

A decorative border of black and white line-art maple leaves surrounds the entire page. The leaves are arranged in a repeating pattern along the top, bottom, and sides.

“The Chain of Life”

A Service of the Word

for

Harvest Festival

using

Common Worship

Manchester Diocesan Board of Education

“THE CHAIN OF LIFE”

A SERVICE OF THE WORD FOR HARVEST FESTIVAL

PREPARATION

Leader: Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

All: And also with you.

Leader: This is the day that the Lord has made.

All: Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Leader: ** Welcomes the congregation to the service and points out that they are gathered to rejoice in all that this special Harvest Festival day represents – all those things which, like this day itself, ‘the Lord has made’. Children help to give each person a small circle of card showing the world, for use in Prayers later in service (see below).*



** Introduces the theme, ‘The Chain of Life’, by pointing out that the harvest is the culmination of a complicated chain of events, and in itself is the beginning of a new chain as seeds are gathered from the harvest from which to plant the next crop.*

** Concludes introduction with a prayer:*

Heavenly Father, today we have come to tell you how amazed we are that your world is so complicated; to say thank you for all the good things you give us; and to ask you to help us look after your world.

Father, help us to speak from our hearts, and hear our prayer. **Amen.**

SONG

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

Presenters: *Act out a brief school ‘lesson’ on “the effect of light on plant growth” (National Curriculum Science Key Stage 2, ‘Life Processes & Living Things’ 3a). The main point could be reporting on an experiment in which cress was kept warm and watered but left in the dark. What happened? It drooped and went yellow. What do plants need to grow well? LIGHT!*

Reader: Genesis chapter 1, verses 1-5

Presenters: *Another 'lesson' on "the effect of air and water on plant growth" (National Curriculum Science as above). Possibly reporting on a continuation of the cress experiment, this time providing light but no water for one sample of cress; and putting another sample in a sealed jar with the air sucked out through a straw and the straw hole stopped with blutack. What happened to the cress? So what do plants need to grow well? WATER from RAIN and AIR from the SKY.*

Reader: Genesis chapter 1, verses 6-8

Presenters: *A brief word from the classroom. Teacher: "Plants get light and heat from the sun, air from the sky and water from the rain – but what else do they need to grow well?" Class: "SOIL!"*

Reader: Genesis chapter 1, verses 9-10

Presenters: *Teacher sums up: "So if you have got light, heat, air, water and soil, you can have..."*

Reader: (interrupting teacher) Genesis chapter 1, verses 11-13

Presenters: *Hold up a large circular picture of sun and rain clouds over hills divided by a stretch of water, and covered with greenery. The circle should have a silver edge to make it look like a link in a chain.*

SONG

Presenters: *Act out a brief 'lesson' on "the life cycle of flowering plants" (National Curriculum Science Key Stage 2, 'Life Processes & Living Things' 3d), perhaps filling in the quarters of another large circle in response to answers to questions. Eg "Where is a seed in winter?" "In the ground." Draw a snowman with a seed under his feet. "What happens in spring?" "Shoots appear." Draw a thin green shoot poking up through the soil. Appropriate questions and responses for summer and autumn.*

Reader: Genesis chapter 1, verses 14

Presenters: *A brief 'lesson' on "food chains to show feeding relationships" and about "how nearly all food chains start with a green plant" (National Curriculum Science Key Stage 2, 'Life Processes & Living Things' 5 d&e) Perhaps holding up a picture of a slug, a lettuce and a bird and asking if a slug can eat a bird, or a bird eat lettuce, then asking the children to arrange them in the right order so they all get fed and sticking them on another circle.*

Reader: Genesis chapter 1, verses 20-25

SONG

Presenters: *A brief 'lesson' on "ways in which living things and the environment need protection" (National Curriculum Science Key Stage 2, 'Life Processes & Living Things' 5a). Perhaps asking what effect killing all the slugs off would have on birds (starvation) and plants (overgrowth); and what effect killing all the birds would have (too many slugs, and therefore too many plants eaten); what effect killing all the lettuce would have on birds (starvation by starving slugs). Emphasise human role in either upsetting or maintaining environmental chains and balances.*

Leader: And so we join the chain (holds up a circle with a picture of a group of people on it)

Reader: Genesis chapter 1, verses 26-31

Leader: *Invites the congregation to make a paper chain – each person having been provided with a strip of sticky paper (or more than one if the congregation is small). The 4 circles which have been produced are hung from this chain. The Leader points out that it is our job to look after the chain and make sure it doesn't break and that we are not 'the weakest link'. It is not easy – we need love and strength in our hearts, to do it, but we believe in a God who not only created us, but also gives us the love and strength to do our job. The congregation are invited to stand for the Creed.*

All: We believe in God the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.

We believe in God the Son, who lives in our hearts through faith and, fills us with his love.

We believe in God the Holy Spirit, who strengthens us with power from on high.

We believe in one God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

(Common Worship p148, No 7)

SONG

(During this song the Harvest Gifts are brought to the altar)

Reader: Luke chapter 12, verses 16-21

PRAYERS

Leader: *Points out that part of looking after creation is making sure that everyone gets a fair share – and also that we share creation with the future by not destroying it. Greed can make us poor caretakers. The Harvest gifts will help us focus our thoughts as we pray. In our confession, we ask for forgiveness for the times humanity has been ‘the weakest link’:*

Leader: Jesus said: ‘Before you offer your gift, go and be reconciled’. And so, before we ask God’s blessing on our gifts at the altar – as brothers and sisters in God’s family - we come together to ask our Father for forgiveness:

(Common Worship p275)

We confess our sin, and the sins of our society in the misuse of God’s creation.

God our Father, we are sorry for the times when we have used your gifts carelessly, and acted ungratefully.
Hear our prayer, and in your mercy:
forgive us and help us.

We enjoy the fruits of the harvest, but sometimes forget that you have given them to us.
Father, in your mercy:
forgive us and help us.

We belong to a people who are full and satisfied, but ignore the cry of the hungry.
Father, in your mercy:
forgive us and help us.

We are thoughtless, and do not care enough for the world you have made.
Father, in your mercy:
forgive us and help us.

We store up goods for ourselves alone, as if there were no God and no heaven.
Father, in your mercy:
forgive us and help us.

(Common Worship p126)

Leader: May the God of love bring *us* back to himself, forgive *us our* sins, and assure *us* of his eternal love in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

(Common Worship p136)

Leader: *Invites congregation to write or draw on the back of 'world cards' one thing in Creation for which they want to give thanks. Children gather these in small baskets and take to front to put in large basket before a prayer candle (suitably guarded against accidents!) saying 'Thank you, God' as they tip them in.*



Prayer Leader: Heavenly Father, thank you for your wonderful creation, and for giving us the special job of caring for it.

We pray for the Church, for ourselves as its members, and for all those with power in the world: help us all to do our bit in looking after your creation and sharing out its good things. (silence)

Father, Lord of creation
in your mercy hear us.

We thank you for our families and friends. They are your creations too. We pray that you will help us to care for them. (silence)

Father, Lord of creation
in your mercy hear us.

We pray for people who are suffering – thinking specially of people who are not getting their fair share of the good things of creation. (silence)

Father, Lord of creation
in your mercy hear us.

Father, we place in your care all those who have died, especially those who have died of want in a world of plenty. (silence)

Merciful Father,
accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Leader: We will use the Harvest Thanksgiving Collect to bless the gifts at the altar.

Eternal God, you crown the year with your goodness and you give us the fruits of the earth in their season: grant that we may use them to your glory, for the relief of those in need and for our own well-being; and we ask that you will bless these gifts offered today, that those who receive them may be blessed; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.** (from Common Worship p447)

Leader: We end our prayers with the words that Jesus taught:
Our Father in heaven

CONCLUSION

SONG

Leader: May God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the source of all goodness and growth, pour his blessing upon all things created, and upon *you* his children, that *you* may use them to his glory and the welfare of all peoples.

And the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be amongst *you* and remain with *you* always. **Amen.**

(Patterns for Worship p184)

NOTES: *The 'Presenters' could be a mixture of children, young people and adults as appropriate to the material and your circumstances. The children in the congregation could form the 'class' or join ready 'primed' children who would be the nucleus of the 'class'. 'Lessons' could involve some of the paraphernalia of the classroom – flip chart, trays of cress and jar suitably prepared, clipboards.*

The 'school science lesson' topics are all drawn from the primary National Curriculum for Science, and local schools could be asked to present material which they have done on the topics instead of the mock up 'lessons'. Children from your church could ask at school if they can bring in work they have done on these science topics, which they could then – with appropriate adult support – present to the congregation.

Schools use many songs celebrating Creation and the fruits of the earth. Your local schools might be able to suggest songs with which the children would be familiar and to which they may know some actions. A local school might even provide a choir to lead some of the singing.

Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England
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