Chains of Love – an active prayer

*Before the service, you will need to have made up lots of paper chains. Either cut strips from gummed paper or photocopy the template and use a paper cutter to create the strips, held together with glue, Sellotape or stickers.*

*Items needed: premade paper chains. Stickers or address labels to stick the chains back together at the end.*

*As the activity begins or before the service, spread the paper chains around the church, with as many people as possible holding a paper chain.*

Explain that the chains represent love – the love God has for us, and the love we have for others. God Love makes us strong, for love comes from God. Love goes round the world like chains, connecting us together, stronger for being connected.

Invite people to think about the ways in which we personally break the chain of love, by actions that are not loving and unkind words. Ask people to call out something that people do that breaks the chain, and as they call it out, break a chain.

Then ask people to think about the whole world, the ways in which wealth and poverty, power and privilege break the chains of love. Again, ask people to call out something that people do that breaks the chain, and as they call it out, break a chain.

Invite everyone who hasn’t broken a chain so far to do so in silence.

*Pray:* the broken chains of our world are the responsibility of us all. God, we depend on you for strength and lean into you for love. We ask you for forgiveness, and we ask to know your grace. Help us be renewed.

Invite people to pick up one of the broken chains from the floor and take a sticker. Fasten a once-broken chain round your wrist like a bracelet or fix a chain back to a surviving link in the original chain. People may work together to fix the chains.

As the chains are fixed, invite people to think of Jesus who through the brokenness of his body offered healing to the world. Pray that we will love, not in merely in speech and words, but in truth and action. Let us love one another with the love which is of God.

Chains of Love – a prayerful action script

*Items needed: premade paper chains. Stickers or address labels to stick the chains back together at the end.*

*Paper chains can be made using gummed paper, or ordinary paper, cut into strips and held together with sellotape or stickers.*

*As the activity begins or before the service, spread the paper chains around the church, with as many people as possible holding a paper chain.*

We are bound to God by love, and bound to each other by love. Love makes us strong, for love comes from God. Love goes round the world like chains, connecting us together, stronger for being connected.

Yet not everything we do is loving.

We remember before God the times when we have not acted with love towards someone.

… when our words about someone else have been unkind

… when we have deliberately withheld love

… when we have let unloving attitudes to the poor, the outsider, the rest of the world go unchallenged

… when we have had enough to spare and seen a brother or sister in need and refused to help.

As we confess our brokenness, I ask you to tear through one or two of the paper chain links.

*Brief pause for action*

And as we look at the chains that lie upon the floor, we admit that we do not always love God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength.

… remembering the times we have felt too busy to pray

… the situations or dilemmas we are avoiding bringing to God in prayer

… the parts of ourselves, good and bad, that we have tried to hide from God

And as we look at the chains on the floor, we ask for your forgiveness, and for your grace. Because it is only by your grace that we can love you.

*Brief pause for quiet reflection*

And we pick up one of those broken chains each, and hold it.

God’s love for us heals us.
We bind the broken chain around our wrist, like a bandage.
We recall the wounds that scarred Jesus’ body, as Jesus poured out his love for us.

*Brief pause for quiet reflection*

By God’s love we are forgiven. Through God’s love we continue to be called to live in love.

I invite you to take a sticker, and use it to make the chain you are holding whole once more. Around your wrist, perhaps, or join a link back to the original chains.

*Brief pause for action*

And as we remake those chains let our prayer be that we will love, not in speech and words, but in truth and action. And let us love one another with the love which is of God. Amen.

*This service is prepared for Commitment for Life by Revd Dr Catherine Lewis-Smith*.