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# **Sermon/Discussion Starters**

A key part of the work of Tearfund’s partner, CEDES (Comité Ecuménico Para O Desenvolvimento Social), highlighted in this year’s World Development Appeal, is to train facilitators in the ‘Umoja’ process. ‘Umoja’, which means ‘togetherness’ in Swahili, helps church leaders and their congregations work together with the local community to bring about positive change for the whole community. The process helps local communities and churches build on the resources and skills they have within them and equips them to have a shared vision for determining their own future with their own resources. The process is built around sharing Bible studies with the local church and, in turn, with groups from the local community to enable them to think in ‘kingdom’ ways about their personhood, their role as good stewards of the world around them and of the resources they do have at their disposal, the nature and function of the local church in the community, and more besides. And as we hope you will see from this year’s Appeal, ‘Umoja’ is proving fruitful in the lives of communities such as the community of Inhassoro in Mozambique.

Horácio Valoi works with CEDES in Inhassoro and has trained as an ‘Umoja’ facilitator. He speaks about a number of Bible passages that have been inspirational to the community and to the local church and also instrumental in shaping their response to their context and their vision for a more secure and sustainable future.

Details of some of these passages are provided below along with a brief thought to guide you in preparing a sermon or talk, or shaping a discussion in a midweek or small group. It is the hope and prayer of the World Development Committee that you too will be inspired by the Holy Spirit as you engage with God’s word and that these passages might be instrumental in shaping your response to our brothers and sisters around the globe in fragile and dangerous places, and also in the context where God is using you.

**Exodus 3**

* God speaks to Moses from the burning bush and tells him that He will bring His people out from under the oppression of their Egyptian taskmasters into ‘… a land flowing with milk and honey’.
* Through this passage people are enabled to see God as a God who breaks the yoke of oppression and injustice and who places His people in ‘a good and broad land’. A place where under His rule they can not only survive, but thrive, and are provided with all they need to do so.
* Communities are invited to see the potential of the place God has for them and of the resources at their disposal to vision and shape a fruitful future and they are pointed towards good practices, such as conservation agriculture techniques, to help them journey from reliance to resourceful resilience.

**2 Kings 4: 1-7**

* Through the story of Elisha and the widow’s oil communities are taught to identify the widow’s needs and also her resources… and to take note of the outcome!
* Communities understand that with God’s help, and if they are willing to share, they can make a difference in addressing their poverty.

**Mark 6: 30-34**

* Through the story of the feeding of the 5,000 those taking part in the ‘Umoja’ Bible study are encouraged to think about the needs of the crowd and also their resources.
* They are helped to think through the steps Jesus took to perform the miracle of feeding the 5,000 and why He took those steps. They are also encouraged to think through how Jesus might have performed this miracle differently and why He didn’t!
* The next step is to think what a ‘miracle’ might look like in that community… and about the resources that God has placed in the community’s hands.
* Communities learn that God wants to use them, and their resources, to bring about transformation in their individual lives and their lives together.

**Luke 10: 25-37**

* Through the parable of the good Samaritan the local church is helped to consider its calling in relation to the local community. Who are their neighbours and what are their needs? Whom, or which groupings, might they find it hard to relate to? Whom might they ‘pass by on the other side’? What response would Jesus call forth from the church?
* The local church is helped to understand that it cannot ignore the needs, physical and spiritual, of people in the local community, even those who are ‘other’, but instead should use its time and resources to come alongside and help those in need, even if this is difficult or costly.

**Zechariah 8: 3-23**

* This passage is about the Lord’s promise to bless Jerusalem.
* It is used to help communities draw (sometimes literally) a picture of how they would like their community to look in the future.
* They are encouraged to reflect on how their ‘dream’ fits with God’s values and the values of the church and the community.
* The picture is kept before the community to act as an inspiration and motivation for change.