

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2012

We will all be changed

Suggestions for providing an all-age dimension to the Order of Service for an Ecumenical Act of Worship

These suggestions are for individual elements linked to the sections of the service. They provide an all-age dimension to the service, or could be combined with individual items from the service to be used in some other way during the week.

Polish origin of this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity material

Today there are significant communities of Polish people in the UK and there will be Polish worshippers in some congregations. Why not invite a Polish speaker to take part in the leadership of the service and to teach people some Polish words before the service begins. It would be particularly appropriate for a bilingual, Polish-English speaking child to do this, with the necessary adult support. Use the significant words around which the service is constructed. Use them each in one single form, a verb or a noun.

- servant
- wait
- suffer
- struggle
- peace
- love
- feed
- unite

The serving, the waiting, the suffering and the struggling...

It is possible to represent each of these ideas using the simple device of a towel and some water.

During the GATHERING and INTRODUCTION, invite pairs of people to enact each idea, using actions that link with Scripture.

Serving: Using a large bowl of water and a large towel, one person washes the feet (or hands if you prefer) of the other and dries them with the towel. Cf. John 13.5.

Waiting: *this enactment of the concept of waiting is drawn from the experience of the restaurant 'waiter', a person who attends to the diners, drawing our attention to the experience of 'waiting' as an active rather than a passive activity, a time filled with attentive expectation rather than a tedious passage of time.*

This might be enacted with a 'diner', smartly dressed sitting at a table with a beautiful glass, and a 'waiter' (white shirt/blouse, black skirt/trousers, perhaps a bow tie, with a tea towel over the arm and a tray in one hand) standing nearby with a large jug of water. The waiter fills the diner's glass then moves discreetly away and watches the diner attentively. When the diner has drunk the water in the glass, the waiter notices and quietly returns and refills it. Cf. Isaiah 40.31; Lamentations 3.26; Micah 7.7; Zephaniah 3.8; Judith 13.3; Luke 7.20; Romans 8.23

Suffering: A person in a hospital gown or dressing gown, with dishevelled hair sits on a chair with their head in their hands. Another person approaches them with a bowl of warm water and small towel or face cloth, puts an arm around them and begins to wipe their face with the damp cloth. Cf. Job 2.13; Psalm 88.15; Psalm 116.3; Isaiah 53.3

Struggling: A small person enters trying to transport a heavy bucket of water; s/he tries lifting it, dragging it, pushing it and the water slops out so that the water carrier is distressed at losing the precious water. Another person enters with a towel, mops up the spilt water and then helps the small person to carry the bucket away safely. Cf. Ecclesiasticus 11.11, 38.28; Ephesians 6.12; Philippians 4.3; 1 Timothy 4.10

Song: Blessed be your name

Use the ASL website (ASLPro.com) to learn the sign for the word 'blessed'. Open up the website, click on 'Religious signs' then click on 'b' and scroll down until you find 'bless'. Demonstrate this before you sing this song and appoint someone to lead the signing of the word each time it occurs. This enables people who cannot join in with the song by reading the words to take part kinaesthetically. By the time the song is over, the sign will be very familiar. It can then be used again when the verse 'Blessed be the name of the Lord' is sung after the psalm verse.

Song: It is well with my soul

You can find a more visual account of the story behind this hymn with an explanation by a contemporary hymnologist, Al Smith at the following YouTube site:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vnYTdtNiVUk&feature=related>

Teach everyone the chorus first, enabling non-readers to join in with these very repetitive words and their easy tune.

You could use flags to accompany the different verses, using colours to pick up the imagery:

Verse 1, the river and the sea *blue flag*

Verse 2, the trials and the helpless estate (referring perhaps to the Chicago fire) *red flag*

Verse 3 my sin *red flag*

Verse 5 Jordan *blue flag*

Verse 6 Thy coming we wait *gold flag*

Verse 7 *gold flag*

The loving and the feeding

Illustrate the opening of this section in the same manner as *The Serving, the waiting...* The eight people involved in the first set of enactment move to the front of the worship space and form two groups of four. The four on the right move towards the four on the left, greeting each warmly with a hug or a kiss on both cheeks, then all sit down at a table together and four of the people each produce a bag containing a small loaf of bread, a bottle of milk and a jar of honey. These are shared out among all and the group remain together for the readings that follow.

Testimonies

The testimonies of the three characters, if they are well read, or even proclaimed, should be able to maintain the interest of all but the youngest members of a congregation.

Hymn: I heard the voice of Jesus say

The three verses might be illustrated by the placing of objects as follows:

Verse 1: a pillow and blanket

Verse 2: water is poured from a jug into a series of glasses

Verse 3: the lighting of a large candle

The unity

The eight people who have been involved in the previous enactments now join hands to form a row of eight united people and make their way from the front to the back of the worship space negotiating any obstacles well as they are able without breaking their unity.

Reading: Jesus' prayer for us John 17.13-20

You could precede or follow the reading with this exercise, taken from material which will appear in *ROOTS Adult & All Age on 20 May 2012* when this passage is the Lectionary Gospel reading.

Play about with creating huge bubbles around willing volunteers, big and small (see

www.sciencemuseumshop.co.uk/product/271035/mega-bubble.html for details of kits to make giant bubbles). You will need to practise beforehand. Discuss the fact that if you stay inside the bubble, you are going to be pretty limited in what you can do.