

## Dramatic Interpretation

**Set-up:** Several rumpled strips of blue fabric (e.g., blankets or sheets) suggesting a turbulent river stretch end-to-end from the front of the stage toward the back. The “river” begins  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the way from the left edge of the stage and angles back at  $45^\circ$ , so that the right side of the stage is larger at the front than the left side is. Close to the front of the stage are the left and right ends of a bridge which does not completely span the river. A straight-back chair lying on its front legs, seat perpendicular to the floor and its back not touching the floor but stretching across the river, can simulate each end of the bridge. Cover the side of the chair facing the congregation with a drawing of the end of a bridge. Behind the left end of the bridge hide a drawing on foam board or other firm material of the central span of the bridge. Label this connecting piece “Week of Compassion” in letters dark and large enough to be read from the last row of the congregation. Behind the right end of the bridge hide a bottle of water, a piece of fruit, a tube of ointment, and a shovel (sliding the handle under the “river” if necessary to conceal it).

On the left side of the river, three people (L1 who carries a wallet containing several \$20 bills, L2 who has a checkbook and pen, and L3 who may have a coin purse) sit amicably in chairs at a table set with mustard and ketchup bottles, paper cups, etc., to suggest a picnic. If your congregation uses the coin offering boxes, place one with many coins in it on the table. On the right side of the river, chaos reigns. Three people lie crumpled on the floor: R1 face down close to the bridge, R2 further away with limbs at odd angles, and R3 partially beneath a large cardboard box labeled “School.” A box labeled “Medical Clinic,” other boxes representing buildings, and perhaps overturned furniture are strewn about.

**As the action begins,** the people on the left chat lightly about its being a beautiful day for a picnic, etc. After a few moments, the people on the right begin to moan and cry out in pain and horror.

**L1:** Good gracious! What’s going on? It sounds like people are hurt! [Left-side people rush to the edge of the river, upstage of and oblivious to the bridge.]

**L2:** It looks like there’s been an earthquake.

**L3:** This is awful! What can we do?

**L1:** We can’t reach them. We can’t get over this raging river. [Left-side people run distractedly along the river’s edge.]

**L2:** [Running downstage] Here’s a bridge, but it’s missing a key part. We still can’t reach them to help!

**L3:** [Discovers and lifts up the drawing of the central span] Here’s the missing part of the bridge. It’s labeled “Week of Compassion.” We can connect with the hurt people through Week of Compassion! [Connects the ends of the bridge by propping the central span, “Week of Compassion” side facing the congregation, between the ends.]

**L1:** I want to help, but I can’t go over there. I’ve got kids, a job, and commitments here. I can’t just abandon my responsibilities here. But, oh, I want to help.

**L2:** And we don’t have the things they need. They need medical help, clean water, food, blankets. They’ll need help rebuilding their homes and that school. [Looks back over shoulder toward the picnic table.] We don’t have that stuff! Mustard and ketchup don’t cut it after an earthquake.

**L3:** No, but we do have something that could turn into the things they need. If we pool our resources, between us we have a substantial amount of money.

**L1:** Do you think so? Let's try it. [L1 pulls several \$20 bills out of his/her wallet. L2 takes out a checkbook, writes a check, and rips it out loudly. L3 brings the coin offering box from the table or pulls out a coin purse out, shaking it so the coins jangle. All three place their offering on the bridge, close to the Week of Compassion section.]

**R1:** [Strains forward to pull out the water bottle and fruit from behind the right end of the bridge.] Thank you! Thank you! [Stretches over to give fruit to R2. Pulls up and limps behind R3, lifts R3's head, helps him/her drink from the water bottle. Returns to the bridge and drags out the shovel. Uses it to pry box off R3.]

**R3:** [Lifts up on elbow and says with great relief:] Thank God! You rescued me. [Grips stomach and moans.]

**R2:** I'll see if there's medicine. [Turns toward bridge.]

**L1:** [With conviction] You bet there's medicine! [Pulls more money out of wallet and places it on the bridge, close to the Week of Compassion section.]

**R2:** [Pulls ointment from behind right end of bridge, runs to R3, mimes rubbing it onto R3's leg.]

**R3:** Thank you. That feels better.

**R1:** Yes. Together, we will survive. And we will rebuild. We must, for our children's sake. [R1, R2, and R3 softly sing or hum the opening strains of an appropriate song like "Blessed Be the Tie that Binds" or "Grateful." R1 and R2 begin straightening up boxes and stacking them to rebuild.]

**L1:** How brave those people are!

**L2:** Did you notice how they helped each other, even though they just lost everything? That is love in action.

**L3:** Seeing them work together amidst that destruction was a real lesson in cooperation—and faith.

**L1:** It may sound weird, but I feel good. I'm deeply sobered by the terrible pain those people are experiencing, and the destruction. Yet, I'm hopeful. We were able to help through Week of Compassion. We've done something really important.

**L2:** I know what you mean. I feel blessed to have been able to help. I feel like God used me, that God's love reached out through me.

**L3:** That is so cool! I want to keep on helping. [Wonderingly] I feel happy on the inside.

**L1:** We will keep helping. We addressed the immediate needs now. Through Week of Compassion, we'll be there for the long haul, too, continuing to help with the rebuilding.

**L2:** I feel like singing! [Sings out] I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart ...

**L3:** [Singing the first line of the Christmas hymn] Joy to the world!

**L1, L2, and L3: [Together] Praise God!**