combined Western-Chinese University in Shanxi, Secretary of the Christian Literature Society in China, as a translator and author. He even traveled to the USA to campaign for a World Government for Peace. Richard was so highly regarded, the Chinese state made him a Mandarin of the Highest Grade and he was even awarded the Order of the Double Dragon – a huge sign of respect for someone from outside China.

How can we sum up his legacy today? A missionary, a campaigner, a teacher, a pioneer, a visionary? As we look around us in Wales, Europe and worldwide, we need pioneering minds and hearts as never before. We also need people who will support and pray for God’s kingdom to come and for the Holy Spirit to enable the church to step up and step out. We need to have eyes to see, and ears to hear where God is at work today, so we can join him where he is.

Hymn suggestion: God of the Poor
The Baptist Union of Wales Timothy Richard Appeal for Syrian refugees in Lebanon

[The text below is taken from the Appeal PowerPoint which can be downloaded from the Appeal page: www.bmsworldmission.org/BUWappeal
If you have projector facilities, please use the slides which go with the text below to show your congregation the children’s faces]

[From slide 3 onwards]
What better way to celebrate Richard’s legacy and carry on his pioneering relief work than to support BMS’ life-changing work with Syrian refugee children in Lebanon?

BMS has been helping Syrian refugee children and their families but there are so many Syrian children who BMS hasn’t yet been able to help. So many not yet blessed with a supportive, caring environment where they can learn and grow and hear about God’s love.
Let’s meet some of the children who have been helped by a BMS-supported learning centre in Beirut.

[Next slide]
Meet Gabi and Maher. Gabi is 10 and Maher is 11 and they are half-brothers. They come from Homs in Syria and today they live outside Beirut in Lebanon – a country they’ve been living in for seven years.

Gabi loves learning new words, and while he likes playing football, he’s not nearly as good at it as Maher. Maher is cheeky. And confident. And says he gets in trouble a little more than his brother! Their family lives in a tent and they sleep on mattresses on the floor. That’s not life for all refugees, but it is for their family.

[Next slide]
Children like Gabi and Maher have had their entire lives disrupted and uprooted by war. They’re living in a country that was once invaded by Syria. They’re in danger of missing years of school, of losing all hope for a future of employment and fulfilled potential. We want to help more refugee children like Maher get back into the classroom, where they can learn, be inspired, and get their childhood back.

[Next slide]
Malick is 11 years old. He has a cheeky grin and is always ready to strike a pose.
Malick and his sister Sara are Kurds. They are two of over 1.5 million Syrians estimated to be living in Lebanon today. They are from a Muslim background but most importantly they are children who need access to education. Malick loves Arabic and English, Sara loves arts and crafts. They both miss their grandparents. They left Syria when their neighbour’s house was hit by a bomb. They ran. And when they came back, they didn’t have a home anymore. Just rubble. They arrived in Lebanon with just the clothes on their backs and nothing else.

[Next slide]
School for Malick and Sara is located on the third floor of a building without window panes in the hot and noisy urban sprawl just outside Beirut. The concrete walls and ceilings are decorated with alphabets and Bible pictures, they have an assembly hall furnished with light garden furniture and heavy curtains. This is their school. Malick and Sara spent two years out of the classroom before their mother found this place. They are far from home and, without the handful of teachers here, they’d have no chance of an education. Life can be hard for refugees. People can be uncaring and ignorant of their situation. But in the school they are treated as equals. "The teachers take care of us," says Sara. Malick says: “They don’t shout at us, and also when we are sad the teachers come and make us happy.”
Roshina, their mother, has found work as a cleaner at the learning centre. She has accepted Jesus into her life and is keen to tell other members of her family about the Lord. This has all been made possible because of the support of BMS. And we want to see the centre grow and help more children like Malick and Sara.

[Next slide]
This is Shakala and her brother and sisters. They live in a single room in Lebanon. Shakala didn’t know if she would survive until nightfall most days when she and her family lived in Aleppo, Syria. Bombings, fighting and kidnappings were part of daily life. In all the chaos, Shakala herself was almost kidnapped. Her mother had to lock her children in the house whenever she went out to buy food to stop people getting in and taking them. Eventually, they were forced to flee Syria and try and make a new life in Lebanon. “Bring me a teacher!” Shakala asked her mother over and over again. Her mother didn’t know what to do. She knew how important it was that her children had an education and that school would bring some stability to their lives. But she was terrified of letting her children go. For two years, Shakala asked for school and her mother had to say no. But then some neighbours told her about a BMS-supported learning centre, held at a nearby church. This was the chance that Shakala had been dreaming about. She started school. And she thrived. She loved it so much that she asked for school during the holidays, and the church was able to set up camps for the children to go to. Her teachers didn’t just teach her about maths and English, but about commitment and working hard.

[Next slide]
Things were starting to look up for Shakala. But her future is still uncertain. If Shakala were to go back to Syria, she might be forced to abandon her education and marry her cousin. She is 14 years old. Her mum doesn’t want that to happen: “I want her to study and pursue her dreams,” she says.

Shakala is determined to achieve her dreams. She wishes to continue studying and travel abroad and become a detective. The school means so much to her that she wrote a letter to express her gratitude to the teachers. They’ve taught her to believe in herself. Shakala and many children like her could easily be forgotten, but we as Christians can choose to help them, to give them a chance that the world has taken from them. Your support can allow her to have dreams and has given her the ability to make them a reality. But there are still children that need help.

[Next slide]
These children and their families are more than refugees. More than Syrians and beneficiaries of your kindness. They are children. Ordinary children, yes, and not important to the world’s powers. But loved by God. Everything we do for them is something that we do for Jesus Christ himself.

[End of PowerPoint]

[Reflection film]
The following reflection film focuses on the work of BMS in supporting Syria’s Forgotten Families through church projects in Lebanon.
https://www.bmsworldmission.org/product/reflection-video-syrias-forgotten-families/

Collection to be made towards the Timothy Richard Appeal.

Message:
What will it take for us to be pioneers today? What will lead us to see things as God sees them? The Church in Lebanon is punching above its weight to reach some of the most marginalised children in the world. They have opened learning centres for refugee children from Syria and Iraq – children who have lost out on so many opportunities because of war. Together as churches in Wales, we can expand the work further, to reach more children with the simple, but absolutely life-transforming gift of education.

BMS World Mission has a long history of working with refugees. Sometimes we put the ‘refugee’ label on these people without seeing their individual stories. But God knows everyone; knows of their troubles, their hopes and their fears. He calls His church to be witnesses of His love and mercy towards all – including the most marginalised people on earth.

When we consider the story of Ruth, we see a family who believed they were outside of God’s blessing. Naomi, migrating back to her country, arrives in Bethlehem with her daughter-in-law, a Moabite, an immigrant, a widow and penniless – the world is full of labels for people like Ruth. Naomi was bitter because of her sad circumstances and aims her frustrations towards God. The story of Ruth is about how the people on the margins can be brought into the centre of God’s family and discover God’s blessing again.

Ruth’s story shows a society where God’s commands to show favour and mercy towards the people on the outside are at the forefront of the community’s values. Boaz, following Deuteronomy’s law, directs his workers to leave the corners of the field when harvesting the crops, allowing Ruth to collect enough harvest for her and Naomi to survive. What would happen if we were to leave the corners of our profits today? In our market-driven world, what would happen if we were to obey the generosity commanded in Deuteronomy? Would it mean sharing the food we wasted, or legally enforcing supermarkets to share food freely if past the best before date?

How can we as churches take the intention in such laws? Maybe by rediscovering the Christian duty of hospitality to strangers. Out of our excess we can share with those who seem to be outside the blessing of God. People living with food poverty. Ruth’s book challenges us to go beyond charity, to allow people to feed their families with dignity. The BMS partner in Lebanon supports the education of refugee children, so that they can regain their hope in the future, increase their prospect of future employment which will feed their families and bless the community they make their home.

Ruth couldn’t understand the generosity towards her: “Why are you so kind to me, and take notice of me, and I come from another country? ” Why are you so kind? – she asks him.

I’m a Moabite! The Moabites were enemies of Israel, having resisted Israel after they had come out of Egypt. So why was Boaz so generous?

As Christians, we all have been at the point of stopping and wondering, shaking our heads and recognising God’s grace towards us. We know our nature, yet see the blessing God gives us freely through Jesus’ death on the cross. That’s how wonderful grace is. We see restoration. We see transformation. Boaz takes the opportunity to save the land of his relatives. He married Ruth. Naomi and her family are brought back into the life of the family and the community.
This story is a shadow of Jesus Christ himself, who came to the world to save everyone who is outside of God’s kingdom. He invites them into God’s family. There are no outsiders, no exclusions, only invitation by grace. If we have experienced God’s grace and know what it means to be drawn into His blessing, how then are we responding to others on the margins of society, excluded from blessing? Let us be bearers of His love in the world around us; this is what Timothy Richard did in China over a hundred years ago, this is what God is calling his church to do in times like the present. We can help protect more children’s futures. We can restore hope to more parents. We can be the difference in uncertain times.

Prayer:

God of the edges, we thank you for the work that BMS supports in Lebanon: we pray for the Learning Support Project helping Syrian refugee children, that it might open up their future; and we pray that the team of teachers might have resilience and strength.

God of the edges, thank you for Jesus, who came to welcome home those on the margins and who has rescued us. May we say ‘The Lord bless you’ to our neighbours both near and far, and act in the light of that. We have prayed in the name of Jesus, our kinsman redeemer, Amen

Hymn suggestion: Here is Love vast as the ocean