

PRAISE ALL YOUR DAYS!

(Planning Worship for All Ages Together)

A training session designed for those working with children in the parish context and those involved in planning and leading all-age worship,

led by Revd Steve Dixon, Manchester Diocesan Children's Work Officer.

AIMS

- to consider good practice in all-age worship
- to increase awareness of the structure of the Communion service
- to increase awareness of the potential of 'Common Worship'
- to engage in a group planning process and share experience and insights with others

The Revd Steve Dixon
Children's Officer
Manchester Diocese
Board of Education
4th Floor, Church House
90 Deansgate
Manchester M3 2GH

Tel: 0161 828 1433

1. INTRODUCTION

ALL-AGE CULTURE

The Church should be a model of community. It was in the community of those who 'do my Father's will' that Jesus located his 'family'. The Church is also a model of family. In a society which increasingly seeks to separate itself into small groups of 'those like me' – in age as well as interest and other factors, part of the Church's witness to the world is to be a model of a community which is inclusive of all ages – in other words a family.

In addition we need to recognise that to be without children is not only to diminish our witness, but also to lose a vital part of our own spiritual nurture;

Children are a gift to the Church. The Lord of the Church sets them in the midst of the Church today, as in Galilee, not as objects of benevolence, nor even as recipients of instruction, but in the last analysis as patterns of discipleship.

(John Pridmore in 'The Child in the Church' BCC 1976 –
quoted in the introduction to 'Sharing the Good News with
Children: The Church of England's Children's Strategy',
General Synod 2003)

In other words 'All-age Worship' is not something we put on specially for the children, but should be the normal expression of our culture as an 'all-age community'. One implication of this is that children can take an active part in the liturgy on any Sunday of the year not just on a designated Sunday. For instance a good child reader could be on the rota for reading in church alongside the adults.

ALL-CULTURE CULTURE

It is not only children who have difficulty accessing our traditional liturgy – it is also the majority of adults in this country. If we can produce worship which is accessible to children, we may well find we have worship, which is accessible to the broader culture in which our church culture exists.

Professor John Westerhoff (European Conference on Christian Education, Stirling University, 1989) maintains that we have divorced the intuitive from the intellectual, seeing them as in opposition whereas they are both part of our thinking process. He sees children as naturally intuitive thinkers and suggests that if we bear their needs in mind, they will be ministering to us by drawing more of the intuitive into our liturgy.

We now recognise that people have different preferred learning styles. Perhaps our standard liturgy has tended to be restricted in its style, and in our attempts to broaden the range of styles for the benefit of children, we may also become more responsive to a wider range of learning styles amongst the adults.

WORSHIP AND THE NURTURE OF CHILDREN

This is the first strand of the Church of England's National Children's Strategy and clearly links worship with nurture. Westerhoff, in his series of lectures on Christian Education (see above) saw worship as central to the educational process. He sees the experiences of the children in the worship as a whole as foundational to their Christian education, rather than what they may receive in the 'teaching' bit of the liturgy. What they are taught should give them the tools with which to reflect on their experience, but without the initial experience, there is nothing for them to reflect upon. We need to ask ourselves, therefore, what our children actually are experiencing in the broadest terms when they are present in worship: what will a child's reflections be on the experience of hearing someone at the front telling them that God loves and welcomes, whilst someone at the back is telling them to sit still and not mess with the books?

2. SOME GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

Language

Much of our liturgy comes in approved texts – but in those sections where the texts are not set, do we have to continue using ‘churchy’ and theologically dense vocabulary? Do we need to use words at all – are there actions or other practical things we can do?

Using the spaces

Common Worship tells us what we have to say at certain places – it doesn’t tell us we can’t say other things in between. If we use brief forms of required texts we give ourselves ‘elbow-room’ for comment and commentary in the gaps to make sure the logic of the liturgy is clear. These comments, of course, must in themselves be clear and not ‘churchy’ in vocabulary or delivery.

Being creative with texts

We can use set words in creative ways. We can have children saying ministerial words for example at the offertory; in the responsorial version of the affirmation of faith; or in the introductory words in Morning Prayer on Sunday.

Environment

Historically the worship environment was highly visual. We should provide as many visual stimuli in the environment as possible – permanent items as well as those used for specific services. We also need to encourage the children to make use of what is there, and when they do we have to be comfortable about children gazing in wonder at a stained glass picture of an angel when we think they should be listening to the reading. It is important to make sure that church furniture does not mask actions and that it presents the minimum restriction to movement and innovation.

On the move

We know that children are not made to sit still for long periods. But perhaps they are not the only ones to appreciate the opportunity of stretching their legs, other than to come up for communion. Can we have times to move to different parts of the church for different purposes – to make the church building a place of pilgrimage, as Michael Perham suggested (*New Handbook of Pastoral Liturgy*, SPCK 2000)? The intercessions give an opportunity for this. Some churches are experimenting with having different ‘stations’ for the Liturgy of the Word (which enables different learning styles to be accommodated); and ‘Liquid Worship’ gives the majority of the liturgy over to a ‘stations’ approach.

Variety and balance

Betty Pedley and John Muir (*Children in the Church?* NS/CHP 1997) suggests nine ingredients which will enable children to engage more effectively with worship:

- simplicity
- the visual
- the tactile
- use of all the senses
- participation
- use of symbols
- short sections
- times when reading is not necessary
- the opportunity to move.

They advocate a balanced distribution of these elements throughout the service, rather than swamping the liturgy with examples of all nine at every turn!

Use of specific resources

There is a variety of resources that can be purchased or produced to help children participate in the liturgy, for example: activity bags, pew sheets, children's Bibles/Bible story books, children's prayer books, prayer cubes, children's liturgy books, 'lift the flap' liturgy sheets, special books for the eucharistic prayer. The best way of using these resources is to have adults working quietly with the children as their 'ministers' during the service. Sometimes use of the materials will entail 'dipping out' of the main activity of the service, to engage in a parallel activity to that in which the adults are engaged. The activity should, however, always relate to the adult liturgy taking place alongside it, and it should not be too long before the children 'dip' back in to the main liturgical activity.

3. SOME AREAS FOR CONSIDERATION IN THE LITURGY OF THE SACRAMENT:

(i) WHO IS INVITED?

'Baptised children are fully in the family and should fully participate in all of the family's gatherings – including the family's gathering for the Eucharist.' (p51)

What are your feelings about the admission of children to communion before confirmation?

(ii) WHAT DO YOU DO?

'The Eucharist is not so much what is said as what is done.' (p35)
'We learn what we do.' (p40)

What is done, and what can people see being done at your church? Are people encouraged to look? What do the children see and do and what do you think they will learn?

(iii) HOW DO YOU DO IT?

'The leader of the Eucharist serves as host at the Lord's Table. Like any good host, the presider at the Eucharist should work to make people feel comfortable, welcomed and ultimately involved in the meal.' (p47)

Does the family feel comfortable at table in your church? Should they? How do you think the children feel? How do the children relate to the presider?

(iv) HOW DO YOU FEEL?

'The early Christians celebrated their sacred meal on Sunday, the "Lord's Day", the day of the victorious resurrection – not on Maundy Thursday, the day of the passion before the crucifixion.' (p38)

What are the implications of this for our attitude to the Eucharist? What expectations do we bring to the table?

All quotations from:

Westerhoff, J & Willimon, W. (1980). *Liturgy and Learning through the Life Cycle*. New York: The Seabury Press.

4. PLANNING GUIDANCE

PLANNING A SERVICE OF THE WORD USING “COMMON WORSHIP”

a) Where to look

Invitations to Confession: p275; (in ‘Seasonal Provisions’) p300-329

Authorised Forms of Confession and Absolution: p122-137; p 276-279

Collects: p288-289; p375-447

Creeds and Authorised Affirmations of Faith: p138-148

Blessings: (in ‘Seasonal Provisions’) p300-329

b) Room for Manoeuvre

What you can move:

- * Prayers of Penitence (can form part of ‘Prayers’)
- * Sermon/address (can be in parts)
- * All items in ‘Liturgy of the Word’ (can be in any order, though usually end with Creed/Affirmation of Faith)
- * Collect (can be replaced by praise/hymn/Gloria, and be moved to sum up ‘Prayers’, or can introduce reading(s))
- * Songs/hymns

What you can adapt:

- * Collect (could be thematic, based on reading(s) or as summing up to ‘Prayers’)
- * Readings (can be dramatised, sung, read responsively etc – need not be from authorized lectionary, EXCEPT: ‘Advent 3’ to ‘Baptism of Christ’ & ‘Palm Sunday’ to ‘Trinity Sunday’)
- * Psalm (can be in a variety of forms or replaced by a ‘scriptural song’)
- * Sermon/address (can be in a variety of forms)
- * Prayers (can be in a variety of forms)
- * Blessing

What you can leave out:

- * One of the Bible readings

The following may be left out, EXCEPT at the Principle Service on Sundays and Principal Holy Days:

- * Prayers of Penance
- * Sermon
- * Creed

Page numbers refer to *Common Worship: Service & Prayers for the Church of England*, London: Church House Publishing, 2000

WORSHIP IDEAS FOR A COMMON WORSHIP, ORDER ONE SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION

PLEASE NOTE: it is not suggested that you try everything on the list below in the same service!

¶ The Gathering

The Greeting

- If the first greeting is used (Common Worship p167), president and congregation could raise their hands to each other as they speak their words, to emphasise that this is a way of saying hello.

Prayer of Preparation

- Slowly fill a clear glass bowl with water from a clear glass jug.
- The children could be encouraged to learn the collect for purity by sequencing the lines: either each line could appear on a separate strip of paper, or they could be printed in the wrong order on a single sheet with a box at the end of each line where the child can fill in a number to indicate the right order.

Prayers of Penitence

- Pebbles, symbolising those things for which forgiveness is asked, can be placed into the bowl of water. One child, or a small group of children could do this on behalf of the whole congregation, or each congregation member could be given a pebble by a child on entering church, and could then place it in a large bucket of water, as and when they felt moved, during a time of reflection, with music.
- During a silence for reflection, the congregation could taste the bitterness of sin by eating short piece of 'bread stick' dipped into a bowl of lemon juice. When absolution is pronounced, the bitterness can be removed by dipping another piece of bread stick in honey.
- If the font has been filled, the water could be used for asperges (sprinkling the congregation) at the absolution.

- The children could be supplied with 'happy' and 'sad' masks, or faces on paper plates, or a pair of curved card lips which can be turned up or down. They could hold up 'sad' during the confession, and 'happy' at absolution.
- The congregation could indicate the things they are asking forgiveness for by writing or drawing on small pieces of paper. The paper can be in a shape that is relevant to the theme of the day's service, if that is appropriate. The children could collect the papers and lay them at the foot of a cross.
- Children could use published 'sorry' books (eg *I'm Sorry - Little Fish Books About You and Me*, SU, ISBN 0 8307 0957 6) or make their own, giving examples of the things they might ask forgiveness for. When absolution is given, these books should be collected and put away and should not come out again during the service!
- The congregation could be asked to make a tight fist as they imagine the things they are holding on to that need God's forgiveness. They then open their hands, palm down, to release these things. Next hold out their open hands, palm upwards, to receive the absolution.

Gloria in Excelsis

- This is a joyful response to God's forgiveness. Singing is most appropriate, but make sure it is something the congregation, especially the children, can easily join in with. There are several short, simple and dramatic versions such as the 'Peruvian Gloria'. If you use an ornate 'choir party piece', invite the congregation simply to listen and let their thoughts be carried away on the wings of the music, rather than lose the joy of it by trying to join in something that is too hard for them.

The Collect

- The Collect completes the Preparation and at this point the Common Worship rubric (p171) says *The president introduces a period of silent prayer* In the silence there could be a brief activity appropriate to the theme of the collect (eg the collect for the 3rd Sunday before Advent refers to people 'in authority': cards showing pictures of world leaders, maps of their countries or their flags could be distributed or images projected, and people could spend a moment or two silently praying for them).

¶ ***The Liturgy of the Word***

Readings

- The children can use their own Bible story books at this point. If they contain a version of the Gospel for the day, so much the better. The books should be kept in a special place and taken out and put back with care.
- If the reading is from a good 'child friendly' translation many in the adult congregation will also be appreciative! *The Message* version (Eugene Peterson, Navpress, ISBN 1 5768 3289 9) often offers a lively rendition.
- Activity sheets based on the Gospel for the day can be purchased (eg Redemptorist *Look* sheets) or produced 'in house' which children can complete on clip boards during the readings and perhaps on into the sermon.
- There are many alternatives to simply reading from scripture, including: drama, dance, mime, rap, or response to 'key words' (as in the CPAS *Telling Tales* series).

Sermon

- Similarly, there are many ways of exploring the meaning of scripture other than just talking about it. An activity might fill the 'sermon slot' so that the congregation have a chance to talk about and reflect on what they have heard rather than the worship leader doing it all. Children can present something themselves provided they are well prepared and microphones are used.

The Creed

- Wherever choices are invited, make sure they are 'child friendly'. Again, many adults will also prefer this. There are a number of affirmations of faith that can be used at this point (p138-148). The short question and answer one (p144) allows children to learn and use the repeated response.
- The children, the congregation as a whole, or the worship leader can move around the church to places appropriate to each of the persons of the Trinity: eg. the door (leading to the world) for the Father; the altar for the Son; the font for the Holy Spirit.
- Images connected with the three persons on the Trinity could be shown at the appropriate moment during the creed/affirmation.

Prayers of Intercession

- Subjects for prayer could be written or drawn about on pieces of paper, possibly in shapes appropriate to the theme of the day, and collected up to be taken to the altar at the offertory.
- Symbolic actions such as lighting a candle, or planting a seed can accompany prayer, either done by a representative or representatives of the congregation (who could be children) or by the congregation as a whole during a time of reflection. Music is often helpful.
- Visual symbols of things to be prayed for can be used eg a globe, a house, a church, or symbols of aspects of church life, such as a Brownie banner or a music book. They can be placed in one central position as the prayers progress, or placed in 'stations' around the church which can be 'visited' by the congregation during a period of reflection.
- The children can use a variety of resources in a prayer time of their own, whilst the adults are being led in prayer: published or self-produced 'please' and 'thank you' books; 'lift-the-flap' thank you prompts; prayer cubes; jigsaws made of pictures appropriate to the standard headings for intercessions, or cards with these headings and an appropriate picture; boxes of cards with pictures – of people, places, everyday events, nature - which can be used to stimulate prayer.
- If the children are expected to listen to prayers being read by a worship leader, make sure the prayers are brief and would get the 'plain English' award – again, many adults will also be thankful for this. The same is true, if children are asked to read prayers – they should also be provided with good microphones, and given time to practice the technique of using them.

¶ *The Liturgy of the Sacrament*

The Peace

- The children can be gathered at the front and asked to take the Peace out to the congregation. Some may want to be accompanied.

Preparation of the Table Taking of the Bread and Wine

- The elements can be brought up by children who can say the leaders lines in the Prayer at the Preparation No8 (Common Worship p292), if provided with a microphone.

Eucharistic Prayer

- The children can have the text in their own illustrated booklet which will help them mark progress through the prayer – a booklet for each prayer in use in the church will be needed.
- Young children can use ‘thread the lace’ silver card shapes of the chalice and paten to get them used to the special vessels used at this point.
- Symbols, or symbolic images relevant to each section of the prayer can be used to point up its structure and mark progress.
- Children can work with a set of ‘matching pairs’ cards – on one set of cards are key phrases from the prayer in use, and on the other are appropriate illustrations. The children aim to match the phrases to the pictures before the prayer is over.
- The ‘Thank you’ element of the prayer could be emphasised by giving the children sets of cards illustrating things they might want to give thanks for, and encouraging them to look at some of these cards and reflect on them during the prayer.
- The children could look at published books, such as *Teddy Horsley (The Picnic – Teddy Horsley Goes to Communion)*, Leslie J Francis & Nicola M Slee, NCEC, ISBN 0 7197 0857 5) on the theme of Holy Communion.
- The choice of prayer can be ‘child friendly’ – Prayer H is short and responsive; the responses in Prayer D encourage participation. Remember, ‘child friendly’ choices make many friends amongst adults too.

The Lord’s Prayer

- Children should be encouraged to learn the prayer, perhaps as a sequencing activity (cf Collect for Purity, above).
- Published or self-produced Lord’s Prayer books can be used.
- Mimed actions can accompany the prayer. The children can be asked to devise these. ‘Signing’ is becoming a more regular feature in liturgy, and many find that it is a beautiful enhancement to worship: expressive miming can have a similar effect for all.

Prayer after Communion

- The rubric (Common Worship p182) states *Silence is kept*. During this silence, appropriate images of could be projected - with suitable accompanying music, if we interpret 'silence' as an absence of words!

¶ **The Dismissal**

- The congregation can face the door, and the dismissal can be given from there

GENERAL POINTS

- The children can use their own communion book, either published or home-made. Published resources are *My Communion Book*, Diana Murrie, CHP, ISBN 0 7151 4946 6 (discount on pack of 6! ISBN 07151 4977 6); *The Communion Cube*, Diana Murrie, CHP, ISBN 0 7151 4976 8; *My Holy Communion Book*, Aileen Urquhart, Redemptorist. ISBN 0 85231 238 5
- Clipboard activities can be devised for the whole service. *Come and Join the Celebration*, John Muir & Betty Pedley, CHP, ISBN 0 7151 4947 4 has a complete set.
- Some form of 'clock' or other device to mark progress through the different sections of the service structure helps children know where they are – and how much more there is to come.

Many of the above ideas have been adapted from:

Graystone, P & Turner, E. (1993). *A Church for All Ages*. Milton Keynes: SU
Muir, J & Pedley B. (2001). *Come and Join the Celebration*. London: NS/CHP
Wallace, S. (2000). *Multi-Sensory Prayer*. Milton Keynes: SU

ALL-AGE WORSHIP: RESOURCE LIST

- Jonny Baker, Doug Gay & Jenny Brown, *Alternative Worship*. SPCK 2003
- Anne Barton, *All Age Worship*, Grove 1993
- Michael Botting, *All in the Family*, Kingsway 1996
- Carolyn C Brown, *Forbid Them Not (Separate Vols for Years A, B & C)*, Abingdon 1992
- Maggie Durran, *All Age Worship*, Angel Press 1987
- Peter Graystone and Eileen Turner, *A Church For All Ages*, Scripture Union 1993
- Dave & Lynn Hopwood, *Telling Tales*, CPAS 1997
Telling More Tales, CPAS 1998
Telling Even More Tales, CPAS 2000
- Dorothy Jamal (Working Party Chair), *Leaves on the Tree*, National Society/Church House 1990
- Rosemary Johnston (ed), *Wholly Worship*, United Reformed Church 1999
- Gordon & Ronni Lamont, *Children Aloud*, National Society/Church House 1997
- Tim Lomax, *Freedom within a Framework*, Kevin Mayhew 2001
- Tim Lomax, *More Freedom within a Framework*, Kevin Mayhew 2002
- Pam Macnaughton & Hamish Bruce (eds), *Together Through the Bible – resources for all-age worship*, National Society/Church House 1998
- John Muir & Betty Pedley, *Come and Join the Celebration*, National Society/Church House 2001
- Diana Murrie & Hamish Bruce (eds), *Worship through the Christian Year (Years A, B & C)*. National Society/Church House 1997-2000
- Betty Pedley & John Muir, *Children in the Church?* National Society/Church House 1997
- Michael Perry (ed), *The Dramatised Bible*, Marshall Pickering 1989
- Sue Relf, *100 Instant Children's Talks*, Kingsway 1994
- Tim Storey, *DIY Guide to All-age Worship (Years A, B & C)*, Kevin Mayhew 2002-4
- Katie Thompson, *The Complete Children's Liturgy Book*, Kevin Mayhew 1995
- Martin Wallace, *The Celtic Resource Book.*, National Society/Church House 1998
- Sue Wallace, *Multi-sensory Church*, Scripture Union
- Sue Wallace, *Multi-sensory Prayer*, Scripture Union 2000
- Roots – Worship*, Roots for Churches Ltd, bimonthly from 2001

All resources available for loan from Resources Centre, 4th Floor, 90 Deansgate: open 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday, except holidays. Please ring first to check that the item you want is in stock.