A T THE BEGINNING OF 2009 a conversation began amongst a couple, then a few, then a group about collaboratively creating resources that enabled us to tell the story of faith in a worship context and within age groups for younger people and teens. Spill the Beans was born as the result of that conversation and has grown and developed over the intervening years.

The ethos has remained the same, however. It’s all about story. For we believe story is the lifeblood of faith. In story we can tell the truth and speak with honesty about things for which there are not yet words. Story contains mystery and is the poetry that forms faith. Stories grow as we grow and can reveal new truths at different times in our lives.

So we believe giving stories to people is one of the most important things we can do in sharing our faith. Children and adults hold stories in their being and keep coming back to them throughout life. Our culture is stored in story. The same is true for our faith.

Narrative Lectionary

Over the course of 2011-2014 the Spill the Beans Resource Team completed a full cycle through the Revised Common Lectionary. As we neared the end of that cycle we began discussion about what to do once we had completed that cycle. We considered the pros and cons of remaining with the RCL for another cycle or trying a different tack. We have decided, in a spirit of continual experimentation, to journey with the Narrative Lectionary which began a new four year cycle in September 2014. This is the sixth issue under the Narrative Lectionary. Note that a set of previous issues (1-12) which covered a cycle of the Revised Common Lectionary is available to purchase.

The Narrative Lectionary is a relatively new four year lectionary that focuses on story and retelling the broad sweep of the biblical narrative in each year. We felt that this focus has a natural resonance with the ethos of Spill the Beans. It is a little experimental and has the feel of a new adventure.

Why have we decided to do this? To fully understand this you need to know that Spill the Beans is a work of love. None of the contributors are paid for their contributions, these contributions are written and prepared with our own congregations in mind. Instead of working in isolation, we bring this work together, give it some spit and polish, and share it with others. This is how we can keep the cost so low.

Many of the team were attracted to the freshness of the different approach taken by the NL and see it as a means of sparking new ideas and experiences for our congregations.

We pray you will also be enthused and enlivened by a new approach within worship and in your age groups, engaging with the great biblical narrative so that all people will let these stories shape their own story of faith.

spilling the beans

IN THIS 18TH ISSUE of Spill the Beans you will find an extensive collection of things to use each week. Each piece is written with specific congregations in mind rather than some average congregation. Thus there may be the need to be a little creative yourselves in adapting and evolving some of the ideas to suit your own place and culture and congregation. That is a good thing.

Of course, if you are creative and you’d like to share what you have done, then we have a place for that on our blog (http://spillbeans.org.uk) and Facebook page http://www.facebook.com/spillbeansresources. There you will find PowerPoint backgrounds for most weeks, a live discussion of the passages for that week and how we might be able to adapt and recreate what has been suggested.

These are a few ideas that possibly expand upon the story offering words, phrases, poetry and ideas that could be used in some way in worship. We encourage you not to use these exactly as they are but rather edit, expand and enmesh these ideas within the culture of your own faith community.

Each week we provide a selection of words, ideas and creative moments to take the theme and the passage a little further. We do not provide a ready made service or perfect prayers but ideas and pointers that hopefully scratch at your own creativity and provoke heaven’s imagination within you.

Here are some helpful tips to guide you in your use of the material in age groups:

1. It presumes some introduction to the story will have taken place in worship together or will play a part in the service when children join it later.
2. Depending on the make-up of your own groups of children you will need to remain flexible in how you use the material.
3. Each idea has been given a guide age range to help your planning, but this is only a guide so use your own judgement about what will work with your group.
4. Before the sit-down activities if you have a group of young children or lots of boys, you may want to add a run-around type game to expend some energy.
5. Use the gathering time exercise with the whole group to get into the story together across the ages.
6. We encourage you to retell the story together.
7. Follow that by choosing as many or as few activities your space and time allow. You could offer a number of activities each at different stations all at the same time for all ages to self-select with a teacher staffing each one, or have traditional classes.
8. During activities, ask children to retell the story to you and ask about their week, what was happy and what was sad and if this week’s story reminds them of other biblical and personal stories.
9. The intention is not to complete “the tasks” brilliantly, but rather to provide opportunities to begin conversations, build relationships, retell the story of the day, and talk about what it means for us today.
10. There are many websites that provide handout-type sheets that will have images, crosswords and wordsearches for the story of that week. They can be helpful in an emergency, but try to be more creative as leaders, the rewards are worth it.
LATEST NEWS

Narrative Lectionary Resources

There is a growing number of other areas of discussion and creativity that relate to the Narrative Lectionary. We encourage you to look at some of the other online resources that are using the Narrative Lectionary (NL).

Luther Seminary, from whom the Narrative Lectionary is sourced, offer excellent weekly notes and an audio podcast available from their website http://www.workingpreacher.org.

A very active Facebook group with super contributions and thoughtful discussion about the weekly issues raised by the scriptural texts can be found at https://www.facebook.com/groups/NarrativeLectionary/.

RevGalBlogPals also provides some nuggets of wisdom on each week’s text. Find them here: http://revgalblogpals.org/category/narrative-lectionary/.

Pastor John Stevens from Oregon is a source of continual creativity for children’s talks using items picked up from the Dollar Store (Pound Store to us here in the UK) based both on the Revised Common Lectionary and the Narrative Lectionary. Find him here: http://dskidsermons.com/.

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Please remember you can use the bookmark system within Adobe Reader to quickly move around this document.

spill the beans resource team

For more information and extra materials, join us on the Spill the Beans blog: http://spillbeans.org.uk or join the community at http://www.facebook.com/spillbeansresources.

The team producing this issue included:

Keith Blackwood
Stephen Brown
Ruth Burgess
Scott Burton
Liz Crumlish
Stewart Cutler
Shuna Dicks
Jonathan Fleming
Roddy Hamilton
Karen Harbison
Jean Inglis
Peter Johnston
Tina Kemp
Bryan Kerr
Caryl Kyle
Jo Love
Nikki McDonald
John Murning
Scott Paget
Lyn Peden
Linsey Schafer
Barbara Ann Sweetin
Jay Thomas
Julie Woods

Key to Abbreviations

In the worship ideas section the following abbreviations may be used to indicate different sources of worship music:

ATAS  All the Assembly Songs You’ll Ever Need
CG    Common Ground
CH4   Church Hymnary, 4th Edition
CH3   Church Hymnary, 3rd Edition
JP    Junior Praise
MP    Mission Praise
SGP   Songs of God’s People
WGRG  Wild Goose Resource Group
through the season

Introduction

In this section you will find some ideas for scene-setting activities and a weekly visual focus as you move through the season.

These ideas are provided for you to use and adapt depending on the size, shape and layout of your worship space and the technology you have on offer to assist.

These ideas provide possible ways of linking all the weeks together which can be a helpful reminder to people of the thread of the story and the key aspects being focused on during worship.

Picking up on the last focal point of Issue 17 for Transfiguration Sunday, a question mark, we bring the questions back into worship by means of a large question mark, to which we will add a variety of questions over the upcoming weeks of Lent.

The question mark could be made of cardboard or, if you are feeling adventurous, you could make a 3D structure out of polystyrene or wood. The various symbols can either be stuck onto cardboard, stuck onto sticks to insert into the polystyrene or pre-drilled holes along a wood structure.

Lent 1 – Easter Day

Prepare your large question mark for this section. Noted below are directions for what to add each week.

Weekly Suggestions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Lent</th>
<th>Story</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14 Feb</td>
<td>Lent 1</td>
<td>Mark 10:17-31</td>
<td>Who do you think you love?</td>
<td>Add a heart symbol to your question mark with 'Who do you think you love?' written inside or beside it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Feb</td>
<td>Lent 2</td>
<td>Mark 10:32-52</td>
<td>Who do you think you are?</td>
<td>Add a cut-out of a person with 'Who do you think you are?' written inside or beside it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 Feb</td>
<td>Lent 3</td>
<td>Mark 12:1-12 (or 12:13-17)</td>
<td>What do you think you own?</td>
<td>Add a cut-out of a bunch of grapes with 'What do you think you own?' written inside or beside it in a winding manner to represent the vineyard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Mar</td>
<td>Lent 4</td>
<td>Mark 12:28-44</td>
<td>What is it worth?</td>
<td>Add a cut-out of a pound sign or various currency symbols with 'What's it worth?' written inside or beside it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Mar</td>
<td>Palm Sunday</td>
<td>Mark 11:1-11 and/or Mark 14:3-9</td>
<td>What next?</td>
<td>Remove all of the symbols added over the last few weeks and replace with a single Palm branch or Palm Cross with 'What next?' written on or beside it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 Mar</td>
<td>Easter Day</td>
<td>Mark 16:1-8</td>
<td>How do we go on?</td>
<td>Add an image of an empty tomb below the palm cross with a pathway leading away.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Easter 2 – Pentecost

After Easter, we will use the body as a way of showing the Spirit working through us. Draw around a willing volunteer and cut it out complete with fingers (we need them for the first week). This series has a job for your Junior Church/Sunday School to do in preparation for the next week, which allows the young ones to feel a part of the installation.

3 Apr Easter 2
Story: Acts 1:1-14
Title: Promised Spirit
Activity: Add a pinkie finger (little finger) wrapped around/linked to the pinkie finger of your cut-out with ‘Promising Spirit’ written inside or beside it.
Next week: Ask the young ones to prepare a cut-out of a hand (complete with wrist).

10 Apr Easter 3
Story: Acts 3:1-10
Title: Healing Spirit
Activity: Place the cutout of a hand and wrist on the head of your cut-out with ‘Healing Spirit’ written along the wrist (or beside it if you prefer).
Next week: Ask the young ones to prepare a cut-out of another person holding something resembling an olive branch (see enclosed template).

17 Apr Easter 4
Story: Acts 17:1-9 and 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10
Title: Reconciling Spirit
Activity: Place the cut-out of our new person beside our existing one to portray the handing over of an olive branch. In the gap between the arms passing on the branch of peace, add the words ‘Reconciling Spirit’.
Next week: Ask the young ones to prepare lots of cut-outs of people with the arms and hands about 45 degrees from their body to allow them to be able to be linked together.

24 Apr Easter 5
Story: Acts 18:1-4 and 1 Corinthians 1:10-18
Title: Uniting Spirit
Activity: Place the cut-outs of our new people on either side of the existing pair. Link their hands together to portray them all holding hands. Add the words ‘Uniting Spirit’.
Next week: When the service has started, ask the young ones to take the original cut-out away to draw and colour in a heart on its chest, cut the arms off and reposition them in such a way that they are placing the hands on top of their heart.

1 May Easter 6
Story: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13
Title: Loving Spirit
Activity: Replace the original cut-out (complete with last week’s alterations) in the centre of the people chain. Add the words ‘Loving Spirit’.
Next week: When the service has started, ask the young ones to take all of the cut-outs away. Choose one and draw all the parts of the face, some clothes and so on.

8 May Easter 7
Story: 1 Corinthians 15:1-26
Title: Living Spirit
Activity: Using the newly ‘dressed’ cut-out, add the words ‘Living Spirit’.
Next week: Ask the young ones to prepare long strips of tissue paper or crepe paper in red and yellow colours.

15 May Pentecost
Title: Gifting Spirit
Activity: Add the red and yellow strips around and over the cut out figures to represent the Holy Spirit, wrapping it around them.
On this day in which we remember St Valentine, it might be pertinent to ask, “What or whom do we really love?” If Lent is a time for examining self or for some spiritual spring cleaning, the passage this first Sunday in Lent may help us get to the heart of the matter. How deep is our love? Do we love God enough to relegate everything else? Is it our love of God that motivates us in all areas of life?

Lent is a time perhaps more for asking questions than seeking solutions, a time for re-examining all that we believe and all to which we cling. Questions like “Is it enough?” or “Is it too much?” seem pertinent.

The encounter of the rich man with Jesus is an emotionally charged story. It is possible the rich man thought he would be a useful addition to Jesus’ cause, a welcome asset. What a disappointment to discover that, though outwardly he looked like an ideal candidate, there was something lacking. What a challenge to find his worldly wealth was not as important as his spiritual health. Even his fine, upstanding habitual life, observing the commandments, did not go quite far enough. There was something more required, something less tangible but more pervasive, an attitude to be embraced. And, I imagine, it must have hurt Jesus to have to be the bearer of bad news. But Jesus did not hold back on the truth, he did not let the man down gently.

In love, he told him that still there was one thing lacking; and not just a little thing. In love, Jesus refused to compromise. He told the man that he must sell all he had, give the money to the poor and then come and follow. As servants of God today, we often settle for less than that. We often offer less than that. We are frightened to scare people off. So we lure them in and hope for the best, hoping that, by the time they discover that the cost will be much greater than they had envisaged, they will be in a place to go the extra distance. Are we setting people up to be disappointed further down the line when they discover that the warmth and welcome they have encountered has masked the whole story? Perhaps our Lenten discipline might involve our examining how we present the stark reality of the gospel today?

And what about today’s immunity to the shock factor of the good news Jesus brought? The comfort we have come to read into hard words of challenge? How often have we spoken aloud the wish that we could change mindsets, change those cosy complacencies that have crept in and built up over years of affirmation? Jesus challenges mindsets in our gospel this morning. He calls them out and chews them up and spits them out. You think you have it all sussed? Well, think again. The kingdom of God is something that none of us can comprehend with our limited imagination and perception. It is all we can do to keep in mind that, just when we think we have got it, the goalposts move and we are faced with a new challenge, presented with a different scenario that blows apart our carefully thought out “what is the least I can do and still be Christian” practices.

A question for us this St Valentines day at the beginning of Lent: Do we love enough to tell it like it is and be changed by the gospel we share?
What If?

A dialogue between two wealthy women, named in the Gospels, who supported Jesus and his disciples out of their own means. Should directly follow the Bible reading. Could be followed by a time of conversation or quiet reflection, inviting people to consider why Jesus asked different things of different people with respect to their wealth. What sense of call or challenge do we hear concerning our own wealth? How does our wealth or lack of it play a part in our spirituality and witness?

Joanna: Susanna, there you are.
Susanna: Joanna! Hi...
Joanna: Well, that was a shock, wasn’t it? Are you thinking what I’m thinking?
Susanna: Why has he never asked the same of us?
Joanna: Exactly.
Susanna: What would you do if he did?
Joanna: I couldn’t just sell everything I have! For one thing, Chuza would never allow it. My own husband is just like that man—so caught up in his money he doesn’t know who he would be without it.

Susanna: Do I know who I would be without it? Maybe I still let it define me more than I think. Giving to the poor is one thing, but becoming poor… would I actually do that if he asked? If he said I could not be with him unless I stripped away the cushion of my comfortable prosperity?

Joanna: I know. It would scare me, if I’m honest, to be empty-handed, to be dependent. It scares me that I might feel less of a person if I had little to give, no resources to draw from.

Susanna: Do you ever think it’s because we have means that we can be with him at all?

Joanna: Yes. Yes, I do. And then, look what he said today, right in the face of that man’s sincerity and searching...

Susanna: The crazy thing is, I could have wept when he walked away. It was so much to ask, but I was willing him to follow through, to actually do it, to go home and put all his gold and robes and furnishings up for sale!

Joanna: Why didn’t I think of this before?” she thought excitedly, “Why didn’t I think of this ages ago?”

She had the coin in her hand now, and with her other hand she reached out and took Wendy’s hand, pressing the coin into her friend’s palm. “You have it! Go and choose what you want!” said Alison, and watched as Wendy’s face broke into a huge excited smile.

“Aw, thanks, Ali!” she cried, and rushed into the shop where for the first time she could choose her own favourite things.

Alison waited outside, feeling so very happy. It was a funny kind of happiness. She knew it was a very different feeling from the happiness she would have felt if she’d spent the pound coin found on the pavement herself. There was something that felt so good about giving it away to Wendy! Alison decided there and then to try and find more ways to give things to other people: not only would it make them happy, it would make Alison happy too!

Retelling For Young People

The Found Coin

Names have been changed but this is a true childhood story from one of the Spill the Beans Team. If you have a real life similar story of your own, do use it instead, or in addition.

Alison and Wendy were good friends who walked home from school together every day. They always passed by the sweet shop, just after the railway bridge. Usually Alison had some money from her mum to spend. Wendy never had money to spend. So when Alison had money to spend, she would go into the shop while Wendy waited outside. Alison chose what she wanted, and shared the chocolate or crisps or sweets with Wendy as they walked on through the town to get home. Wendy was glad to have such a generous friend, but sometimes she felt sad that she had no money of her own to choose her own favourite things from the sweet shop.

One day Alison had no money from mum. She was just thinking how nice it would have been to go and buy some chocolate, when something caught her eye and she looked down at the pavement. Somebody had dropped a pound coin! There it was, lying on the pavement.

“Look!” she cried, and then Wendy saw the coin too. Just as Alison stopped and bent down to pick it up, she had an idea. “Why didn’t I think of this before?” she thought excitedly, “Why didn’t I think of this ages ago?”

She had the coin in her hand now, and with her other hand she reached out and took Wendy’s hand, pressing the coin into her friend’s palm. “You have it! Go and choose what you want!” said Alison, and watched as Wendy’s face broke into a huge excited smile.

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worship ideas

Through the Season

Please visit pages 4 and 5 where you will find ideas that can be used to help create a linking theme using a large question mark. This week add a heart symbol to your question mark with ‘Who do you think you love?’ written inside or beside it.

Gathering Activity

For each Sunday in Lent, prepare a slip of paper for each worshipper with the focus question for the week, in this case “Who do you think you love?” to help worshippers reflect and make choices about their attitudes to life and the kingdom. Do not feel limited by these suggested questions. Adapt or re-write them to bring out your focal point.

If you want to develop this idea a bit further there is an ‘Ups and Downs of Lent’ Journey Sheet in the resources on page 134.

1st Sunday: Ups and Downs

Which of these attitudes is the snake that makes the kingdom slip away and which is the ladder to the kingdom come?

A. Everything I have came from hard work and determination to bless me and my family.

B. All I have is a gift of grace and a resource for creating a better world.

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

God of Love,
we worship you today because you are worthy of all our praise.
You are the giver of all good things,
embracing us as part of your outstanding created order and including us in your family of love,
despite our faults and failings.

Day after day, you call us to be your disciples,
revealing to us along the way the reality of what following means:
giving as well as receiving,
serving as well as being served,
loving others as well as you loving us.

So assist us in offering our heart-felt worship today,
by giving of ourselves in ways that show sacrificial love for you,
for our neighbour,
for your church,
for your world.

What must we do to receive eternal life, Lord?
Sell all that we have and give it to the poor?
Really, God?
Seriously, Lord?
You are kidding, right?

We love so many of the hymns we sing.
We are grateful for this opportunity to say our prayers.
We relish the reading of your word.
Help us, then, in the aspects of honouring you that we find more difficult.
Assist us in the actions that we must take to enter into the life of your Kingdom for the heart of the matter is often a matter of the heart.

We confess that we find aspects of following you difficult at times and we admit it is easier to receive than to give.
Help us in making choices that please you, honour you, resource the building of your Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

So, challenge us and change us in our time of worship.
In Christ’s name,
Amen.

Call to Worship

Today, the journey begins with our hand in God’s and our hopes in the future as we head for Jerusalem.

Come, now is the time to worship, to face the challenge of discipleship, to open our hearts to the call of God and let the love we know become a reality we live.

Opening Responses

Leader: What is this time in our lives?
All: It is the time to turn to God.

Leader: What does God ask of us?
All: God asks that we follow.

Leader: Where is God taking us?
All: To new places we have yet to discover.

Leader: Following Jesus to Jerusalem, let us begin our journey of Lent and let us sing to God’s praise.
Prayer for Others and Ourselves
If there as a hungry child right in front of us in this moment, Lord, you do know that, as the loving people we are, we would relieve that child’s hunger immediately.

If a homeless woman walked into our church today, Lord, asking for our help, with our faith that compels us, we would do what we could to find her shelter.

If a man had fallen on our church path and was battered and bruised, Lord, by the guidance of your Spirit, we would reach out in love and bind up his wounds.

If a stranger came to our church this morning, lost and scared and tired and confused, Father, you appreciate that we would help them and guide them and assist them to find their way.

These people are not always here in our midst though, God, and the urgency doesn’t always appear so great. These situations don’t always arrive on our doorstep, so the needs are not so obvious. But you still call us to pray and serve and give and love to those who may be out of sight, but must never be out of mind.

And so for the refugee and displaced we pray. For the hungry and the hurting we offer our reflection and respect. For the aching and the unaccepted, we ask your encouragement—your encouragement to help us to help them.

There are no easy options to the complexities of life; no straight forward responses to so many varying needs. Assist us to assess how we are reacting to the news we see on our TVs, the situations we hear of in our town, the difficult circumstances we know of all around. Are we part of the solutions, or are we part of the problem? Open our eyes to see the kind of Christians we are and the kind of Christians we are yet to become.

And on this journey make us more and more in your image: compassionate, kind, generous. Amen.

Prayer of Dedication
One way we follow you, Lord, is by giving what we have. So, accept these gifts, we pray, as tokens of our human love in response to the immensity of your divine love.

You offer us your blessings; we bless you with our offerings. You meet our every need; we respond in word and deed. You accept us in our living; we respect you in our giving. Take these gifts, then, as our sacrifice of praise. Amen.

All-Age Prayer
Leader: You have given us much, Lord.
All: We accept your gifts with gratitude.

Leader: You call us to freely give.
All: We give what we can with gratitude.

Leader: You make us in your image, Lord.
All: We respond with a sense of gratitude.

Leader: Shape us, mould us, model us on your example we pray.
All: As we live in a sense of gratitude.
Amen.

Reflective Prayer
I love you, Lord.

But I love my bank account too and my money: mine, mine, mine.
And I love food, for me, that I don’t want to share with others.
And I love sleep more than work, rest more than labour, peace more than dealing with injustice, my habits more than the effort to change.

Oh, and I love the church, but... some of the people...

Oh my, God. How hard this verb can be: to love. And what about the acceptance of being loved too. I fall so short.
I mess up so magnificently.
I sin (that’s the church word, isn’t it?).
I sin too well, too often, too naturally.
And yet, you... love... me. How bonkers is that?

Love Divine loves little old me.
Love Eternal loves the child that I am.
Love Everlasting includes me rather than excludes me from grace and hope and mercy and peace.

I love you, Lord!
**Reflection**

**What Price Love?**

You mean everything?
All I have?
I can’t, I won’t…
I have been a good man,
I have obeyed all the commandments,
all my life I lived these out.
Is that not enough?
Everything you say?
And give it to the poor?
This will get me eternal life?
And riches in heaven,
what good are they to me there?
I can’t do it,
no I just can’t.
Eternal life will have to pass me by.

It didn’t need to be that way,
this young man could have followed Jesus.
He could have followed and had it all.
Except the ‘all’ is not what he thought it was.
He thought having was all that mattered.
And yet love is all about giving.
Love is not about self but about the other.
Love turns the usual order of things upside down.
Love comes from the inside out.
Love…

**Take Home Ideas**

Why is money so important to us? Is it a sense security? Don Marquis said, “There is nothing so habit-forming as money.”
Researchers claim that the major concern of most college and university students is getting the right education to land the right job in order to make the right amount of money. Money is perceived as power and security—the more you have of it, the more you have of them.

A story of tandem bikers is telling. Riding their two-seater along a road, they encountered a steep hill. Panting and groaning, they finally achieved the summit. “What a climb!” said one when they stopped for a rest break. “Yeah!” said the other. “And if I hadn’t kept the brake on, we would have slid right down again!”

That is often a picture of us, racing through life. We puff up the hill expanding our earnings and savings while gripping the brake ever more tightly, scared of what might happen if we ever let go.

- During this week stop and think of what you own, your possessions. What value do you really place on them?
- Think about your eating and drinking habits. Do you only buy the best of the best, the brand labels or do you have a mixture?

Pray for those people who have no security, no money, no home and those who rob, cheat and steal to find that security.

**Sending**

May we go from here
leaving a trail of love
in our wake
that others may find it
and treasure it
as the way to God’s heart
and the path to a life
lived in the richness
of God’s promises.

**Praise/Hymns**

Courage brother, do not stumble... CH4 513
God loves you and I love you... JP 348
I have decided to follow Jesus... MP 272
I want to serve the purpose of God... MP 859
I want to walk with Jesus Christ... MP 302
Jesus' love is very wonderful... JP 139
Lord, you have come to the seashore... CH4 532
Love divine... CH4 519 / MP 449
May the mind of Christ my Saviour... CH4 536 / MP 463
Only by grace can we enter... MP 914
This little light of mine... JP 258
When we walk with the Lord (Trust and Obey)... MP 760
Will you come and follow... CH4 533
Your hand, O God, has guided... CH4 511 / MP 705
age group ideas

gathering

Through The Small Gap  all age

You will need: items for creating an obstacle course.

Set up an obstacle course which includes a section where children have to try to get through a very small space. Let children (either all children or three or four children, depending on numbers and time) go round the obstacle course.

Talk about how difficult it was to squeeze through a small space. Use this as a way into the story of the rich young man.

crafts

Camel Lacing Card  age 3-5

You will need: simple outline drawing of camel (these should already be cut out with holes punched round the edge), crayons, bright coloured wool, sellotape, laminating pouches, laminator.

Give each child a picture of a camel and get them to colour the picture. Give each child a length of wool, with sellotape wrapped round one of the ends to make a stiff section of wool. Show the children how to go in and out of the holes ‘sewing’ round the edge of the camel, using the wool and the stiffened end as a needle. When you get back to the first hole, cut the sellotape end off and then secure two ends of wool with tape to the back of the picture. While the children are doing other activities, one leader should laminate the camel pictures. (If you do not have time to do this, laminate the pictures during the week and give them out next week).

Talk about people wanting to follow Jesus but sometimes finding it hard as hard as a camel going through the eye of a needle. Talk about some of the things that make it difficult for people to follow Jesus and how important it is for us all to help each other to be followers.

Egg Box Camel  age 6-8

You will need: four wooden spring clip pegs and three ‘egg’ sections of egg box per child, thick A4 card, scissors, paints, brown poster paint, painting aprons/shirts, covering for tables, baby wipes, googly eyes, staples, stapler.

Divide egg boxes into sections, one single and two still joined per child. Give each child three sections to paint: one forms the head and other two form the humps of the camel. Once the paint has dried, place two humps upside down and clip clothes pegs to the corners to form legs. Turn the camel back the right way up so that it is standing. Attach the head to its body using staples and stick googly eyes onto the head.

Talk about the story and how Jesus wanted the rich young man to be his follower but the rich young man could not give up all he had and put Jesus first. Link to the idea in the story of the camel going through the eye of a needle. Discuss with the children how we can be followers of Jesus and some of the things that might make that hard for us.

Terramundi Pots  age 9-12

You will need: Terramundi pots: these are ceramic pots which have slot for coins to go in but have to be smashed to get the money out (you can buy these fairly cheaply from bargain shops), tissue paper, a small selection of decopatch papers (you can get these from craft suppliers, you only need one or two sheets per pot to brighten up plain tissue paper), watered down PVA glue (two parts glue to one part water), glue spreaders.

You might want to get one terramundi pot per child or one for the group or one per two/three children, depending on the number of children you have and whether you want them to take the pot home for them and their family to put money in or whether you want to keep the pot to be used Sunday by Sunday and the children to collect money as a group. Get the children to tear the tissue paper and decopatch paper into small pieces and then to cover the pot with paper, sticking on the pieces and overlapping them: it gets quite tricky. Make sure that you keep the money slot clear.

Talk about saving money for important things, for things you want. Discuss with the children if they have ever saved up money for something. Talk about the story and Jesus asking the rich young man to sell what he had to give money to the poor. Discuss with the children saving up money in the decorated pot(s) during Lent and then choose a charity to which to give the money they have saved.

Lent Journey  all age

You will need: six large pieces of corrugated card (about carpet tile size), lots of card footprints, string, hole punch, scissors, sellotape, felt tip pens, PVA glue, glue spreaders, collage materials.

Ask the children to work together to make a collage of today’s story. Pictures could include a camel, a needle, bags of money, a question mark, rich young man and Jesus in conversation, and so on.

The collage should be stuck onto a large piece of card. Ask the children to each decorate a footprint with their name. Punch holes in the card and at the ‘heel and toe’ of each footprint. Thread string through the holes and display. Add to this display each week of Lent with another collage tile and footprints.

Talk with the children about the season of Lent: a journey between now and Easter and talk about learning from the stories we will be reading each week. Talk about today’s story and discuss the ways we can follow Jesus.
age group ideas

activities

Who Do We Trust?  
age 3-5

You will need: print out pictures of people or things that the children might trust (for example, doctors, nurses, vets, teachers, dentists, police, firemen, paramedics, church leaders, parents, money).

Ask the children to identify the people and to give some simple reasons why it is we need to trust them. Examples might be: they help us, look after us, educate us, keep us safe, and so on.

Lenten Calendar  
age 6-12

You will need: copies of the Lenten Calendar available on page 136.

NOTE: IF POSSIBLE GIVE THIS OUT TO THE CHILDREN THE PREVIOUS WEEK TO BEGIN ON WEDNESDAY 10 FEBRUARY (ASH WEDNESDAY).

Explain to the children that this is a calendar of challenges, some that will be easy, others that may be more difficult, to try to complete over the season of Lent as we get closer to Easter Day. The calendar finishes the day before Easter Day.

Rich And Poor  
age 6-12

You will need: images of rich people in the world with a note of how much money they have (look online for the annual “world’s richest” lists, images of people living in poverty, homeless, refugees, paper, pens.

Put all the rich images on one table and on another place the people who have little or nothing. Ask the children to write down ten differences between the rich and the poor images. They might come up with things like appearance, clothes, homes, jewellery and so on.

• Who do the children think would lose out the most if their goods were stolen?
• Who would help the rich? (Insurance companies/family/friends)
• Who would help the poor? (Maybe a friend or family but they may have little)
• Ask the children to study the pictures again and then ask them what the difference is between these people in their lives of faith?
• Who should we be helping?

Note that God does not see wealth as a way of telling how good a person you are, God sees beyond to who we really are.

Love  
age 6-12

You will need: copies of the activity sheet available on page 137, pens.

As it is Valentine’s Day today, use the activity sheet to explore ways in which we express our love of God.

games

Seeking The Camels  
age 3-5

You will need: pictures of camels (you could use the template available on page 135), picture of a needle and thread or have an actual needle and thread available.

Hide the pictures of the camels around the room in which you meet and challenge the children to find them all. Show the children a picture of a needle, or better have an actual needle available and show them how to thread the needle. Then ask them if they think a camel could fit through the hole. You can tell them about the joke Jesus once told about trying to fit a camel through a needle: a joke about impossible things.

Trust Games  
all age

Today’s bible story talks trusting God which would provide the opportunity for playing some games that involve trust. For instance, falling backwards with arms outstretched and eyes closed into someone’s arms, or blindfolding one person and then having their partner direct them around the room and over obstacles.
Preparation
For the Activity/Discussion we will spend some time looking at statistics around the local area of the church. The Church of Scotland has a church statistician who ensures the statistical analysis is available and accurate for each parish. These Statistics for Mission are available on the Church of Scotland website. Your church denomination may have similar information available for your church. If not you can find information for your local area, from government websites and local newspapers. One good place to start is the Wolfram Alpha website, which does a great job on statistical information: [http://www.wolframalpha.com/](http://www.wolframalpha.com/).

For Living It Out ensure you have a foreign currency coin for each young person. If someone in the congregation has been on a holiday to a foreign land, they may have a few small denomination coins they would willingly donate to the group!

Opening Activity
Lent
Ask the young people whether they have decided to give something up for Lent, or perhaps whether they have decided to take up a new challenge for the Lent period. If they have not done so already, use this as an opportunity to talk about why people do this during this time to prepare for the coming of Holy Week and Easter.

The Word
Read Mark 10:17-31.

- Ponder how many people they think were present when this story happened?

Activity/Discussion
It is official. The kingdom breaking in with Jesus is one where people with an abundance have to give it away to those with little. Often this is tied up with money. As a young person money usually comes from family, sometimes a part time job, perhaps the government. Traditionally young people do not have much money to spend let alone give away. Often we forget how much power we have on where others spend money for us.

- How do you know who is rich or poor?
- What differences do you think being rich or poor brings?
- Is there a particular area you think of as symbolic of being poor or being rich?
- If so what do you consider are the things that help you make that determination?

Let’s look at our local area and see what it means to be poor or wealthy here in our context. (Use a range of materials gathered in your preparation time to look at the local area and see what it tells you about poverty and wealth with the area of the church.)

- Did anything in the statistics surprise you?
- Do you think people living in the next town along think our area is rich or poor? Is that view accurate?

Jesus does not see this man as rich, he sees him as someone who has something which gets in the way of following God.

- How do you feel about the statistics we have found?
- How does being rich or being poor get in the way of following Jesus?
- If Jesus is the answer, what questions does this research ask of Jesus and his followers here on earth?

Living It Out
Jesus asks the rich man to give up money. Something which makes his life easy, which gives him power, something he can rely on, yet Jesus tells him to give it away. The agenda for the rich man’s life is set by his money.

This week take a coin, this coin is not a coin from this country, it is not something you can spend here. Keep it in your pocket as a reminder that Jesus wants us to think differently about who and what we are. Jesus challenges us to have a view of our lives in the terms of the kingdom come, not in the terms money sets out for us.
This week’s narrative contains three different elements, each, as is common in Mark’s gospel, linked by urgency and by the road to Jerusalem and, ultimately, Jesus’ death. In this second week in Lent, the narrative raises many questions for us as we seek to follow Christ.

Jesus is, once again, valiantly attempting to teach the disciples about things that lie ahead, about fickleness and betrayal and condemnation and death. There was fear around at what was happening and confusion about the message that Jesus was sharing: words that offered little comfort to those who had given up everything to follow Jesus and might have, perhaps understandably, anticipated reward. Although Jesus speaks plainly enough, there was great reluctance to take on the import of his words. The disciples did not want to hear the outcome of which Jesus spoke. And, even though they were on their way to Jerusalem, their hope was for an outcome other than that of which Jesus spoke.

How ironic, then, that the narrative becomes embroiled in a discussion about who should sit on Jesus’ right or left in glory. The disciples do not want to contemplate Jesus’ death but James and John do want to ensure their place in glory. However, that is not something that Jesus can promise or deliver. Even if, as James and John affirm, they are able to endure the suffering that Jesus is about to endure, there are no guarantees that their reward will be as desired.

Jesus seizes the opportunity to reiterate his teaching on the first being last and the great being servants. Harsh words for us to consider in these days when entrepreneurship is encouraged and when competition in all things pervades society. And yet, there is a growing movement to take cognizance of wisdom and gifts that are often overlooked, a greater awareness that service is never one-sided but a mutual sharing of opportunity. This is all cold comfort for disciples who feel they are doing their bit and might reap some recompense for leaving all they knew behind them in order to follow Jesus.

In both instances, when Jesus confronts brothers James and John and when he encounters Blind Bartimaeus, he asks them, "What do you want me to do for you?" There is often a catharsis in being challenged to name our desires. But, more than that, Jesus makes no assumptions about what folk want or need. And being confronted with a question allowed Bartimaeus to proclaim his faith. We might give some pause to how the blind man seemed to understand what Jesus was about better than the disciples did. He received his sight and immediately followed Jesus.

This second week of Lent, we might explore questions that ponder what it is that we do not get about the way of Jesus. Are we in denial of The Way he calls us to follow? Are we making assumptions about the folk around us, their needs and desires? Do we recognise the gifts that those we presume to be helping bring? Do we expect rewards for following the path of discipleship? Questions like these might focus our thoughts on the call to discipleship that accompanies us through Lent as we too journey to Jerusalem.
the story

What Do You Want?

A dialogue which highlights some contrasts, and an ultimate similarity, between the stories of James and John and of Bartimaeus.

Voice A: There were three men who wanted something.
Voice B: Three men who wanted something from Jesus.
Voice A: Two men came confidently from his closest circle.
Voice B: One man shouted from afar, a stranger in a crowd.
Voice A: The two men came and demanded, “Jesus, do what we ask!”
Voice B: The one man came and begged, “Jesus, have mercy!”
Voice A: When others heard the demand of the two men, they were indignant and angry.
Voice B: When others heard the cry of the one man, they rebuked him and told him to be quiet.
Voice A: Jesus was easily approached by the two men. Unbeckoned, they came.
Voice B: Jesus was out of reach to the one man, but Jesus stopped for the one man and said, “Call him,” and he came.
Voice A: The two men wanted to be seen.
Voice B: The one man wanted to see.
Voice A: The two men wanted glory.
Voice B: The one man wanted to see.
Voice A: The two men wanted places of honour.
Voice B: The one man wanted to see.
Voice A: Jesus raised many questions with the two men.
Voice B: Jesus demonstrated a straight answer for the one man.
Voice A: Eventually Jesus said to the two men, “No, I can’t give you what you demand.”
Voice B: Immediately Jesus said to the one man, “Yes, I can give you what you ask.”
Voice A: Jesus, with many words, reasoned with the two men, that their minds might be changed.
Voice B: Jesus, with few words, released the one man, that his life might be changed.
Voice A: The two men heard and they didn’t get it.
Voice B: The one man heard and he got it.
Voice A: And the two men followed Jesus on the way.
Voice B: And the one man followed Jesus on the way.
Voice A: There were three men who wanted something
Voice B: and they followed Jesus
Voice A: on the way.

Retelling For Young People

Will They Get What They Want?

Make room for the children to give their own guesses and reasonings towards the end.

This is a story from long ago, about three men who all wanted Jesus to give them something. The three men were called James, John and Bartimaeus. James and John were two of Jesus’ closest friends. Bartimaeus had never met Jesus, but he’d heard about him. Bartimaeus was blind, and he spent most of his time sitting begging at the sides of the roads.

The one thing that James and John really wanted was to know that they were the most important people of all Jesus’ friends! They wanted to be the special ones! They wanted to know that they would always get to sit beside Jesus, even when they went to heaven!

What do you think Bartimaeus wanted? He wasn’t trying to be important. He wasn’t hoping to be special. He didn’t think he’d ever get to sit beside Jesus, not while he was still alive or up in heaven. But he really wanted to be able to see. He just wanted to stop being blind, so that he wouldn’t have to sit at the road sides begging any more.

So, do you think Jesus gave James and John what they wanted? Did Jesus promise them that yes, they were the most important and special people of all. Do you think Jesus gave Bartimaeus what he wanted? Did Jesus take away his blindness and help him to see again?

Jesus said yes to somebody. And he said no to somebody. Who do you think he said yes to? Who do you think he said no to? I wonder why... what do you think?
worship ideas

Through the Season
Please visit pages 4 and 5 where you will find ideas that can be used to help set the scene throughout this season. This week add a cut-out of a person with ‘Who do you think you are?’ written inside or beside it to your large question mark.

Gathering Activity
For each Sunday in Lent, prepare a slip of paper for each worshipper with the focus question for the week, in this case “Who do you think you are?” to help worshippers reflect and make choices about their attitudes to life and the kingdom. Do not feel limited by these suggested questions. Adapt or re-write them to bring out your focal point.

If you want to develop this idea a bit further there is an ‘Ups and Downs of Lent’ Journey Sheet in the resources on page 134 which can be added to each week.

2nd Sunday: Ups and Downs
Which of these attitudes is the snake that makes the kingdom slip away and which is the ladder to the kingdom come?

A. God has promised that when I follow Jesus I will be blessed for my faithfulness.
B. A follower of Jesus finds blessing when faithfully following Jesus’ example.

Call to Worship
In this important season we learn that we are important to God and that each person is valued, so lay down titles and positions and pick up the threads of fellowship and joining with our neighbours let us worship God who calls one and all to join him in the journey of love.

Opening Responses
Leader: What is the greatest gift of life?
All: To know we are made in the image of God.
Leader: What does that require of us?
All: To love our neighbour as ourself.
Leader: Where does that take us?
All: To a place where we see all are equal.
Leader: Come then to worship in that place where God’s people find the fullness of life and learn to share its fullness with others.

Prayer of Adoration and Confession
From the stars to the seas, from mountain to meadows, landscape to loch, creation is a vast canvas declaring your glory, Lord.
Open our eyes and help us to see!

From a new born child to octogenarian, from African to Australian, Caucasian to Cantonese, humanity is a vast canvas declaring your glory, Lord.
Open our eyes and help us to see!

From crocodile to caterpillar, from wombats to weasels, beavers to buffalo, wildlife is a vast canvas declaring your glory, Lord.
Open our eyes and help us to see!

Open our eyes and help us to see your amazing universe of diversity, delight and dynamism through spirits soaring in wonder, hearts lifted with awe and minds filled with imaginative thought.

Open our eyes and help us to see your amazing world and our place within it all, our duty of care for it all, our call to serve it all.

We gather in church today, thrilled to view the wonder of life, yet not to be blind to troubles and traumas and tyranny.

Open our eyes to see environmental concern.
Open our eyes to see the needs of hurting humanity.
Open our eyes to see disharmony in nature.

May we respond in ways that help rather than hinder, assist rather than aggregate, maintain rather than mistreat.

Oh, open our eyes in worship today, Lord of creation, to see from your holy perspective.
Amen.

Prayer of Dedication
We come with eyes opened, longing to really see. Help us to respond with open hearts ready to feel, open hands ready to give, open minds ready to accept, open wallets ready to share, open churches ready to welcome.

Receive what we give you now, open to the riches you have already provided us. Use what we offer to open the way for more to know your love.
Amen.
Prayers for Others and Ourselves

As we continue on our journey in this season of Lent we continue our pilgrimage with you, Lord Jesus, our teacher, our healer, our Lord, our servant King.

Your journey leads to Jerusalem and the cross; a pathway to pain and sorrow, a road to torture and death. And yet on this adventure you call us too: the faithful and the doubter; the convinced and confused; the dedicated and the defeated; the visionary and victim and volunteer.

You see us exactly as we are. Oh to see ourselves as you and others see us! And oh to see the reality of the world we live in; a world we prefer to shut or eyes to, where children suffer and parents can offer no relief; where suffering comes to rich and to poor; where illness an calamity or bereavement and brokenness is around almost every corner.

As our eyes are opened to your world in need as our eyes fill with tears and a bloodshot from the stress heal us, Lord, like you healed Bartimaeus. Heal us for our own benefit. heal us for the benefit of our families. Heal us for the benefit of your church and world as a whole that healed we may heal others, cared for we may care for others, changed we may change others for the better.

We are your children—no more, no less. Your children are our sisters, our brothers— at home and abroad. As family we see more clearly your Kingdom in our midst. Praise you for the vision you give. Amen.

Reflection

He lived in darkness, he lived by his hearing and touch and smell. Tasting life rather than seeing life. But he wanted it all: the full spectrum of senses. Here was his chance. 'Jesus! Son of David! Take pity on me!' "Shoosh," he is told. "Be quiet!"

But no, this was his chance, and he was taking it. "Son of David! Take pity on me!" And there Jesus was, right in front of him. And his dearest wish given.

He felt whole for the first time in a long time: to feel whole, to feel worth, to feel loved. Bartimaeus now had it all; life in all its fullness. And faith was all it took.

All-Age Prayer

Leader: My eyes are closed when I sleep.
All: Open my eyes, awake to your amazing world.
Leader: My eyes are closed when I pray.
All: Open my eyes to see who and what to pray for.
Leader: My eyes are closed when I'm frightened.
All: Open my eyes to know you are with me always. Amen.

Reflective Prayer

My eyes are dim. I cannot see. And, actually, I have got my specs with me.

I am intentionally short-sighted at times if I am honest, God, for I do not want to see problem after problem, trial after trial, terror after terror or trauma after trauma.

Do I want healed of my blindness? Do I want to really see? Do I truly long that thou be my vision? Do I really want to even know who I really am?

Oh God! Yes. Yes, I do want to see how I can feed and clothe and welcome and help. But sometimes I do not know where to start! Sometimes I fear where it all might end!

Maybe if you just open my eyes a little bit at a time, Lord, not instantly taking me from blindness straight into blinding me with the full horror of all the needs in the world.

Open my eyes to see what I can actually achieve; what I can realistically assist with. I can help, can't I? There are things I can do, aren't there?

I'll do it, God. Open my eyes and lead me where you will. But help me, still, please. Amen.
Take Home Ideas

This is the second week of Lent.

- Did you take-up or give-up anything on Ash Wednesday?
- Have you managed to keep it going?

The period of Lent is not just about taking-up or giving-up something over a six week period: you are meant to learn something from it also.

Some of the disciples are struggling to understand and learn from Jesus about what it means to be a disciple.

- How do you understand your position within your family?
- Within the church?
- Within any organisation you are connected with?
- Do you put yourself first or last?
- Are you overly ambitious and then don’t follow through?
- Do you like a place of honour when you go somewhere or are part of something?
- Are you the type of person who gets upset when a new comer joins something you are involved in and you get annoyed?

Read this passage again at home slowly asking yourself: what does it mean to be a disciple?

Sending

Christ the who,
Christ the where,
Christ the when,
Christ the why.

Christ the who,
Christ the when,
Christ the heart.

Christ be our want,
Christ be our way,
Christ by our wherefore,
Christ be our whole.

Christ in all things,
for all time,
for all people,
be with us.

Praise/Hymns

Be thou my vision  
Brother, sister, let me serve you  
Come to Jesus, he’s amazing  
From heaven you came  
He came to earth, not to be served  
Healing God, Almighty Father  
Inspired by love and anger  
O Christ the healer  
O Jesus, I have promised  
O Lord, all the world belongs to you  
Reach out and touch the Lord  
There is a longing  
Turn your eyes upon Jesus  
When I feel the touch  
When Jesus the healer passed  
When to our world the Saviour came
Blindfold Game  all age
You will need: blindfolds, various objects to identify by touch. Note that some children get very anxious at the thought of being blindfolded.

Ask for a couple of volunteers. Put a blindfold on each volunteer in turn and give each an object to hold. The child should try to guess what he or she is holding just by touch. Use this as a way into the story of Bartimaeus.

Touchy-Feely Collage  age 3-5
You will need: A4 card or sugar paper, PVA glue, glue spreaders, a wide variety of materials and/or papers with as great a variety of textures as possible (corrugated card, crinkly paper, cellophane, feathers, wool, foil sweet wrappers, and so on).

Give each child a sheet of card and get them to make a collage with all the different bits and pieces. Perhaps they could stick some of the pieces on with their eyes closed.

Discuss with the children what they think it would be like to be able to see well or at all. Perhaps one of the children might know someone who is blind. Talk about the story and how Bartimaeus asked Jesus for help. Talk about us asking Jesus for help when we pray. It might be fun to have some touchy-feely toddler toys for this age group to play with today.

Open My Eyes Picture (1)  age 6-8
You will need: copy the All-Age Prayer (see page 17) onto A5 sheets of coloured paper (in straight text, not as responsive), A4 card in a variety of colours, white card, felt tip pens, laminating pouches, laminator.

Using this week’s All-Age Prayer as the basis, give each child a copy of the prayer and get them to choose the colour of card they would like. Ask the children to stick the prayer in the middle of the A4 card, leaving a large border all the way round. Get the children to illustrate the words, ideas of the prayer in the border using felt tip pens and stickers: for example, closed eyes, open eyes, praying hands, animals, trees, flowers and other aspects of God’s amazing world.

Discuss with the children what they think it would be like not to be able to see well or at all. Perhaps one of the children might know someone who is blind. Talk about the story and how Bartimaeus asked Jesus for help. Talk about us asking Jesus for help when we pray. Talk about the ideas in the All-Age Prayer. Discuss with the children if they ever feel the way people are described in the prayer.

Open My Eyes Picture (2)  age 9-12
You will need: copy the All-Age Prayer (see page 17) onto A5 sheets of coloured paper (in straight text, not as responsive), sunglasses template, A4 card in a variety of colours, white card, felt tip pens, downloaded logos of charities which help others (it would be good to include some related with sight, some well known larger charities and some local charities, scissors, glue sticks.

Ask the children to choose the colour of card they like and to draw round your sunglasses template. Get the children to cut their glasses out. Get the children to draw ‘lens’ part of glasses on to white card and then cut out and stick on at the appropriate place on glasses. Make sure that the lens area is fairly big.

Have the children write the words of the All-Age Prayer in one lens and to stick logos of charities in the other lens. Then get the children to decorate the ‘frame’ of the glasses with felt tip pens.

Discuss with the children what they think it would be like not to be able to see well or at all. Perhaps one of the children might know someone who is blind. Talk about the story and how Bartimaeus asked Jesus for help. Talk about us asking Jesus for help when we pray. Talk about the ideas in the All-Age Prayer. Discuss with the children if they ever feel the ways described in the prayer. Talk about the ways charities help other people.

Lent Journey  all age
You will need: see page 11 for details of this craft activity that spans this whole season.

Get the children to work together to make a collage of today’s story. Their pictures could include eyes, hands reaching to help, question marks. Ask the children to write the days of the week on the footprints; that will connect to next week’s story.

Chair Covers  all age
You will need: fabric chair cover (basic white or cream cotton variety like ones people have for changing colour schemes of banqueting chairs for weddings/ functions), fabric pens.

Encourage the children to work together to decorate the chair cover with words and pictures which tell today’s story.

While working on this talk about the story with a focus on the James and John / First and Last part of the story and discuss with the children ways we can put others first.
age group ideas
activities

Discussion

You will need: paper, pens or flipchart.

What can we do to help people? There has been one emergency after another and one disaster after another for quite some time. Write down those that you remember and ask the children if they remember these events and if they, their school, their family or your church helped out in any way. What did they do? Jesus said ‘your faith made you well’ and the church people have faith that we can help also and that is why we as a church are so involved in many aspects of the world we live in.

After the earthquake in Nepal over 400,000 were made homeless. The World Mission Council of the Church of Scotland, as an example, have asked presbyteries and churches to ‘Let us build a house’ and provide immediate relief and shelter to those who find themselves homeless. The immediate relief has helped but long term planning needs to be put in place. Could your church helping to build a house in Nepal this year? Visit http://churchofscotland.org.uk/serve/world_mission/get_involved/let_us_build_a_house.

In other regions or denominations, there will be other similar projects that could be used here as the focus for the children.

Punchinello

A follow the leader game. All the children stand in a circle holding hands and, as they say the rhyme, walk around in the circle.

What can you do, Punchinello little fellow, what can you do, Punchinello little dear?

The child in the middle sings and acts out what he can do.

I can do this, Punchinello little fellow, I can do this, Punchinello little dear.

While they sing this they can hop on one foot, twirl around, wave their hands in the air—anything they want. After the middle child does this, the outer circle responds by doing the same actions and singing.

We’ll do the same, Punchinello little fellow, we’ll do the same, Punchinello little dear.

Finally the outer circle sing,

Who do you chose, Punchinello little fellow, who do you choose, Punchinello little dear?

The child that is picked swaps over in the middle of the circle.

Follow The Directions

For this game all the children must be sitting on a seat in a circle facing inwards. The leader calls out a random direction such as ‘if you have a sister move two places to the left’. Some children may move while others will not and you may end up with people sitting on a seat and another person sitting on their knee.

Keep this going: ‘if you have a cat move 5 places to your right’, ‘if you are wearing blue move three to left’ and so on.

You may end up with four or five people on a seat. Every now and then take away a seat to make it more difficult. When one of the piles of people collapses start again.

Musical Chairs

You will need: chairs.

In today’s Bible story the disciples are arguing about which seats they will take. A perfect opportunity for the classic party game.

Follow My Leader

‘Jesus was walking ahead of people and there were lots of people following.’ Let each child take the front leading role to walk, run, skip around the room and doing actions which everyone behind must follow.

In And Out The Dusty Bluebells

This is an old favourite that is not used very much now, but emphasises following and being led by someone. If you do not know it, ask someone older in the congregation who no doubt will and could lead this with the younger generation.

One person remains apart while everyone else forms a circle with their hands joined and up forming arches. Everyone sings the rhyme.

The person on the outside goes in and out around the circle, until the song ends. Then they stand behind the person where they finished. Both of these children form a chain and go in and out as the song begins again.

The game continues until there is no one left to make the circle.

The words for the rhyme can be readily found online.

Sunday 21 February 2016
discussion starters for teens
what do you want?

Preparation
For the Discussion you will need paper and pens. Each person has to write down how many people out of 100 the statement would be true for. There is no right or wrong answer here, it is simply a way to discuss how each young person thinks about the statement for themselves and wider society.

For Living It Out we will invite the young people to spend some time considering what they should ask God for. You have the freedom to pick a song which inhabits this quiet space and speaks into it.

As an example, Rich Mullins’s song ‘Hold me Jesus’ from the album A Liturgy, a Legacy and a Ragamuffin Band would work well.

Opening Activity
If You Love Me, Baby, Smile
A classic game to start with today. The young people form a circle with one in the middle. The middle person must approach others in the circle and ask, “If you love me baby, will you smile?” The person being questioned must answer, “I love you baby, but I just can’t smile.” If she does smile or laugh, she goes in the middle and the previous middle person joins the circle.

The person who is in the middle is not allowed to touch other players but may make as many funny faces as she wishes.

The Word
Read Mark 10:32-52 together and ask the young people to picture the scene.

• How would you describe the road Jesus was walking on?
• What would be the noise level on the road?

Activity/Discussion
In this passage we see a confident Jesus. This is someone who knows he could do miracles all day and night, he could tell people what they need to hear or their deepest desires, yet he asks: what do you want me to do for you?

• When you think of God how often are you asked what God can do for you?
• How does this God who asks, match up with the God of Lord’s Prayer?

Today we are going to play a game of “How Many Out Of 100?” Each player needs to be given 4 pieces of A4 paper and a pen (use both sides). When asked each question the player will write down how many people out of 100 the statement would be true for.

1. How many people out of 100 do you think turn to God only to get what they want? (To pass exams, to find a parking space, to take away pain, or something like that.)
2. How many people out of 100 believe that God’s plan is set and we cannot change it?
3. How many people out of 100 believe prayer is actually taking to God?
4. How many people out of 100 when they say “Oh My God?” actually are meaning to talk to God?
5. When given the option to ask from God how many people out of 100 would ask for honour and prestige?
6. When given the option to ask from God how many people out of 100 would ask for mercy and healing?
7. How many people out of 100 would be successful with their request?

Living It Out
We see in James and John and Bartimaeus a contrast with their requests. John and James from the positions of first, Bartimaeus from the position of last. The question that Jesus asks twice in this passage is “what do you want me to do for you?” Jesus stands at the door and knocks, like a God who asks us what we want. A God who is open to the adventure, a God whose plans for your life is held in tension with what you want and actually ask for.

We are going to listen to a song, and during this song you are invited to consider what it is that you want to ask from God. Then ask God for it.

we finish by using the Sending Prayer from page 18 above as a sending out blessing on the group.
This can be quite a dangerous passage. Of course, we would like to think, in a good way, most of the gospel is dangerous, but here is an example when we can tip the scales in the wrong direction and the danger is not a badge of bravery and faithfulness to be worn with pride but a darker one that is based in prejudice and arrogance.

There is a bit of a back-story to this parable. The Gospel of Mark is written just about the time of the Temple’s destruction and the Roman’s pushing down hard on the Jews after an uprising. It was a difficult time to be associated to the Jewish faith and the fledgling Christian community, a new branch of that faith, is caught in the middle of all of this. They have broken away from Judaism proper but are struggling because they are so small, nervous of their new worldview in amongst the much more ancient and established Jewish culture. This happens a lot in times of change when the old understandings and new outlooks are all up for grabs. The vineyard was always an image for and of Israel but a new group is now on the scene who call themselves the inheritors of this very kingdom. The old certainties are becoming less certain and the stakes are high.

When Mark’s community heard this parable their ears will have been tuned to different things from our own. Their sensitivities will have understood the tenants as being the religious authorities of the time: the pharisees and Jewish religious leaders. The early Christian church will have understood these Pharisees and Jewish religious leaders as wanting the land and harvest for themselves but seen themselves as the true inheritors of Jesus’ Way.

This context of the story with the background of the destruction of the temple explains why that event happened: the previous inheritors of the faith did not behave correctly and what they had was taken away from them. In many ways it was a clear sign to the early listeners in the church that ownership was being passed to them.

In many familiar ways you can understand what is happening here as it happens time and again in the world: the smaller, newer movement, being persecuted, sees themselves as the righteous inheritors and the bigger group is getting their just desserts. It is a very human response.

The problem comes when the smaller sibling eventually becomes the more powerful one yet still reads the passage in the original way without being aware that they have changed character in the story. Christianity, as it has grown to be one of the most powerful religious movements, has indeed done this over the ages and some have used such a parable as a theological reason for anti-semitism which has contributed to some of the most serious pain inflicted on a people from pogroms to holocaust. It can be misused to launch the growth of the Church Triumphant, with such passages as this one used as a get-out-of-jail-free card when the Church is brought to task with what it has done historically.

It is one of these parables where we ought not to stand behind Jesus and point at others. It is a parable that invites us to think quite clearly about ourselves and how we see ourselves in the context of the kingdom. Are we the ones who laud the kingdom over others, believing it is ours by divine right or recognise instead the kingdom is no ones but God’s and it is not a piece of ground but a community, a way of living that is shaped by the way we connect and respond to others?
Two Stories, One Theme

The Parable Of The Wicked Tenants

Jesus was in Jerusalem with his disciples. He had been teaching and preaching. The crowds were listening. The religious leaders were watching and listening and were looking for a way to kill Jesus. And Jesus told a story: this is it.

Once there was a man who planted a vineyard. He made a good job of it. He planted a hedge round it, and dug a pit for the winepress, and built a tower for the workers to keep watch over the harvest. The man let the vineyard to tenants and he went to another country.

When the time of harvest came the man sent one of his servants to collect his share of the fruit. And the tenants beat up the servant and sent him away empty handed. The man sent another servant and this servant was hit on the head and badly wounded. The man sent another servant and this servant did not return because the tenants killed him. The man kept on trying and more of his servants were killed or wounded.

The man had a son, and in the end he sent his son to the vineyard to collect his share of the harvest. He believed that the tenants would show respect to his son. The tenants who were watching from the tower saw the son coming and they recognised him. They said to each other, this is the heir, if we kill the heir the vineyard will belong to us. So the tenants killed the man’s son and threw his body out of the vineyard. End of story? Not quite.

Jesus asked the people listening a question: What do you think the man who owns the vineyard will do? And then Jesus answered his own question: He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to someone else.

The religious leaders realised that the story was about them—they were the ones behaving like the tenants—but the crowds were watching and they could do nothing and they walked away.

The Question About Paying Taxes

You remember the question? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not?

It was difficult—there had been riots in Jerusalem—the Jewish people objected to the taxes they had to pay to Rome. If Jesus said it was lawful to pay taxes a lot of Jewish people would say he was wrong.

And if Jesus said that it was unlawful for the Romans to impose taxes on the Jewish people the religious leaders had a perfect excuse to tell the Romans that Jesus was a troublemaker and should be killed.

You remember the answer? Bring me a coin and let me look at it. Whose likeness is on the coin? Caesars. So give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.

Brilliant! Even the questioners who had been sent to trap Jesus were amazed. A great answer.

And?

In the light of the story about the tenants and Jesus’ answer about taxes, two questions to ponder and discuss:

What do you think you own? How do you use your resources?

Retelling For Young People

For Under 9s

Emily was seven. She had had a birthday party. She had been given some presents. She loved the new swing in the garden and her pink and green stripy socks. Some of her family had given her money.

Emily needed to decide what to do with her money. Her mum had suggested that Emily saved some of her money towards the new schoolbag that she wanted to buy. And there might be other things that Emily found she wanted before Christmas and if she spent all her money now she wouldn’t be able to buy anything for months.

Emily thought.

Part of her would like to go out now and spend all her money on sweets! If she did that it would be great while it lasted but it wouldn’t last long and she’d probably be sick! Perhaps she should put all her money in the bank, or maybe she could spend a bit now and save a bit for later. Grown-ups always talked about saving some money for a rainy day—that was silly—all you needed for a rainy day was a coat and wellies and Emily already had those.

Emily wasn’t sure what to do. As it was already teatime she decided that she would think about it later.

If you were Emily, what would you do?

For Over 9s

• Do you know what taxes are?
• Do you know why governments need to charge people taxes?
• Do you know who pays taxes?
• Do you know what some of the taxes in your country are used for?

Think about roads. Often in bad weather roads get damaged and they need to be mended. The people who use roads most are the people who are drivers. Most people who own a car or a lorry pay a tax to the government, some of which is used to repair the roads. Is that fair?

Talk about VAT, Income tax, stamp duties and so on (there are plenty of websites to help give information).

Talk about pensions, National Health Service, social security benefits.

• If you were the government which new tax would you like to introduce?
• How would you spend the money that you raised from your new tax?
Through the Season

On pages 4 and 5 you will find details of the visual focus based on the use of a large question mark. Add a cut-out of a bunch of grapes with 'What do you think you own?' written inside or beside it in a winding manner to represent the vineyard.

Gathering Activity

As per the previous Sundays in Lent, prepare a slip of paper for each worshipper with the focus question for the week, in this case "What do you think you own?" to help worshippers reflect and make choices about their attitudes to life and the kingdom. Do not feel limited by these suggested questions. Adapt or rewrite them to bring out your focal point.

If you want to develop this idea a bit further there is an ‘Ups and Downs of Lent’ Journey Sheet in the resources on page 134 which can be added to each week.

3rd Sunday: Ups and Downs

Which of these attitudes is the snake that makes the kingdom slip away and which is the ladder to the kingdom come?

A. Being a follower of Jesus helps to make me a better person than others.

B. Being a follower of Jesus helps be to become a better person for others.

Call to Worship

We are heading for the kingdom:

a place where new visions are made,

linked arm in arm with the people of God,

the young and the old,

the poor and the rich,

the able and the infirm,

walking together on a level plane.

So let us lay aside our worldly ways and wants and turn to God who will supply all our needs to reach our destination.

Opening Responses

For these responses, ask different individuals to be a 'voice'.

Have a child and elderly person, a disabled person, someone dressed either as a poor person or who comes in dress down jeans, someone who holds a very high position in society, and so on, a real mixture. As each person comes forward they speak the 'voice' part and the congregation responds. Repeat for as many people as you have to participate in this response.

Voice: I ask you to see who I am,

All: equal in God's sight and loved.

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

God of generosity and openness,

we come as workers in your kingdom harvest
to sing our praises,
to share our joys,
to relieve our burdens,
to listen for your word
and to share in communion with each other.

We come recognising all that you have done for us,
in the openness of a world of choice
where we are able to shape our future
and the future of our communities and world
through the decisions we make on our own
and together as a people.

We praise you for the freedom that brings us,
and today we recognise that freedom with thankful hearts.

We praise you for the part you seek us to play,
for the ministries into which you invite us,
for the situations that allow us to share good news through deed and word,
and for the encouragement your Spirit brings
as we grow in faith,
in understanding
and in our ability to serve.

With such freedom and opportunity
comes responsibility and temptation.

Like any good workers,
we are called to work together for the sake
of the bigger goal,
but like some workers,
we can be tempted to work solely for our own benefit,
not counting the cost of our decisions
as they impact on others
or on society as a whole.

Forgive us, Lord of generosity and openness,
when we fail to live up to your expectations
and crush the generosity you extend to us.

Forgive us, Lord of generosity and openness,
when we deny other servants their place
and trap ourselves in small-mindedness.

Forgive us, Lord of generosity and openness,
when we fail to recognise that your kingdom
is not the same as the kingdoms of the world,
that your reign is of a different order.

May we recognise once more the worth we have
in your eyes,
that we are valued beyond any worldly value,
and in return know your true worth
as the King of all kings,
the Lord of lords,
and the Prince of peace.

Amen.
Prayers for Others and Ourselves

Whose face do we see, Lord God?
When we look at a coin, do we see the face of a monarch, a president, an emperor? Or do we see the potential that coin symbolises, a potential that can be unleashed for good or for ill, for selfless service or for selfish gain, for creativity as part of your kingdom or for business as usual, profit margins, and lording it over others.

We pray today for those in the workplace who get carried away by unscrupulous practices, for the obvious: theft and deceit of customers and businesses; and others that are pervasive yet hidden: using international borders to get around paying taxes, and yet you see all this, Lord. You know what is owned by us, in our practices and failures, and what we should aspire to in fairness and justice for all.

We pray today for countries that suffer as a result of bad management, for people trying to do what is right in societies where corruption is an epidemic, and for those seeking to bring changes to systems that are inherently imbalanced.

We pray today for our communities, that all people might work together, recognising each other's differences but striving to benefit each other, refusing to take advantage of others, and instead building a community that mirrors the values of your Kingdom.

We pray today for all those who are suffering, whether because of personal losses, of health, of grief or of conflict, and pray that they would reflect on what really lasts, the love that is shared and known, the relationships that need to be nurtured and grown, that through these we might all grow stronger.

Amen.

Prayer of Dedication

May we, as we bring our gifts today, recognise the true worth in what we bring, that our gifts would value the God who is worthy of our praise and worship, that they would symbolise our own commitment and the value we place on that commitment.

May we, as workers in the harvest field of our Lord, dedicate ourselves to that service, today and tomorrow.

Amen.

Reflection

That bright shiny coin in your pocket or purse, what is it worth?
1p, 2p, 5p... a whole £1 even?
What are you going to do with it?
What will it buy you?

What if I said it could buy you an education? Or a visit to a qualified doctor? Or a water pump for a village? What is it said it could show God's love?

That shiny coin could do all of these things and more. Added to other shiny coins, and through our own choices in how we spend our money, we can do wonderful things, and yet still buy the things we want for ourselves.

Tomorrow Fairtrade Fortnight begins. And with your shiny coin you could be making a life changing choice. Each time you buy something that has been fairly traded a child begins an education, or a sick person gets the chance of being well, or a village gets fresh water. And God's love is on display.

So, that shiny coin in your pocket or purse, what is it worth?
worship ideas

Take Home Ideas

Each day this week pick up a coin and look at it. Reflect on the value of that coin today and what the value of it would have been many years ago.

Look at the date on the coin: reflect on the events of that year good and bad. Then look at the outline of the Queen’s head. Render what is due by law.

Ask yourself:
- Do I pay my taxes and on time?
- Do I pay a fair price for goods I buy?
- Do I ever try to cheat or claim for things that are not due to me?

Jesus teaches us to be fair so make a conscious effort this week to buy some Fair Trade goods and think twice before you try to cheat in whatever subtle form that may take.

Sending

Leader: We are people of the Way.
All: We belong to God.
Leader: We are children of peace.
All: We belong to God.
Leader: We are guardians of truth.
All: We belong to God.
Leader: We are rooted in faith.
All: We belong to God.
Leader: We are sharers of love.
All: We belong to God.
Leader: We are building the kingdom.
All: We belong to God.
Leader: We are receivers of life
All: for we belong to God.

Praise/Hymns

Almighty Father of all things CH4 497
For the fruits of all creation CH4 231 / MP 253
Forth in thy name, O Lord CH4 529 / MP 159
God, when you called our church by grace online at http://carolynshymns.com/god_when_you_called_our_church_by_grace.html
Heaven shall not wait CH4 362
His ways are not our ways JP 364
I stand amazed in the presence MP 296
Is it lawful to pay taxes? online at http://carolynshymns.com/is_it_lawful_to_pay_taxes.html
Jesus Christ is waiting CH4 360
Jesus take me as I am MP 382
Judge eternal, throned in splendour CH4 264 / MP 395
O Lord, the clouds are gathering CH4 708 / MP 509
Son of God, eternal Saviour CH4 468
Take my life, Lord, let it be CH4 502 / MP 624
Who can sound the depths of sorrow? MP 766
age group ideas
gathering

How Many Coins Do I Need?  all age

You will need: items for creating a ‘shop’ such as tin of soup, apple, small ball, packet of clothes pegs, coins, paper and pen.

Lay out the items as per a shop display with a realistic price for each item on a price tag/card beside each item. Have a pile of coins of different values available.

Ask the children ‘Which coins would I need to buy item X?’ and get them to find the coins. You could combine items ‘Which coins would I need to buy item X and item Y?’

Use this as an introduction to the story.

crafts

Coin Rubbing (1)  age 3-5

You will need: coins (as per Gathering Activity), foreign and/or old coins, crayons (large are better), white paper, scissors, sugar paper, glue sticks.

Give the children a sheet of white paper, a selection of coins and different colours of crayons. Get the children to each place a coin under the paper and then to rub over the coin with the crayon. Repeat with different coins and different colours of crayons. Help the children to cut out the coins and then get the children to stick their coins onto the sugar paper.

Talk about the symbols and face on the coins showing which country the coins will have worth. Talk about how we belong to God and God loves us.

Coin Rubbing (2)   age 6-8

You will need: coins (as per Gathering Activity), foreign and/or old coins, crayons (large are better), white paper, card photo/picture frames, PVA glue, glue spreaders, felt tip pens.

Prepare paper beforehand by cutting the paper so that it is the correct size to fit into the picture frames. Give each child a frame and piece of paper. Have them design a picture using the coins. A simple shape is best, for example, a boat, crown, owl, heart. Ask the children to lay out their design first and then place their paper on top and rub over the coins with different coloured crayons. Remove the coins and fill in any details to picture using felt tip pens. Place their picture into the frame. Decorate the frame by sticking coins around the frame using PVA glue.

Talk about the symbols and faces on the coins showing which country the coins have worth. Talk about how we belong to God and God loves us and how we can show God’s love in the way we act towards others, including the way we spend/give our money.

Coin Rubbing (3)   age 9-12

You will need: Fairtrade logo downloaded and printed onto A4 paper, coins from Gathering Activity and any foreign and/or old coins that you can find, pencils, glue sticks, PVA glue, glue spreaders, black A4 card, scissors, white paper, felt tip pens.

Give each child a Fairtrade logo. Ask the children to place some coins under the picture and to rub over the coins with the pencil—but not filling in all of the logo. Get the children to cut out the logo and glue it onto the black card using the glue sticks. Then get the children to decorate on top of the logo by sticking some coins onto the logo using PVA glue. Again do not fill in the whole of the logo. Get the children to write ‘Fair Trade’ or to make up a slogan about fair trade onto the white paper and then cut this out and stick it onto their picture.

It might be a good idea to have some fairtrade chocolate, biscuits or fruit for the children to taste today.

Talk about using money wisely and in ways which show what is really important to you and how Fairtrade helps us to do that. Resources are available from Fairtrade (discussion materials, films, games) which you might find useful. You could focus on Fairtrade Fortnight. The children might be aware of this through school.

Lent Journey all age

You will need: see page 11 for details of this craft activity that spans this whole season.

Get the children to work together to make a collage of today’s story. Their pictures could include coins, coin rubbings, Fairtrade logo. Ask the children to draw coins on the footprints; that will connect to next week’s story.
age group ideas

activities

Shop  age 3-5

You will need: items for a shop (akin to Gathering Activity), play food, cans, child’s toy till, toy coins.

Let the children play at ‘shop’ selecting what they would like and then paying for it. Ask the children why they picked those items and why they think we need to pay money for the goods we buy? Lead onto talking about Jesus wanting us to acts of kindness that cost nothing.

Shopping With Cash  age 6-8

You will need: as above set up a shop but instead of play items of food have real items like sweets, tins of food, clothing, some real money.

Give each child a set amount of real money. Price the items at low prices and see what each child buys. Discuss why we pay for goods, bring in why we buy Fairtrade goods and then lead onto talking about random acts of kindness and how we can be involved in that; opening a door, smiling, helping to do the dishes. Challenge the children for the week ahead to think of something they can do.

Heads And Tails  age 6-12

You will need: a variety of coins of different ages (if in the UK, try and have a complete modern set of all the coin denominations too), paper, crayons, pencils.

Let the children look at the different coins noting the images on the coins (in the UK you will see the Queen at different ages depending on the age of the coin) and noting how old the coins are, what the values are and any other marks on the coins. See who has the oldest coin. If you have pre-decimalisation coins available this would be a great opportunity to confuse a younger generation with pounds, shillings and pence.

Show the children how you can arrange a complete set of modern coins with the "tails" images uppermost and create the Royal Coat of Arms. Let the children place a sheet of paper over this and trace the coat of arms using a crayon.

Then give the children some paper and pencils and ask them to design their own coin.

Note that in New Testament times the coins had a picture of the Roman Emperor on them rather than the Queen, but the principle is the same. The head of the State has his or her picture on the currency of the land.

Foreign Currency  age 6-12

You will need: foreign coins.

Use the foreign coins to talk about different countries, travelling abroad, places that the children may have visited, what was on the coins, and what that says about the country.

games

Find The Coin  age 3-5

You will need: a coin.

‘Lose’ a coin in the room and ask for the children’s help to find it using commands like ‘hot’, ‘warm’, ‘cold’ and so on to indicate how close you think they might be to the coin.

Spin The Coin  age 6-12

You will need: lots of copper coins or small coins.

Give each child some coins of different sizes; 1p, 2p, 5p and ask them to spin the coins. Challenge them to see how many can they keep going at the same time.

Payment Optional?  age 6-12

You will need: fruit and vegetables.

Some people do not like paying for their goods or giving something in kind for the goods they received, just like the wicked tenants and people not paying taxes in today’s stories.

Lay out the goods at one end of the room on a table. Select someone to be IT. IT stands in the middle of the room and they are to stop someone you have selected from getting one of the goods. The selected person has to get past the person without being tagged to reach the goods and then get back across again. If tagged they stay in the middle. How many of the goods eventually make it across? Add a time limit to the game.

Heads Or Tails  all age

You will need: a coin.

The children need to put their hands on their heads if they think the next throw of the coin will be heads or on the back of their hips if they think it will be tails. Someone throws a coin in the air and if heads lands upwards all the children with their hands on their tails are out and sit down on the floor. Then you reset and ask everyone left to choose again heads or tails and throw the coin. Do this again and again until only one child remains as the winner. This is a quick game and can be played a few times.
discussion starters for teens
something for nothing?

Preparation
For today’s session you will need a standard deck of cards, a spoon for each member of the group and access to one more of the Shift books if you decide to do the alternative Living It Out.

Opening Activity
Spoons
You will need: a standard deck of cards (no jokers), spoons (one fewer than there are players), suitable for 3 to 13 players.

Arrange the spoons in a small circle in the centre of the table and deal four cards to each player. Each player tries to make four of a kind. The dealer takes a card off the top of the deck to have five cards in his hand, removes one and passes it facedown to the left. Each player discards to the person on his left. The last player places his discard into a trash pile. Cards are picked up and passed quickly around the table until someone gets four of a kind and takes a spoon from the centre. Once the player with four of a kind takes a spoon, anyone can take a spoon. The player left without a spoon is out of the game. If at any time the draw cards run out, pause to reshuffle the trash pile and keep going. The winner is the last player remaining.

The player who reaches four of a kind first has a variety of ways he can take the first spoon. A sneaky pull exposes those paying too close attention to their cards. A demonstrative grab leads to a wild free-for-all.

The Word
In the previous chapter of Mark we accompany Jesus as he rides into Jerusalem on a donkey. We see him curse a fig tree, which was a symbol of Jewish spiritual leadership, and watch on as an angry Jesus clears the temple of money lenders. Clearly irked, the religious leaders challenge Jesus about where he gets his authority from to say and do these things.

Read Mark 12:1-12 together.

Activity/Discussion
As a group list the characters in the parable and their role in the unfolding drama.

- What do you think motivated the tenants to behave in the way they did?
- What will the vineyard owner do when he returns?
- If you were the owner how would you have dealt with the situation?
- If the owner symbolises God what does it reveal about him?
- What do you think was Jesus’ motive in telling this parable?

With this parable Jesus provokes the religious leaders further. He challenges them to remember that they get their power from God and they have abused their responsibility to nurture God’s people.

Living It Out
- Who are the people who have power over you?
- Who do you think are the most powerful people in the country and in the world?
- How do they use their power? Who uses their power well and not so well?
- What power do you have and what influence do you have?

Encourage the young people to research a topic, issue or campaign during the week that they feel strongly about. This could be about local youth facilities, animal rights, or the country’s response to migrants. Maybe they could sign a petition or write a letter to their local MP about changes they would like to see. You can find information about your local member of parliament at http://www.theyworkforyou.com/.

Alternatively encourage the group to agree ways in which they can change the world together with small random acts of kindness. Shift has a range of books that give ideas and suggestions: ‘Change the World for a Fiver’, ‘Change the World 9 to 5’, and ‘Teach Your Granny to Text and Other Ways to Change the World’ are all available to order online.
Up to now in all the stories we have been reading through Lent, people have come to Jesus to ask either selfish questions such as the Rich Young Man or questions that were hard-hearted and designed to trick Jesus. At the beginning of this week’s passage we have got a genuine question and Jesus answers it authentically without any polemic or parable. Yet, of course, it is not quite as simple as that.

The greatest commandment is certainly to love God, but Jesus, without hesitation, slides onto the second greatest which he says is to love neighbour. Therefore, the care of others and the love of neighbour with all the practical response that this entails has become, in a single breath, more important that everything else including all religious obligations. This is no small rebalance of faith and it is made all the more significant as Jesus is standing in the courts of the temple while he says it.

As an aside it is interesting to recognise that Jesus remarks how close the Scribe is to the Kingdom of God for this is the week when the confrontation between Jesus and the religious authorities reaches its peak, yet it is one of those who becomes his enemy who is closest to the Kingdom! Jesus is not out to get a whole group of people but rather to highlight particular behaviours regardless of the group from which that behaviour emanates.

Yet Jesus then goes on to denounce the scribes for ‘devouring widow’s houses’. In other words the Scribes’ lives impoverish others and bankrupt widows because of the tax the temple charges them. As he says this, there in front of them all is one of those very widows, bankrupt because of the charges the temple sanctions yet she is giving her last two coins as an offering. So the story is perhaps less to do with lifting up the widow’s generosity and far more to do with condemning those who take what she gives without thinking of where or who it comes from. The Scribes are condemned for the pursuit of what they have before having any compassion towards those around them.

In times of austerity it is easy to become more scribe-like and fend for self and be less generous towards others when the real lesson in times of austerity (for the widow lives within just such a time for herself) is to be generous towards those things that matter. Austerity does not mean to cut back on those whose needs are greater but to recognise we are here for each other and to respond as such. The Scribes did not recognise that. The widow, in some way, did, for she gave fully to the temple which was meant to care for others.

Following this story, or as part of a sermon or Bible study, what would happen if we were to pick up our congregational budget and ask: what does this reflect about us? Does our budget reflect the lifestyle of the scribes or our response to the widow? That might be a life-changing question that might lead to a different way of being church in our communities.

If that does not change how we look on this story then remember also this story is the preface to the bigger story of Jesus, also bankrupted by the religious authorities, who goes on to give his all not just for the whole community but the whole world. The widow gives two coins. It could be said that she could have held something back for herself but does not. Likewise Jesus gives all, holding nothing back.

Mark 12:28-44
(Psalm 89:1-4)
the story

The Scribe
You know he talks a lot of sense does Jesus. I enjoy listening to him. He knows what he’s talking about. He’s a great teacher.

One day I got to talk to him. I asked him about the commandments. As a scribe I get to copy many rules and regulations and the commandments have always interested me. I asked Jesus which commandment he thought was the most important. I guessed what he would answer and I guessed right.

Jesus said “The first is: Listen Israel—God, our God, is one—and you shall love him with your heart, and your soul and your mind and your strength, love him with all of your being, with everything you’ve got. And the second commandment is that you shall love your neighbour as much as you love yourself.”

I loved what Jesus said, and I told him so. Loving God and our neighbours as much as we love ourselves is what life is all about. Jesus looked at me, he knew that I took the commandments seriously and that I tried to understand them and practice them. He told me that I was not far from doing what God wanted me to do.

The Widow’s Offering
Jesus had been talking and teaching and answering questions in the Temple. He’d been critical of those who thought themselves important. He’d told people to beware of those who always took the best seats and who were fond of wearing beautiful clothes and praying long prayers. He accused some religious leaders of taking money from those who were poor and vulnerable when they should have been caring for them and supporting them.

Then Jesus sat down, in the women’s court of the temple. And he watched people as they put their money into the temple treasury. All kinds of people put money in, farmers, fishermen, new parents, widows and widowers, people who were obviously rich, people who were poor.

Jesus watched them all and he watched as a poor widow dropped in two small coins, barely enough to buy a meal.

Jesus called his disciples over and told them what he had seen and commented that whilst the richer people had given to the treasury and still had money to live on the widow had given the treasury everything that she had.

The Widow
He was watching me. He just sat there. He looked tired. I was tired too.

The Scribes and the Pharisees were everywhere, dressed beautifully as usual, behaving importantly, making me feel very small.

The law says that widows like me should be protected and cared for. Someone ought to tell the religious leaders this... the only people they seem to care about is themselves.

And where does this money go to that people put into the treasury? Who does it help? Who does it feed?

I didn’t have much to give to the temple treasury, only two small coins, but I put it in.

He was still watching me. He pointed me out to his friends.

What was he saying about me? Was he asking the same questions that I was? I wish I knew what he’d said.

Retelling For Young People

The Two Great Commandments
Remember the ten commandments. The ones God gave to Moses. They helped people to know what God wanted and they gave people some rules that helped them to care for each other and live good lives.

Someone asked Jesus what he thought were the most important commandments and this is what Jesus said.

“Listen! This is the first commandment: God, our God, is one—and you shall love him with your heart, and your soul and your mind and your strength—love him with all of your being, with everything you’ve got.

“And the second commandment is that you shall love your neighbour as much as you love yourself.”

We sometimes shorten it even more: to love God is to love your neighbour.

• What do you think that means?

Loving God with everything you’ve got is about learning about God, reading the stories of Jesus, learning to pray, respecting the earth, asking questions, enjoying the world.

• How do you respect the earth?
• Have you got a favourite prayer?
• Which three questions would you like to ask God?
• How do you love your neighbours, your friends, people who need help?

And the love yourself bit is important too. If you do not look after yourself you will find it very hard to look after other people.

• How do you look after yourself?
• What does your body need?
• What do you enjoy thinking about?
Through the Season

On pages 4 and 5 you will find details of the visual focus that can be used throughout this season, picking up on different aspects of the theme. Add a cut-out of a pound (£) sign or various currency symbols with ‘What is it worth?’ written inside or beside it to your large question mark this week.

Gathering Activity

As per the previous Sundays in Lent, prepare a slip of paper for each worshipper with the focus question for the week, in this case “What’s it worth?” to help worshippers reflect and make choices about their attitudes to life and the kingdom. Do not feel limited by these suggested questions. Adapt or re-write them to bring out your focal point.

If you want to develop this idea a bit further there is an ‘Ups and Downs of Lent’ Journey Sheet in the resources on page 134 which can be added to each week.

4th Sunday: Ups and Downs

Which of these attitudes is the snake that makes the kingdom slip away and which is the ladder to the kingdom come?

A. Power is held by our leaders and politicians as they are the best people to make decisions on behalf of everyone.
B. Power is held in every person’s hands that they might make decisions that benefit all.

Call to Worship

Come now to God in whose presence each of us find the strength to be extraordinary, the means to be rich, a position of importance no matter who we are or what we have: all flourish in the kingdom and achieve more than they ever dreamed.

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. We come, dear Lord, to worship and praise you with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. In you we find the source of our being, the foundation of love, and the wellspring of relationship.

It is to you we turn this day, from the business of another week with all of its cares and concerns, joys and worries, successes and failings, for we give thanks that you journey with us, knowing us as a loving parent knows their child.

We praise you for the observations and encounters recorded in Scripture for us to ponder, conversations with scribes and rulers, glimpses of a poor widow offering all she has, and we wonder what your Son, Jesus, might remark about us if he stood and watched us for a day.

Would he point to us and our actions as an example of the life of the Kingdom?
Would he smile as he witnessed an act of selfless generosity?

Some days he might, on other days... not so much.

Lord, we give thanks for those days when we make a difference, when we raise ourselves to the challenge of your Way, when we take the steps towards your ministry with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. And yet, Lord, we also recognise that on other days we get it wrong, we make bad decisions, we think solely of ourselves, we neglect the harm we do to others, and we fail to contribute to your Kingdom.

Forgive us, Lord, and may we be encouraged to step forward again, not looking back, that our lives, our words, our deeds, our thoughts might be suffused with the wonder and joy of your perfect presence.

Amen.
Prayers for Others and Ourselves

This week for the intercessory prayers you might consider giving each person a low value coin and a slip of paper that says on it “I promise to pray for...” along the same lines as money notes in the U.K. say “I promise to pay the bearer on demand the sum of...”

Where do we place worth?

Do we place worth in our possessions?
Do we place worth in our relationships?
Do we place worth in our power?
Do we place worth in our military might?
Do we place worth in the strength of our economy?
Do we place worth in our nation?
Do we place worth in our tribe?
Do we place worth in our trade?

Where do we place worth?

Lord God,
of rich and poor,
of young and old,
of educated and non-educated,
of gay and straight,
of busy and lonely,
of faithful and doubter,
we know where you place worth.
We know that you value each and every one of us more highly than we value ourselves, and do so in such a way that frees us to see the worth in others.

May we, in turn, look to our world and communities, and strive to find what is worthy, truly worthy, and build on that worth.

So today, Lord, we take these coins that represent what the world sees as worthy, and we place them away, in our pockets or in our purses, to be used for worldly things during this week, and instead turn our thoughts to what we can promise to do for the sake of your kingdom this week.

*Invite the congregation to take a moment to complete the sentences on their slips, writing down what they will pray for this week, which ideally would be something that they seek encouragement to do, for instance, “I promise to pray for more patience when dealing with my work colleagues” or “I promise to pray for a spirit of generosity in my family” or some such.*

*The congregation could then be invited to bring these forward and lay them on the communion table / altar.*

May we see the worth in the prayers we have offered for ourselves and for our world, and may we share in the building of your kingdom, Worthy God.
Amen.

Prayer of Dedication

May we, your people, worshipping together as a community of faith, set ourselves apart, not that we see ourselves as better than others, nor that we think we are richer or more valuable than others, but rather because we have a calling to serve others, to walk in the way of Jesus, empowered by the Spirit of God.

So use us and these gifts we bring, and may we do so sacrificially out of our poverty, rather than thoughtlessly out of our wealth.

Amen.

Reflection

This Great Commandment, to love with heart, mind, soul and strength, to love with your whole being. That shut them up.
Quoting what they knew, Jesus silenced them.

They knew it but did they live it?
Loving God and loving neighbour, they knew this, but did not live it.

These teachers of the law did not practice what they taught. Lording it over everyone, reserving the best seats in town, taking advantage of the widows, making a big show of their prayers.

Shown up by the poorest of the poor, a widow woman.
She gave her all.
In her offering she gave all she had, heart, mind, soul and strength.
Those two copper coins, worth more than all the rich offerings of the wealthy. She gave her all.

We know the Great Commandment as well as the teacher of the law. Do we live it? Do we really sincerely live it? In loving God and loving our neighbour, what are you prepared to give?
**Take Home Ideas**

Total up the income you have coming in every week or month. Write down your outgoings for the week or month; bills, food, rent/mortgage, insurances, savings, leisure time, how much your offering is to the church, how much money you give to other charities.

Spend some time reflecting and thinking about what this says about who we are and what our priorities are.

- Are you overspending in some areas?
- Are you underspending in some areas?
- Do you think you have a balance in your outgoings?
- Our offering is in response to God’s word to us. What does our offering say about us?

**Sending**

Send us from this place, Lord, into your world to ask questions of our faith, to be enemies of fear, to show strength in our weakness, to share riches like the poor. And we all we need to live on be the love of Christ in whose name we journey together.

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**Praise/Hymns**

- A new commandment MP 1
- All that I am, all that I do CH4 505
- Be bold, be strong MP 49 / JP 14
- Father, I place into your hands MP 133 / JP 42
- I am a lighthouse MP 133
- I give you all the honour MP 271
- I will offer up my life CH4 503
- Jesus is the name we honour MP 870
- Lord of creation to you be all praise CH4 500
- Love is the touch CH4 115
- Spirit of God descend upon my heart CH4 495
- Such love MP 619
- Two little fishes CH4 504
- When I needed a neighbour CH4 544
- When I survey the wondrous cross CH4 392 / MP 755
- Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness CH4 201
**age group ideas gathering**

**What Is It?**  all age

You will need: prepare two large jigsaws one of a heart and one of a coin (a basic heart shape and circle shape cut out from thick card will do the job).

Lay out the pieces of the jigsaw and ask the children to work together to make the two pictures. Do not tell them what the images are initially. If they are finding it tricky to make up the jigsaws then start to give them clues. Use this as a way into the story.

**crafts**

**Mothering Sunday Craft**  all age

**Heart And Hands Basket**

You will need: two sheets of A4 card per child (in pastel shades), pencils, scissors, felt tip pens, stickers, hole punch, gift ribbon, sellotape, wrapped sweets or chocolates (4/5 per child) or pot pourri.

As this is Mothering Sunday in the UK, this is a craft for that day.

Ask the children to choose two sheets of card in a colour they like. The sheets can be the same colour or two different colours. Ask the children to draw around their hand with a pencil, cut out their hand shape and then to use their hand shape as a template for drawing round till each child has 4 hand shapes.

Have the children place two hand shapes side by side with thumbs overlapping and then they should sellotape the thumbs together. Repeat this for the other two hand shapes. Then the children should lay one linked hand shape, which now should form a kind of heartshape, with the sellotaped area facing up and other linked hand shape on top with sellotaped area facing down, so that the two sellotaped areas are now together.

The children should then tape round the straight edges of the heart (the pinky finger edges!) to form a basket. The children can decorate the front of the basket with stickers and write a message on the back with felt tip pens. Place sweets or pot pourri into the basket. Punch a hole at both layers of the basket at the V section of the heart and thread gift ribbon through to close the basket. The children can give this as a gift to their mum, granny or someone who looks after them or you might decide to give these to members of the congregation.

If you decide you want a gift from the children to go to members of the congregation, it would be a good idea to have the hands already drawn, cut and stuck together beforehand so that there is enough time to make gifts for all.

Talk about the Great Commandment Jesus gave to love God and love our neighbours and discuss with the children how people do that today. Their mums and other mothering figures could be good examples. Talk about the story of the widow's offering and relate this to Mothering Sunday with the widow being someone who generously gave all she had to help others and show her love for God.

**Love Reaching Out**  all age

You will need: A4 card (two sheets per child), felt tip pens, scissors, template of heart shape which fits onto A4 card, sellotape, rulers.

Get the children to choose two sheets of card in colours they like. Get the children to draw round heart shape on one sheet of card and to cut this out. Get the children to draw a happy face onto the heart using felt tip pens. With the other sheet of card, get the children to lay the card portrait orientation and to draw lines along the length of the card about the width of a ruler between the lines (around 3 c.m.) to make long strips. Each child needs three strips (it might be easier to have these prepared earlier).

Ask the children to fold two of the strips concertina style and then sellotape them onto the back of the heart at appropriate points to form arms which stretch. With the third strip of card, get the children to cut that in half and then stick the two pieces onto the back of the heart shape at appropriate points to form legs. With scraps of card get the children to draw, cut out and stick on hands and feet/shoes to their figure.

You can use this figure to talk with the children both about the Great Commandment to love which Jesus gave and the generosity of the widow who gave all she had to help others and show her love of God. Discuss with the children ways we can show love today.

**Lent Journey**  all age

You will need: see page 11 for details of this craft activity that spans this whole season.

Get the children to work together to make a collage of today’s story. Their pictures could include hearts, rule books, question marks, houses, coins. Ask the children to draw hearts on the footprints; that will connect to next week’s story.
age group ideas

activities

Who Do I Love?  age 3-5

You will need: arrange a tea party.

Since today is Mothering Sunday why not invite the children’s mums or carers in with them today for a tea party and let the children tell their mum’s or carers why they love them?

This can lead into some discussion of how we love our parents but also should love God and other people.

What Do You Love?  age 6-8

You will need: pen, paper and something you love.

You will need to give each child pen and paper for this activity. Ask them to write down ten things that they love. For example, sport, sweets, bike, parents, and so on. After they have done this ask them to rank the items of what they love the most with number one being the most loved.

Discuss with the children why they chose to rank the way they did.

• Can they or have they ever shared this love of their number one item with anyone else? Would they?
• What does the bible passage tell us that we should love?
• Is that something you can do? Would it be difficult? Why is that?

Tell the story of a person who bought a very expensive coat because they liked it. They put it in the wardrobe but they never found an occasion to wear it because it was too good: they loved the coat so much they did not want it to get dirty or marked. The person died and the expensive coat was given to a homeless unit where someone wore the coat for a long time.

• Was the person right to keep it locked up and not use it?
• Is that really loving something?

This could be used as a way into discussing how loving material things is quite different to how we are encouraged to love each other.

Customs And Traditions  age 9-12

You will need: what you need will depend on what customs/traditions you are giving as an example.

There is an old tradition in the Church of Scotland that the Session Clerk normally sits on the minister’s right hand side during the communion service. What are the traditions in your church, the homes of the children, the nation. Some ideas to discuss are: bowing/cortseying to the Queen (practice this as you never know when you might meet royalty), using the back door for coming in and out the house, saying prayers before going to sleep, children in the church sanctuary for the first/last 15 minutes, and many, many more!

Finish by talking about Mothering Sunday and the tradition of going back to your mother church for this Sunday and how it has changed over the years to talking about our mum’s.

• How often do we question traditions?
• How often do we question the bible?
• How often do we question our faith?

games

Follow Me  age 3-5

‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength’.

Show the children some actions to accompany the words love (make heart shape with fingers), God (point upwards), heart (point to heart), soul (wrap arms around yourself), mind (hands on head), strength (strong arm stance).

Let the children follow your commands then make this game into “Jesus said, do this, do that...” and use the actions they have been taught.

Draw It  age 6-12

You will need: flip chart or whiteboard, marker pens, some prepared phrases.

This week’s bible passage is very descriptive. Use the images from the stories and get the children to draw the phrases you have from the story in a Pictionary style. No talking from the person drawing, no writing letters, just pictures to get over the message.

Dominoes  all age

You will need: images of the phrases put onto A4 paper (you may need multiple copies of each, one image per sheet, sellotape.

Join some of the images together to form a domino and let the children play dominoes using the images. At the end this could be used to help them retell the story.

Musical Chairs  all age

You will need: chairs, facility to play music.

Reflecting on the words that Jesus had about the best seats in the synagogue, or places of honour, play a game of musical chairs. In the game the best seat is the last one left which is fought over. That is just what Jesus says we should not do.
discussion starters for teens
giving of our all

Preparation
For this week’s session you will need a copy of Toy Story 3. You can use the DVD if you have it or alternatively the video of the final scene is available on YouTube at https://youtu.be/Zf0vIGiuC4M.

For the final reflection you will need a some Jenga-style wooden blocks, at least one per participant, and a selection of felt pens.

Opening Activity
Toy Story 3 Final Scene
Watch the end scene where Andy gives his toys away to Bonnie. He asks Bonnie to take good care of his old toys but struggles to let go of Woody.

• What has been the best gift someone has given you?
• What is the best gift you have given someone?
• Why do you think Andy struggled to let go of Woody?
• Is there anything you would find it difficult to let go of?

The Word
Read Mark 12:28-34 and 38-44.

So often when Jesus was quizzed, the questioner was trying to trap Jesus. In many of these encounters Jesus responds to a question with another question. But in this case Jesus answers the religious scholar’s genuine question directly. “Love God with your whole self and love others as yourself,” he answers.

Jesus then draws attention to the dedication of the poor widow and contrasts her dedication with the shallow actions of the religious scholars. While her monetary offering might be small she gives with her whole self. In contrast the religious leaders are all show, pious on the surface but ultimately they are part of a system that abuses and mistreats the poor.

Activity/Discussion
Ask for a volunteer to read the passage aloud. Everyone then takes a sheet of paper and writes the six symbols down the left hand side. After quietly reading through the Bible passage again, each person writes (next to the appropriate symbol) what they think the passage is saying.

UP ARROW  Write something these verses tell us about Jesus/God
DOWN ARROW  Write something these verses tell us about human nature
A LIGHT BULB  Write down any new discovery you’ve made reading these verses
EXCLAMATION MARK  Write down the most exciting verse in your opinion and why
QUESTION MARK  Write anything you don’t understand or want to ask about
RIGHT ARROW  Write down something these verses say we should do

After ten minutes encourage the group to share their findings together. Where there are questions, encourage group discussion to try to find out the answers together. Take a few minutes to summarise what you have discovered.

Living It Out
Encourage the group to think about ways other than giving money that people can give. Consider examples that take time, effort and motivation.

Reflection
Pass out markers and wooden Jenga-style blocks to each person. As you play some worship music in the background invite members of the group to write words or symbols on their block describing the gifts and talents that they offer to the youth group/church/ministry.

Invite each participant to share what is written on their block and then place it in the centre of the group. Each block should be laid in such a way that as people share they are also building a tower with the blocks; creating a visual representation of the way all of our gifts work together as one.

As the session ends invite each person to take one block from the tower, Jenga game style, and keep as a reminder of today’s session and the gifts we have to give.
what awaits?

bible notes

An Urgent Watchfulness

Just as the earth may groan, so too might the preacher, worship and children’s leader faced with the prospect of coming up with something palatable to present against the backdrop of the darkness and destruction contained in this passage. Yet, we cannot escape from it. The Christian faith does not shy away from the fact that life is not easy: it presents challenge, and demands a response. Life is a journey (“like a man going on a journey”) and we travel in both the Light and Darkness.

The text today is part of a long speech by Jesus in which he foretells darkness, judgement and destruction. He holds nothing back and the picture his words paint must have left the listeners quaking. Reading chapter 13 as a whole must leave us no less affected. Instinctively we might consider the reality of the world we know and the tragedies, calamities and world events we witness today. We might ask ourselves, ‘are these the things Jesus predicted?’ Scholars suggest however that the dark events portrayed in this chapter are specifically directed towards the Jerusalem that Jesus knew, and ecclesiastically speak of the darkness that surrounded much of what emanated from the corrupt temple system. Here Jesus is speaking of the destruction of the temple and the wayward regime that allowed and fostered that corruption. He predicts a ‘second coming’ of God where the ‘Son of Man’ will be seen and made known as God puts right what is wrong in the world.

In this case maybe the passage is not such a foreboding one after-all. Instead of darkness, destruction and calamity we can approach Jesus’ words in verses 1-8, and 24-37 as an indication of a world being put right, a world positioned back on course. In Jesus’ words he points to himself as not only the transformer of physical lives and physical situations, but as an intriguingly important agent of God in the transformation of the entire human relationship with God and creation.

Easter is not far off and it must surely be worth reflecting on the fact that with two weeks to go until the events of Easter morning, Mark’s Gospel uses a technique of ‘contrast’ to accentuate the anticipation of Light and Life breaking forth. As with Christmas and some of the common themes of Advent (including this text which appears in the season of Advent within the Revised Common Lectionary), the preamble to the Easter narrative takes us into some rather dark places. Our text today, and the contemplations of Holy Week, make us long for the ‘empty tomb’, and the promise of resurrection and new life all the more. Easter day, without the darkness and upheaval that proceeds it (just like Christmas without Isaiah’s crooked way), becomes diluted in significance almost to the point that it becomes only a season of Easter bunnies and chocolate eggs.

Our journey through this season accelerates at this point in the narrative. We are reminded to be watchful for there is a great need to be ready to greet God and be ready to be used by God. Jesus speaks of a ‘cockerel crowing’ (a rooster in some translations), and this connects us very much with the appearance of a second cockerel as predicted by Jesus and the ultimate denial of Peter (chapter 14). This is no coincidence. The Gospel goes to great lengths to remind us of the need for watchfulness.

In the context of the darkness about which Jesus speaks, this might be the erroneous ways of the Jerusalem Ecclesia and its ultimate demise, Jesus in the two references to the cockerel may have been indicating that the destination of Easter and the transformation it would bring was more imminent that those who heard him first realised. And for us today the references serve as a reminder to ‘remain awake’, for the time of need for God’s faithful people to rise and follow the Son, living by his example, is more urgent than some realise.
the story

Darkness

Darkness.
Stars falling from heaven.
The gathering of the elect.
Pay-back time.
And when will it happen?
God only knows.

What do we make of these words and this worldview?
Do we think there will there be judgement and retribution?
Do we buy in to a 'Day of reckoning'?
Is 'Pie in the Sky' what our focus and behaviour in this life is all about?
Is the question for us – what awaits us?
Or is Jesus more interested in how we are living and loving each day and how the Holy Spirit is working in our lives.

We are always on a journey and journeys necessitate travelling light so if we’re not coming back this way what are we taking with us?
What are we going to let go of and leave behind?

Retelling For Young People

Packing For The Seaside

This story could be acted out using the props added to piles. Change the lists to items to which you have easy access.

James, Emma and Barney the dog were going to the seaside for a week. James and Emma had decided to make a pile of things that they wanted to take with them.

This was Emma’s pile:
Six books to read: one for each night.
Six chocolate biscuits and a big bag of sweets.
Sandals, trainers, flip-flops, wellies.
Six T shirts, three skirts, three pairs of shorts.
A dress, a coat, two jumpers.
Toothbrush, hairbrush and toothpaste.
Nail varnish.
Pyjamas.
Shampoo.
A teddy bear.
A sun-hat.
Two dolls, a skipping rope, a pack of cards.
A phone and headphones with 20 albums saved on it.
A torch for reading under the bedclothes.
Some spare batteries.
And a bottle of lemonade.

This was James’ pile:
A Kindle.
Twelve Mars bars, six apples.
Sandals, trainers, wellies.
Six T shirts, three pairs of shorts, three pairs of jeans.
A coat, two jumpers, two shirts.
Pyjamas.
Tooth brush, toothpaste, a comb.
3 model cars, a toy elephant.
A torch: for looking round dark caves.
A bucket, a spade a football.
And a bottle of Iron Bru.

This was Barney’s pile:
Both Emma and James helped Barney to get his things together.
Twelve tins of dog food (Barney was a hungry dog).
Dog biscuits, dog treats.
A long lead, a short lead.
A dog brush, a spare collar.
Barney’s favourite toy: a squeaky Christmas cracker.
A tartan blanket, Barney’s dog bed.
And a big packet of plastic bags to pick up Barney’s poo.

James, Emma and Barney looked at the three piles. They were huge.

Just then mum arrived with two suitcases. She looked at the piles and she laughed. I’ll sort out Barney’s things she said. You can each take with you what will fit in your suitcase.

• What do you think they each took?
• What did they leave behind?

If acting this out, you could then ask the children playing the two roles to talk about what they would keep and what they would leave behind.
worship ideas

Through the Season

On pages 4 and 5 you will find details of the visual focus that can be used throughout this season, continuing the question mark idea that has been a part of this thread. Add a cut-out of a wristwatch with ‘What awaits?’ written inside or beside it.

Gathering Activity

As per the previous Sundays in Lent, prepare a slip of paper for each worshipper with the focus question for the week, in this case “What awaits?” to help worshippers reflect and make choices about their attitudes to life and the kingdom. Do not feel limited by these suggested questions. Adapt or re-write them to bring out your focal point.

If you want to develop this idea a bit further there is an ‘Ups and Downs of Lent’ Journey Sheet in the resources on page 134 which can be added to each week.

5th Sunday: Ups and Downs

Which of these attitudes is the snake that makes the kingdom slip away and which is the ladder to the kingdom come?
A. Jesus will prepare a place for me in the kingdom of God.
B. I will be ready to hear God’s kingdom call when it comes.

Call to Worship

In the Light of God’s love
we journey through
the dark places of life
knowing we should fear no evil
and will be victors
in God’s grace.

So let us worship the one
who journeys with us
and helps us to overcome
our fears

to live with strength
even in our tears.

Responses

These responses can either be enacted by the minister / worship leader or they could be presented by voices in different sections of the church as if coming from an unknown place.

Voice 1: Do we expect life just to be sweetness and light?
All: We know that trials will confront us all.

Voice 2: Where is our hope in the darkest of times?
All: In the love and grace of God who gives us strength.

Voice 3: How do we journey through the challenges of life?
All: With trust in the One who journeys with us.

Minister: In that trust let us turn to the One
and Christ Jesus his Son
and in the Spirit of peace and praise
worship God.

Prayers of Adoration and Confession

Holy God,
we come before you
aware of our smallness
in the vastness of the universe.

Who are we
that you notice us?
Who are we
that you care for us?

Parent God,
you are all-seeing,
all-knowing.
We do not need
to see the bigger picture,
or to know the time
of what is to come.

We are called
to watch and pray;
to live in the now,
to pay attention to
your movement and activity
here in this time
and to get involved in it.

We are sorry for those times
when we allow ourselves
to waste time
speculating on the future,
instead of trusting it to you.

We are sorry for those times
when we forget that we
are only a tiny part
of your creation
and try to take control
of matters that are not
ours to control.

Lord, forgive us
for allowing our focus
to drift away from you.

Transform us
and restore us
as your sons and daughters;
followers of Jesus,
who watch and pray
and respond to your
daily call to us.

Amen.
All-Age Prayer

Parent God,
you have made a world
that is both amazing
and yet terrifying.

Long dark winter nights
are finally changing
and light is returning again'
winter storms
are passing
as spring returns.

New life is coming
not just for our gardens
but also for your Son,
but before the dawn
we need the dark.

The dark can be scary
it can be a lonely place,
Jesus faced it with you
and so must we.

Help us not to be scared,
help us to trust in your promises,
and to be held in your love
so that the darkness
will not overcome us.

Help us to be patient
and to be calm,
give us courage to
wait for the new life
that is coming.

Guide us through
the dark days,
steer us in the
right direction
and remind us that
you are with us always.
Amen.

Prayer of Dedication

Generous God,
all that we have and are
belongs to you,
accept our offerings
here and now,
may they be but a symbol
of all that we offer.
Amen.

Prayers for Others and Ourselves

Lord, every beginning has an ending,
we do not need to know
when it will be,
we are tasked with watching and waiting
here and now.

We continue to live
in dark days,
with wars and rumours of wars
on our TV screens 24/7,
help us not to be dismayed,
nor to allow ourselves
to be overwhelmed,
help us instead
to pay attention
to the people around us,
to the needs of so many
here and now.

As nations continue
to posture and show off
their arms and resources
which they believe
gives them power,
help us to remind them
that their power
comes with consequences
and to encourage them
to act wisely
and for the good of the many
here and now.

As our planet continues
to suffer from natural disasters,
earthquakes and unpredictable weather,
droughts and famines,
help us not to panic
or be anxious,
help us to remember
those people
who work tirelessly
to find ways to prevent
destruction and loss
and also those people
who make great sacrifices
to help when disaster strikes
here and now.

Lord, here and now
we name, in a moment’s silence
the people and situations
we know of where
your healing touch is needed.

Lord, thank you for listening to our prayers,
give us patience as we wait for your answers,
may we trust in your time and remember
that we cannot have everything here and now.
In the name of your son, Jesus,
our Saviour, we pray. Amen.
Amen.
Reflection

For at least two voices. The repeated chorus can be read by the same person, perhaps dressed up as a dream-seller. The other stanzas could be read by different people or one person in dialogue with the dream-seller.

Work out the staging: perhaps the dream-seller could be wandering around the worship space and the readers standing up among the congregation.

Dream-seller: Who is looking for the end times?
I have some prophecies to sell,
I have some dreams to tell.
Who is looking for the end times?

Voice 1: Not the poor,
not the ones who seek justice now,
not the ones whose tables are empty now.
They look not to the future.
Only the ‘haves’ seek the end times:
those too full of the now.
Those whose bellies are empty seek renewal in this world, renewal now.

Dream-seller: Who is looking for the end times?
I have some prophecies to sell,
I have some dreams to tell.
Who is looking for the end times?

Voice 2: Not the homeless.
Not the ones who need shelter now.
They seek welcome anywhere in this world and seek it now.
They cannot wait for the coming future.
They need shelter here, among us.
They look not to the future.
Only those who have time, seek the future.
Those who are cold, look for renewal now.

Dream-seller: Who is looking for the end times?
I have some prophecies to sell,
I have some dreams to tell.
Who is looking for the end times?

Voice 3: Not the migrant or the trafficked.
Not the ones who have no community to which to belong.
They seek belonging now.
The future can wait.
Only those who are comfortable now seek a future world.
Those who are not fully settled here seek amongst the now for a home, a belonging place, now, a welcome space now.
Those who cannot afford to wait seek hope now.

Dream-seller: Who is looking for the end times?
I have some prophecies to sell,
I have some dreams to tell.
Who is looking for the end times?

Voice 4: Not the saviour who speaks now,
of a love to be shared now,
among those who are least well off now:
A Saviour who takes the future and forces its hand,
and makes now the time of salvation,
the time to choose to give all,
for those alive now,
to make the gates of heaven open, now.
The future is too late.
Loves needs our now to break open the promise, and so he does and chooses the cross.

Dream-seller: Who is looking for the end times?
I have some prophecies to sell,
I have some dreams to tell,
coming real, now.

Take Home Ideas

To embark on a new journey we must leave certain things behind.

- Think about the legacy that you will leave behind when you come to the end of your journey?
- Is it a legacy that you will be happy with?
- Is it a legacy that you think God will be happy with?

Writing down lists can be therapeutic so why not write down a list of the good things you have done in this life and then write down the points that you are not so happy with or even do it for the week we are in.

We are told, ‘take heed, watch’. It is never too late to change anything in our lives, it is never too late to say sorry.

Pray for those people who lives are weighed down by burdens both of their own choosing and those forced upon them.

Sending

People of God:
keep alert,
stay awake!

Bring light where there is darkness.
Bring love where there is hatred.
Bring hope where there is anguish.
Bring peace where there is violence.

Speak the truth to a hurting world that this is not all that there is, for the One who we follow is faithful and has not abandoned us: we need not fear.

Go now, and share God’s blessing, this day, and always.
**Praise/Hymns**

Behold the mountain of the Lord CH4 715
For my sake and the gospel's go CH4 248
God is working his purpose out CH4 235
God sent his Son JP 58
God, you alone know what you’ve planned online at http://carolynshymns.com/god_you_alone_know_what_youve_planned.html
Hail to the Lord’s anointed CH4 474 / MP 204
How lovely on the mountains MP 249
I cannot tell how he whom angels worship MP 266
In Christ alone MP 1072
Lo, he comes with clouds ascending CH4 477 / MP 424
The journey of life may be hard JP 468
There is a mighty question online at http://carolynshymns.com/there_is_a_mighty_question.html
There’s a light upon the mountain MP 679
View the present through the promise CH4 479
When the Lord in glory comes JP 280
age group ideas

gathering

My Journey Today  all age

You will need: a street map of your area (and/or tablet or computer with internet access).

Open out the map and get a few of the children to find their street and the location of the church and to ‘draw’ with their finger their journey to church. You could also use Google Maps and its ‘Street View’ facility. Use this as a way into the story and talking about journeys.

activities

Fill My Case   age 6-12

You will need: a suitcase, passport, typical holiday items (clothes, toiletries, sunscreen, money, and so on).

Discuss with the children how they would prepare for a holiday.

• What differences would there be depending on the destination?
• Would they need vaccinations?
• What would they take on holiday if going to a sunny climate? A winter climate?
• If we were going on a journey to meet Jesus what kind of questions do you think he would ask us when we got there?

‘End Of’ Sayings  age 9-12

You will need: copies of the activity sheet available on page 138.

Use the activity sheet to have a discussion with the children about these different sayings that either begin with “End of...” or have the word “end” in them. Try to explore both the literal meaning of the sayings and the deeper meaning to which they allude.

Watch  all age

You will need: audiovisual equipment to show a short clip from a film of your choosing, work out some observation questions to ask from the film (some easy, some harder).

Let the children watch the clip then ask them some questions about the clip to see how well they were observing the film. If you do not have access to the facilities to show a film clip, then perhaps use a picture which has a lot of action going on in it; showing it to the children for a set amount of time before hiding it and then asking questions.

crafts

Scribble Journeying Picture   age 3-5

You will need: chunky crayons, sheet of A4 thin card for each child, lollipop sticks (or implements from Play Doh sets).

Give each child a sheet of card and ask them to completely cover the card using a variety of colours of crayons: lots of scribbling. Then give each child a black crayon and get them to cover over their colours. It is easier and faster if the side of the crayon rather than the tip of the crayon is used but you will have to help them with this.

Use the lollipop sticks to rub away some of the black layer of crayon, leaving a ‘path’ or ‘trail’ of colour.

Discuss with the children journeys they make on a regular basis—to nursery, to the park, to granny’s house, to church, and so on. Talk about the disciples going on a journey with Jesus but that they did not know where they were going or how long it would take. Talk about the disciples having to be ready to show love, welcome, kindness and how we can follow their example.

Bags For The Journey   age 6-12

You will need: cotton drawstring bag for each child (available from craft websites), fabric pens, scraps of material, feathers, beads, wool, scissors, PVA glue, glue spreaders, sellotape.

To buy materials for this craft will be more expensive than our usual suggestions. A cheaper alternative would be to use self coloured gift bags (or to make paper bags out of newspaper beforehand).

Give each child a bag and a selection of materials and encourage the children to decorate the bag by using pens, sticking on material/stickers and feathers. Thread some beads onto a length of wool and tie from one of the handles.

Talk about going on journeys and discuss with the children journeys they have made. Discuss the kind of things they would put in a bag for a day and for a longer time.

Talk about going on a journey with Jesus and discuss with the children the kind of things they think the disciples would have put in their bags. Talk about the things the disciples really needed for their journey with Jesus were attitudes like being friends, being open to others, being willing to learn, asking questions and how we can follow their example.

Lent Journey  all age

You will need: see page 11 for details of this craft activity that spans this whole season.

Get the children to work together to make a collage of today’s story. Their pictures could include glasses, binoculars, eyes, towers, backpacks, suitcases. Ask the children to stick luggage labels onto the footprints; that will connect to next week’s story.
games

**Mad Pack And Journey**  
*all age*

*You will need: suitcase(s), items for packing.*

How do we prepare for a journey? The passage tells us to watch and be ready. You will need a suitcase per team plus a number of items you would take on a journey. This would work well as a relay game where the children run to the end of the room, pack the case with the goods, and then take the case on an obstacle course before going back to where they packed it, emptying it and then running back to the team for the next person to start.

**Jenga**  
*all age*

*You will need: desktop Jenga sets or a large garden size version.*

Build up the tower in the traditional way for this game, and see who will destroy it.

**End Of... Maze**  
*all age*

*You will need: copies of the activity sheet available on page 139.*

In this week’s stories there is talk of angels from heaven coming to gather all of God’s children from “the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven”. See if the children can find the connection in the maze from earth to heaven.

**House Of Cards**  
*all age*

*You will need: deck(s) of playing cards.*

Ask the children to build a house using the cards by balancing them against each other and then lying some flat on top of others in traditional style.

**Collapsing**  
*all age*

*You will need: some domino sets.*

Set the dominoes out standing upright close to one another in any shape or direction. See if the layout can be completed before someone accidentally sets off a chain reaction and the dominoes all fall. Start again if that happens. See how complicated it can get, noting whether that makes it more likely for it to collapse early.
Preparation
You will need paper and pens and two songs, “It’s the end of the world as we know it” by R.E.M. and “Walk on” by U2 and something to play them on. You might want to print out the words of the U2 song (they will be readily found online).

You may want to show a couple of scenes from the film “Wild” starring Reese Witherspoon as a part of Living It Out. If so, you will need to organise the facilities to do so.

Opening Activity
The End Of The World
Play the R.E.M. song “It’s the end of the world as we know it”. Some communities have experienced this in a planned way, for instance when a valley is flooded to create a dam, covering up old villages and towns that lie beneath the water of the new dam.

• What would you miss most if your town was to be flooded and you had to leave it?
• Why would you miss that?

The Word
Read Mark 13:1-8 and 24-37.

Activity/Discussion
Write the numbers 1-10 down your paper for a list. Now, think about the 10 things you would take with you if your town was to flood. You have 3 minutes to write a list.

As you leave one of your bags falls into the water and is left behind. Score off the odd numbers on your list.

As you climb from your small rescue boat into a large boat a couple of things fall out of your bag. Score off the bottom two things left on your list.

• What three things are you left with?
• How do you feel about the things you lost?
• How helpful were the things you decided to take?
• Did you take practical things? A tent? Passport?
• Did you take photos of your family in case you are separated?

• Did you take electrical things which will soon run out of power?

Listen to the song “Walk on” by U2. You may want to share some copies of the lyrics for the song as you listen to it so that the young people can follow on.

The reading today is known as the ‘little apocalypse’. It is Jesus talking about the end of what we know and the journey to something new.

• What do you think Jesus meant when he said it?
• What things do you think we might need for that kind of journey?

Living It Out
Talk about travelling light and taking only what you need. In the recent film “Wild” there is a funny scene near the start when Cheryl (played by Reese Witherspoon) packs all her camping gear for a 1,000 mile hike along the Pacific Trail in the USA, she can hardly put the backpack on she has so much stuff. The backpack is named “the monster” by fellow hikers. A later scene in the film has a wiser older man going through the pack with Cheryl identifying what is really needed. This could be used as a visual illustration this week. It is a great film, also!

What are the important things to take on your journey with Jesus?
bible notes

Who Is Worth Following?

In the Christian Church ‘processions’ are common, particularly so in this season of Easter. On Palm Sunday many congregations of Christians across the world will ‘process’ as part of worship—mirroring the procession of Jesus and his followers as they entered Jerusalem shortly before Jesus death. On Good Friday many Christians again will ‘process’—this time remembering, as they do so, Jesus’ walk with the cross.

In society we can observe many different types of processions. It might be worth considering this fact and recognising that processions take place within all sorts of different contexts. People join processions for all sorts of different personal reasons. As we consider the different types of processions that occur we might conclude there are some processions we would love to join, but there are also others that we would avoid at all costs. Taking time to consider the different types of processions and parades we witness today could be a useful starting point as we approach the Scriptures with our congregations. It may allow us to consider what makes people wish to walk with others in such a public display.

Processions come in all sorts of different shapes and sizes and we can ask, ‘who joins in and why’? A single procession may be made up of different people, with different backgrounds, different experiences, different hopes and objectives, yet something in the very nature and core of that particular procession draws these different people to participate.

And so with those who walked in with Jesus, and those who lined the streets, waving Palms and shouting, “Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!” No matter the numerical strength of this procession or the numbers watching it, and despite the different backgrounds and expectations of those taking part, each one present was somehow drawn to be there by a sense that this man was worth seeing. Some were there out of intrigue, some were there because they respected Jesus for what he was doing, and some followed because they utterly believed in him.

The lady with the Alabaster Jar containing expensive perfume must have absolutely believed Jesus was worth it! She arrived sometime after the other guests—maybe she was not invited. Her costly act of devotion appears to have been predetermined. She came with her treasure and thought nothing of breaking the seal and anointing Jesus. For her, Jesus was worth it. He was the ‘real deal’. The unravelling of this story would also suggest that she had a spiritual connection with Jesus that none of the others present could see. She understood Jesus and he understood her. Her outpouring of love towards him and her need to worship him and serve him speak of a belief in him that went far beyond intellectual assent of his teachings. She was idolising him in a way of absolute, unhindered, unfettered devotion.

The woman with the Alabaster Jar would not have been out of place within that procession of loyal followers who entered Jerusalem with Jesus. For her, and people of a similar disposition towards Jesus, Jesus was worth following. He was worth the adulation and triumphalism. He was worth the respect. He was worth following and serving.

On Palm Sunday the texts ask us to consider the depth of our loyalty to Jesus. Are we unhindered in our devotion to him? Would Jesus say of us, ‘he/she has done all he/she could’?
the story

For The Love Of Jesus

Voice A: It happened days before Jesus died.
Voice B: It happened days before Jesus died.
Voice A: A whole crowd of people showed how they loved him!
Voice B: A solitary woman showed how she loved him.
Voice A: They were with him in the city streets.
Voice B: She intruded upon him in a private home.
Voice A: It all started with following instructions.
Voice B: It all started with breaking boundaries.
Voice A: Finding a donkey and its colt.
Voice B: Carrying a jar and its perfume.
Voice A: So there was Jesus, sitting astride the colt.
Voice B: There was Jesus, sitting at the dinner table.
Voice A: They cast off their coats...
Voice B: She broke open the perfume jar...
Voice A: and spread them under his feet,
Voice B: and poured it over his head.
Voice A: And as their moving carpet of adulation flowed in front of him, they shouted in praise.
Voice B: And as her moving show of devotion flowed to his shoulders, she said not a word.
Voice A: “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.”
Voice B: … (pause in silence)
Voice A: “Hosanna in the highest!”
Voice B: … (pause in silence)
Voice A: They proclaimed his greatness in noisy exuberance.
Voice B: She proclaimed his greatness in silent extravagance.
Voice A: Their words and actions spoke of him as their Messiah who would be king.
Voice B: Her silence and actions spoke of him as her master who would be killed.
Voice A: Their coats were torn and he was worth it.
Voice B: Her riches were spent and he was worth it.
Voice A: Nobody said they shouldn’t have done it. What a party!
Voice B: Some people said she shouldn’t have done it. What a waste!
Voice A: Jesus said nothing for they had done a beautiful thing for him.
Voice B: Jesus said, “Leave her alone; why do you trouble her? For she has done a beautiful thing to me.”

Voice A: And what they did to show their love has been remembered ever since.
Voice B: And what she did to show her love has been remembered ever since.
Voice A: Under his feet,
Voice B: over his head,
Voice A: they did what they could,
Voice B: she did what she could,
Both: for their love of Jesus.

Retelling For Young People

Showing Our Love

A crowd of friends with Jesus walking the city through.
They wanted to show they loved him. Together what could they do?

They found a tied up donkey, and led it to Jesus’ side, spread their coats along its back and took him for a ride!

Through the streets they partied, “Hosanna!” they shouted loud,
“Jesus is our friend and king!”
Oh what a happy crowd!

A quiet woman with Jesus inside a rich man’s home,
She wanted to show she loved him. What could she do on her own?

She brought a jar of perfume and carried it to Jesus’ side, poured it gently on his hair and stroked it as he sighed.

“A beautiful thing you’ve done to me,”
that’s what Jesus said to the woman who brought her perfume and poured it on his head.

Whatever we do for Jesus, to show that we love him too, he still says to you and me,
“What a beautiful thing to do!”
worship ideas

All-Age Service

Note that we are assuming most congregations will be holding an all-age appropriate service today. We have included some craft and activity ideas within the worship notes which could be used with younger members of the congregation.

Through the Season

On pages 4 and 5 you will find details of the visual focus that can be used throughout this season, continuing the question mark idea that has been a part of this thread. Remove all of the symbols added over the last few weeks and replace with a single Palm branch or Palm Cross with ‘What next?’ written on or beside it.

Gathering Activity

As per the previous Sundays in Lent, prepare a slip of paper for each worshipper with the focus question for the week, in this case “What next?” to help worshippers reflect and make choices about their attitudes to life and the kingdom. Do not feel limited by these suggested questions. Adapt or re-write them to bring out your focal point.

If you want to develop this idea a bit further there is an ‘Ups and Downs of Lent’ Journey Sheet in the resources on page 134 which can be added to each week.

Palm Sunday: Ups and Downs

Which of these attitudes is the snake that makes the kingdom slip away and which is the ladder to the kingdom come?

A. Cheering with the crowds to enjoy their emotion.
B. Cheering with the crowds to welcome the stranger.

Call to Worship

Gathered here, let each one of us in our hearts step aside from the crowd to realise the treasures of this day as we lay our worship before God who deserves our devotion and in that devotion let us sing "hosannah!" Welcome to Christ the King!

Responses

For these responses you could have people with palms stand, read the question and after the response, lay the palms on the chancel leading to the communion table like the path to God’s purpose.

Voice 1: Would we wave aside all we have learned?
All: No, we take it up and lay it before God as an offering.

Voice 2: Would we wave aside the challenges that lie ahead?
All: No, we face them and lay our fears before God for our blessing.

Voice 3: Would we wave aside the vision of love and peace?
All: No, we will seize the day and follow Jesus on the Way.

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Palm Sunday began with the crowds adoring your Son, Jesus, raising their voices to welcome him and praise him as the new king of kings, a son of King David.

Loving God, we gather here today as a crowd of people drawn to this story of a man whose life still challenges the way we live and the way we think about the world.

Our eyes see a world that has real beauty within it, our ears hear the melodic music filling our every waking moment. We taste the flavours and feel the textures that seek to meet our every desire.

We wonder at the beauty and diversity of all that you have made, all that is seen and all that is hidden.

In the silence we sense a presence that we cannot define, cannot fully understand, and yet we feel drawn to it from our earliest years.

God, you are the source of our being, you make your dwelling within us.

We wonder at the life you have given us, the body, mind and spirit to dwell in this world that you have made; a chance to explore the different places we live in and the different peoples we live with.

The mind to know things and the heart to feel love for ourselves and others.

Forgive us for the times when we have ignored your presence or failed to listen to your still small voice within us.

Forgive us for the times when we have followed the crowd, pulled and swayed by people who would persuade us to seek to fulfil our own will and desires before the needs of others.

Forgive us for the times when we have run away from our commitments and allowed fear to turn us from the right path.

God in your mercy, forgive us once more, renew us and refresh us with your Holy Spirit. Give us a desire and commitment to follow in the way of the cross as Jesus did. Amen.
worship ideas

Prayers for Others and Ourselves

Lord Jesus, on the night you were betrayed
you went to the garden as usual to pray.
Prayer was an important part of your life,
and it was something you encouraged
your disciples to embrace
as being important in their lives.

Following your lead, Lord Jesus,
we come before you in prayer
bringing the needs of the world
into your nearer presence,
knowing that you know our needs
before we do and
knowing too that you answer all prayers.

Loving God, we raise our hearts and minds to you this day.
We pray for the women and men
who have devoted their lives
to seeking your face and
following your ways
no matter what tradition they have chosen.

We pray for the men and women
who seek to serve you through their work environment,
using the gifts you have given them
to improve the lives of others
in any number of different ways.

We pray for the women and men
who have created homes that
practise hospitality and welcome
to all who enter and
for those who have spent time
developing families that are
loving, caring and growing in faith.

We pray for men and women
who have been denied a loving home,
a chance of training or education
that would get them into work,
for those who have missed out
on health care or
who are denied a choice in how they live.

We pray for women and men
who struggle to live day to day,
for those who are hungry, homeless,
sick or unloved and
for those who are abused, neglected,
violeted or suffering from injustice.

We place before you in a moments silence
the names of the men, women and situations
that are close to our hearts and
for whom we seek your comfort and presence...

Gracious God,
thank you that you answer all our prayers,
thank you for giving Jesus the strength and support
he needed to do what you asked of him,
grant that we and
those women, men and situations
we pray for may receive your strength and support also.
In Jesus name we pray.
Amen.

All-Age Prayer

Holy, Holy, Holy God,
great is your name.
We want to shout it from the rooftops,
we want to sing it from the balcony,
we want to share it with everyone.
You are our God, and we are your people.

Hosanna, hosanna,
hosanna in the highest,
Jesus is your Son,
the one we follow,
the one we wave our palms for,
the one we lay our coats down for.

God, we want to praise you today,
we want to shout and sing,
to celebrate the coming of Jesus to Jerusalem.

We are happy and want to share it
with everyone who will listen.
We don’t want to look too far ahead,
into the week that is coming,
we want to stay here, happy and content
celebrating your presence.

Holy God, stay with us today,
enjoy this time of worship,
hear our songs and prayers,
fill us with love,
send us out ready to face
the future.

Don’t let us be afraid,
don’t let us shy from the pain,
don’t let us rush to Easter,
but let us journey with you
in the coming days.
Amen.

Prayer of Dedication

Generous God,
you have given us life, health and wealth,
you have given us family and friends,
a place of safety and security,
all that we have is a gift from you.

Receive our offerings today,
all that we give back to you,
help us to be generous in all our giving,
our time, our money and our talents,
take and use all that we give
for the glory of your kingdom
and the honour of your name.
Amen.
Palm Sunday Reflections

This is a series of short reflections that takes us through the main events of Holy Week. Between them hymns could be sung or bible passages read.

Entering The Story

With the sun high in the sky, the smell of herbs and roast lamb from the Passover hang heavy in the shadowed alleyways of the city, the sound of children crying mingles with the whispered questions of the people meeting between doorways.

Down the escarpment in the Kedron valley Jesus stands, watching, in the heat of the day. This is the time, this is the place where Jesus needs to make his decision to trust love or turn his back and walk away.

And as the city ceases to hesitate, unaware of the decision being made, Jesus turns to the donkey, pauses for the length of a prayer, and climbs on it’s back.

Let us go to the house of the Lord.

The Anti-Climax

The palms, the procession, the crowds shouting and hosannas shifting the air. It was a moment, not necessarily a big one, but for the small, local crowd round the donkey riding Messiah, a significant one.

Here was the man they somehow thought was messianic, who held together their hopes to rid them of the Romans and send down the angel armies and bring on the battle to bring in the Reign of God. The Romans were going to be thrown out and the Religious authorities were going to be seen for what they were and the world was going to change come the Day of the Lord, beginning now and what does Jesus do?

He rides his donkey to the temple, takes a quick look round, and leaves. That’s the great climax of Palm Sunday, of the palms and the cloaks and the hosannas: Jesus takes a quick look round the temple but, as it was late, thinks "We’ll bring in the kingdom another time, busy day tomorrow," and leaves.

It is the great anti-climax. At the start of Holy Week nothing happens.

But what does happen to those who have built up their expectations only for them to be dashed? Do you find yourself less enthusiastic with Jesus, even a little anti-Jesus? He has built us up only to let us down again. He promised much and then failed to deliver.

So you find yourself slipping away from him and towards those who are now a little more cynical, a little more "I told you so", a little more “Look what happens when you believe in dreams.”

And you wonder, is this what motivates Judas? Jesus has failed to deliver. The parade peters out. Something shifts judas from putting his whole hopes in Jesus to forcing Jesus’ hand.

“Maybe if I put him into the hands of the authorities he'll have to do something. He won't want to be arrested. He'll choose to fight. He'll have to call down the angel armies and free us from oppression because so far nothing has happened.”

Such an anticlimax.

But in Jesus’ mind there is anything but anticlimax. He knows this is the Rubicon. This is the moment of choosing. Once he commits to love here, all heaven implodes, the stars go out, the darkness gathers, the crowds change, the wine grows bitter, the bread breaks, the cross is hammered together and the tomb is readied.

This isn’t the anti-climax. This is the calm before the storm...

Prayer

Lord Jesus, may we stop and give you the time you need to make this choice, to turn every word about love you have ever uttered into commitment and example. For here the words run out and all that counts is trust in a way that gives of itself, whose way is broken, whose consequence is death and the choice cannot be done easily, this must milk the soul of everything it believes.

So may we stop and give ourselves the time to know this day of palms and processions is the day the kingdom changed and all talk was finished and the word became flesh again, ready to be born but ready also to die.

So may we stop and give heaven time to gather what light is left and care for you in this moment of decision: to trust love, fully.

So let the palms fly, the high hosannas be sung. Hear them, O Lord Jesus, it is what we know to be true in your moment of decision. May you choose the way of love. Amen.
The evening sun
hollows out the temple courts
with long shadows.
Motes of dust
float through the beams of tired sunlight
in rhythm to the piling of temple coinage.
A rapid flap of wings from a caged dove
adds to the regular soundscape of Solomon’s house:
shoes shuffle,
voices hush,
prayers are made,
expensive sacrifices given:
the sound of the poor being milked in the name of God
who himself despises such a vulture’s feast
by those who claim such a name.

In the flow of sound
comes another,
unexpected:
a single table
upended,
coins
scatter in a jangle of light
caught in the orange beams of sun,
a whip
cracks
from an angry young man
who means new business in the temple,
the crowd suddenly hush
cower back among the shadows
making space for heaven’s entry,
traders shout,
the whip cracks once more,
another table overturns,
guards hesitate,
the man roars
like a caged bear,
sweat being shaken from his long hair
as he turns his head towards them.

And as suddenly as it happens
it stops.
The man of light is gone
and darkness falls
deepen now,
a single coin rolls and settles
and the rapid flap of wings
among cages now strewn and broken
echoes round the court
as a dove frees itself
and takes to flight
rising over the offering
escaping into the evening sky.

Well Done Judas

Someone sits on a seat in the middle of the worship area while
one or two people walk round the chair cynically reading these
words:

I think you know what we mean.

You see,
we know, you know,
your Messiah hasn’t delivered freedom.
Heavens, we would all like to be free of the state.
Our oppressors would probably like to be free of us.
We both want the same thing.

But I think,
and I think you think it too,
Jesus has not turned out to be that Messiah.

You’re not very happy Judas
and like you, we’re all wondering how it all went so wrong
Jesus seems to have pulled you in an unexpected direction.
There is not going to be any salvation here.

You’re a Zealot
and you’ve found yourself in the pocket of a pacifist
Does that not make you look a fool?

Maybe we could help you?

Think about it, Judas.
Let us know.
We won’t be going far.
We have Passover to celebrate.
You call us.

Pause

What?
Already?
You are impulsive!
A passionate fellow!
Well I’m glad you came to us.

Judas, we were thinking
Jesus has turned out to be a bit of a disappointment.

But, maybe he’s waiting for you.
Maybe his plan relies on you
one of his followers, Judas,
to recognise him
and encourage him to make his move?

Maybe your Rabbi is just waiting for you to open the door,
to place him on the board
where he can play that move,
to place him in the centre of the game,
among the oppressors,
where he can call down the angel armies
to free him and us.
If he is arrested then he’d have to do something,
he’d have to call on the Lord
to begin the battle and free us all.
It’s a great vision, Judas.

And maybe,
Judas,
you are the one called to make that move!

Have you been wrestling Judas?
Have you been having nightmares?
Maybe it is a sign!
Maybe this is your time
to bring things to a head,
to focus your man,
to force his hand?
And what if you missed this opportunity Judas for Jesus? What if you let this moment go by when all of heaven was relying on you?

The voices are never clear, Judas. You have to listen, recognise the clues, listen to those who know, like us, Judas. We see the signs, so we wish to help, to make it possible for you.

It could all be done in a flash, tonight even. Just think, Judas, you would go down in history, a saint, a supreme example.

So Judas, we were thinking, all it would take would be a time and a place. It would be such a relief to you, all that anxiety gone, those sleepless nights finished, and all for a positive result, one you were ordained to fulfil.

So Judas, what do you think? You've already thought? Thank you, Judas, thank you.

We want to say how grateful we are to you. It is just a matter of waiting now. Everything is in place. But it is too late to change your mind, Judas.

You have done well. You have made the right decision. It's up to God now.

Oh, and Judas don't leave this behind.

Throw coins into the centre and hold.

Epilogue

The choice has been made, the way chosen, the clash between humanity and love comes to a head. Let us join the journey and share the story of a God who can give no more so gives himself. Go in peace.

All-Age Craft

Lent Collage

If the children have been working on a Lent Collage throughout the season of Lent, today would be the day for everyone to make the final section by adding palm leaves, crowns and donkeys, and a mixture of palm leaves and crosses to attach to the footprints that will then link forward to the events of Good Friday.

Activities

What Is It All About?

For most children who come to church they arrive on Palm Sunday for the parade and mostly a happy talk and then arrive back the following Sunday to celebrate Jesus as risen from the dead. They may not quite understand what happens in between and how important that is to the story. Use the stations below to tell the story of what happens over the next week.

For this activity you need to set up six stations which can be visited during worship to help explain some of the story.

Station 1  Pitta Bread and red juice—the last supper (with an opportunity to eat and drink)
Station 2  Bag of 30 coins—a friend had a secret which meant betrayal (let folks feel the heft of the bag)
Station 3  Helmet or sword for Roman guard—Jesus is arrested (restrain each other)
Station 4  Bowl of water—Pilate's role in the trial of Jesus (let people wash their hands)
Station 5  Hammer and nails—Jesus is taken to the hill where he is nailed to a cross (let people hammer nails into a piece of wood or let them hold a sharp nail)
Station 6  Myrrh (or some perfume) and white sheet—the tomb where Jesus' body was laid (smell the myrrh/perfume)

Crowds

If possible have images available of crowds of people; outside Buckingham Palace, a football match, concert, demonstration and so on.

• Have the children ever been in a large crowd? What was happening?
• Was it good to be part of the crowd?
• Have you ever been to a football match or a concert where everyone is cheering? How did that feel?

People were cheering Jesus as he entered Jerusalem but all too soon he was being jeered.

• Have you ever liked a celebrity or a person and then gone off them?
• Have you ever fallen out with a friend?
• If that friend was in trouble would you then stick up for them?
• What kind of supporter are we? One that just goes with the crowd or sticks with people?
• Do you think about God for an hour on a Sunday and then forget God the rest of the week?
**Passing The Palms**

You will need: a couple of palm crosses for each team.

Some people followed Jesus into Jerusalem jockeying for position and others faded away.

Split the children into two teams and sit them in rows of chairs facing each other and number them. Give child number 1 in each team a palm cross and when told to start they must pass the cross along the line to the end person. They then will need to pass it back but this time behind the chairs. When it gets back to number one it gets passed along the line again under the chairs and then the same back again to number one.

Now it changes! Number one passes the palm cross along from one another to the end, the end person jumps up and runs behind the chairs to take number one's seat and in the meantime everybody should have moved up one space. Keep going until in original positions again.

**Hosanna And Crucify**

You will need: enough pieces of paper for each child, half of which should have in large print the word 'Hosanna' and the other sheets with the word 'Crucify'.

Split the children into two teams and number each person in the teams. One team will be the 'hosanna' team and the other the 'crucify' team. They will need to sit on the floor facing each other but number from opposite ends. For instance, if there are 5 children in each team number 1 faces number 5 of the opposing team and so on.

Place all the paper pieces face down in the middle of the floor and mix them up. Call out a number and the corresponding children run to the middle, pick up a sheet and if it has the right word on it for their team they keep it and if not they put it back down. If it is the right word they shout it out aloud with their team.

**Take Home Ideas**

If you were given a palm cross today then take it home with you, if not cut out a shape of a cross from paper. Use this cross as a book mark this week as you read the passion story from the bible.

**Sending**

The donkey has been found, the palms have been waved, the crowds have shouted 'Hallelujah!'

Time now, to journey from the palms to the cross.

Let us walk with him into darkness and betrayal, mock trial and denial, and as we walk, let us give freely and generously of ourselves; let us go and do beautiful things for love of him.

**Praise/Hymns**

All glory, laud and honour CH4 364 / MP 9
Blessed assurance CH4 561 / MP 59
Going up to Jerusalem JP 354
Here comes Jesus on a donkey CH4 369
Hosanna, hosanna MP 242
Hosanna, loud hosanna CH4 367
I will offer up my life CH4 503
Lord, what a parade online at http://carolynshymns.com/lord_what_a_parade.html
Make way, make way CH4 279 / MP 457
May the fragrance of Jesus MP 462
Meekness and majesty CH4 365 / MP 465
My song is love unknown CH4 399 / MP 478
Ride on, ride on in majesty CH4 365 / MP 580
Ride on, ride on the time is right CH4 370
Said Judas to Mary ATAS 209
Wave your branches high ATAS 252
We have a king who rides a donkey JP 264
When Christ went to the temple online at http://carolynshymns.com/when_christ_went_to_the_temple.html
You are the king of glory MP 790
Introduction

During Holy Week we look at the story from the perspective of one of Jesus’ disciples, Peter. In his newly discovered personal diary, which experts unearthed from the sacred vaults of a Paisley church, you can hear the story from the man himself, and run the full gamut of emotions he endured with Jesus in this week we now call Holy Week.

We have provided more extensive resources for Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, following the Scripture lections suggested by the Narrative Lectionary and these have their own separate sections, but we continue the idea of Peter’s diary throughout.
Monday 21 March 2016

Scripture
Mark 11:15-19

Peter’s Diary
After all the excitement of yesterday, with the cheering crowds and waving of palm branches, I expected that we would have a quiet and restful day before we met up with our friends to begin the Passover celebrations properly.

I should have known better really. Jesus was not really the kind of person to rest for long periods. The only time he seemed to stop was when he sneaked off to pray somewhere quietly?

He gathered us together and informed us that we were now going to the temple, to have a time of prayer with God. Despite our tiredness, we all agreed to go with him. Sometimes, no many times, it was hard to say no to Jesus. Sometimes he would just give us a look that demanded we followed him, and today it was one of those looks!

I suggested to him we should have a wee rest, but he just said to me “Peter, come with me”, so I went.

As we made our way to the Temple, people were busy coming and going, getting the last bits of shopping organised for the feast.

There were many street traders on the road to the temple offering the animals and money for the sacred offerings.

When I mentioned this to Jesus, and reminded him what was needed, he just smiled and kept walking towards the Temple.

When we arrived at the temple gates it was noisier than I could ever remember it. There were people selling souvenirs and exchanging money to pay the temple tax and there were registered traders selling animals for sacrifices which were ten times the price of the same ones outside.

I was just about to mention this to Jesus when all of a sudden he went over to one of the money changers and overturned his table.

All along the row he went, clearing the tables of their money. There was a mad dash by some of the poor people to grab hold of the coins on the ground.

In the next instance, Jesus had wrenched a whip from one of the cattle men and began to set free the animals. Goats and doves and cows were running everywhere and it was lucky no one got hurt.

I thought about saying this to Jesus, but he was so angry, there was no stopping him.

The Chief Priests arrived and did their best to restore order. When the melee had died down Jesus quoted them the words from scripture that God had spoken to his people, “My temple will be called a house of prayer for the people of all nations”.

Then Jesus went on to tell the Priests and Pharisees in no uncertain terms that they had turned God’s temple of prayer into a place for thieves and robbers!

Jesus told us afterwards that these were the people who were charging ridiculous prices for God’s merchandise and lining their own pockets and those of the religious elite.

I guess Jesus was right to do what he did and, by the look of outrage and guilt on the faces of the leaders of the temple, you could tell that they knew what Jesus had said was true.

But as they moved away I heard one of them saying that they had had enough of this young upstart and that something would have to be done about him.

I was mighty glad when we managed to get out of the temple because I had never seen Jesus act like that before and I said so to John. He agreed with me and we decided that we must speak to Jesus about it.
Prayer

Holy God, there are times we want to clear our churches of all the hypocrites, the doubters, and those who think differently from me. Yet all we would be left with is an empty building and a congregation of one.

For we are a broken people, scarred by our own mistakes, limited by our vision, stuck in our ruts of what we believe to be right and wrong.

We who have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, we, who have misread or misunderstood your word. We, who have been selective in the scriptures we agree with, and choose to ignore the more challenging parts. We, who have been indiscreet in our living, and false in our dealings with others.

Teach us, Holy God, to live the truth, love the truth, and obey your truth.

Teach us, Holy God, to be honest in all things, loyal to our fellow believers, and supportive of those outside the church.

Hear us, Lord, and make us alive to your Word and to feel the breath of your Spirit, as we pray together:

Our Father...

Prayers of Intercession

Living God, when things do not work out the way we expect it to, when you change our plans and divert us in your ways, when you disarm us by your actions, when you speak in your forthright way, and leave no room for misunderstanding, help us to become more like you.

Teach us, O God, to become men and women, of compassion, justice and love.

Teach us, O God, to show the strength of our convictions, to declare our faith and trust in your ways, to be more direct in doing what we say we ought to do.

Living God, we pray today for those whose voices are seldom heard; for the hungry on our streets and the folk queuing at our foodbanks. For the traders who never get a fair price for their goods, for the faithful who never serve on our committees or become part of our church hierarchy. For the people who can find no place to pray, and for those whose churches are being bombed, burned and attacked in places throughout the world.

Living God, hear our prayers today, for the people making decisions about budgets each day, for those who lose jobs because there is no new money to pay them, for the fundraisers in charities as they strive to keep vital projects alive, for the volunteers who give freely and generously to others of their times and talents.

Living God, hear these our prayers. Encourage us to stand up, speak up, and act up, in the holy name of Jesus. Amen.
Scripture
Mark 12:41-44

Peter’s Diary
After yesterday’s events at the temple, the town was buzzing. Word gets round quickly at Passover time and many of Jesus’ followers rallied to support him. They all agreed that the prices charged in the temple were ridiculous, but no one had been brave enough to say so before and many of the poor people came up and thanked Jesus for standing up to the authorities and money changers.

Jesus was not one to avoid controversy that much I had learned about him these past three years. He was a man who spoke with conviction about God and he really made us understand some of the hardest parts of scripture. I knew in my heart that Jesus was the Messiah and I told him so often enough, but he just smiled in that disarming way of his. It was as if he knew what you were going to say and what you would do next.

Today we gathered again at the temple entrance. Jesus started teaching the crowds about God’s greatest commandment ‘To love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, mind and body’. He even silenced the hecklers and the clever lawyers with his teaching and it made you feel so good to be a part of his group.

After the crowds had dispersed we sat quietly in the sunshine talking amongst ourselves and watching the people entering and leaving the temple.

Everyone who entered into the temple left an offering in the plate at the door and we began to guess amongst ourselves what each person would put in the plate?

Judas was the most accurate in calculating what people would give. Some of the rich people really made a show of what they gave. They made sure people were looking and some people gave more than a month’s wages and we thought that was great and wished we could give the same.

Then an old lady came by with her tattered clothes and Andrew joked that she might pinch something from the plate rather than put money into it.

It was obvious she did not have much money and she dropped two copper coins in the box which were really worth nothing at all.

Jesus had watched all that had been happening but had ignored all our comments but he drew us together sharply when he saw what the lady had given. He told us that she had given everything she had to God and that was what God asked of all his people.

I said to him that two copper coins were useless compared to some of the offerings we had seen this morning. Jesus said to me, that these rich people, had given no more than their spare change, even though it was a lot of money to us. They were giving not out of love or devotion but merely as a sense of religious duty. Their offerings, although valuable, had no real thought behind it. Whereas, the old lady could have at least got some bread to feed herself, yet she gave almost everything she had but the clothes on her back to God.

Bartholomew asked Jesus if two copper coins were all we would have to give and he looked at him and said, “No Bartholomew, you have to give to God much more than money, you have to give yourself and that is more important than your money.” By giving yourself, he said “you will gladly give your money”.

It was a lesson to all of us. Not just about what kind of money we should give to God but in not judging people by how they look or what they give. Jesus sure has a way of driving a point home that really gets to you. I sneaked back to the temple later to give a little bit more to God, but I did not tell the others, yet the funny thing was I passed Bartholomew and Andrew and Thaddeus on the way. I wonder if they did the same as me?
Wednesday

Wednesday 23 March 2016

Scripture
Mark 14:3-9

Peter’s Diary

The tension from the temple was still apparent in Jerusalem today. John and I had intended to confront Jesus and ask him what he was playing at by disrupting the temple, and throwing out the moneylenders and the traders,

Yet I know that he was right when he called the temple a house of prayer, but there was not much prayer going on there when we visited!

That is what is so frustrating with Jesus. Sometimes he is in the wrong, but also in the right at the same time!

There is a story circulating today that the chief priests want to kill Jesus, but I don’t think they will go that far! Even if they come to arrest Jesus, I for one am prepared to fight them and the rest of the disciples said the same.

John and I have agreed to be extra-vigilant in an attempt to protect Jesus.

This evening we all shared a meal at the house of Simon, a man that Jesus had healed of leprosy a while back. He put on a really good spread and served the most beautiful wine I have ever tasted.

Just as we were finishing our dessert Mary, the sister of Martha, arrived. She went over to where Jesus was sitting and took from her apron pocket a small bottle, which I guessed was perfumed oil, and she poured it over the top of Jesus' head, and then upon his feet, before using her own long black hair to massage it in.

I did not think this was the time or place to do such a thing and I told Mary in no uncertain terms. I said that we all thought that Jesus was a great and wonderful person, fit enough to be the King of Peace, but she could have at least allowed him to finish his meal.

Although I was a bit angry, some of the crowd were apoplectic with rage. James pointed out that Mary was wasting her bridal perfume on someone who was definitely unavailable! Thomas said that it was ridiculous after what Jesus had said yesterday about not doing things just for show.

Judas said that we could have earned a fortune by selling the perfume and giving the money to the poor. He ranted about the widow woman who gave her last penny to God! And Mary's money from the perfume sale could have fed the hungry people in Jerusalem for a year. None of us disagreed with any of these sentiments.

We expected Jesus to reprimand her. Instead he defended her! In all the time I have known Jesus I have never seen him bring a person down in company. He always says something positive and makes us see the other side of things.

He told us that not all the money in the world could solve the problems of the poor because somewhere along the line the money disappears into someone's pocket and those in need are left without.

These seemed strange words coming from a man who had defended the poor, who had sought to feed and clothe them and had taught us to do likewise.

He said that we could help the poor whenever we wanted to and he reminded us that far too often we are more concerned with ourselves than remembering the poor.

Then he said a very strange thing that made John and I sit up and take notice. He said that Mary had poured this wonderful perfume over him to prepare his body for burial.

It made me wonder if Jesus knew about the stories going around Jerusalem that the chief priests planned to kill him. I am sure that he doesn’t or he would have told us.

He has said in the past about suffering and death but that cannot happen to the Messiah. No one would dare put Jesus to death. There would be a riot in the city if he was killed. We would rise up and fight for him, for he has taught us so much about love and service that we cannot fail him now.
Jesus finished by telling us
that Mary would be remembered
all over the world
wherever the Gospel was preached
for doing such a thing and we all scoffed at him.

Yet here I am,
a few hours later,
writing in my diary about what happened.

This Jesus certainly knows us better
than we know ourselves at times.
She did something
that none of us thought about doing,
and maybe that is why we feel so upset
by the event.

I just do not know
what is going to happen next.

Prayer of Praise

Holy God,
we praise you.
from the tips of our toes
to the top of our heads,
we praise you.
From the depth of our soul,
and from the height of our intellect,
we praise you.
From the inner city
to the littlest town,
from the rural village
to the poshest suburb,
in the city centre
and on the edge of town,
we praise you
wherever we might be.

We praise you
for the food and the shelter,
and for what little luxuries we allow ourselves.
We praise you for friends and neighbours,
for workmates and colleagues,
for close friends and internet friends,
for those we love
and those we need to love some more.

We praise you, Lord,
for the laughter and joy
that lightens our load,
for the music and songs
that melt our hearts,
for the people who inspire us
and generate hope in our everyday lives.

We praise you, Lord,
for you are a generous and a loving God,
a God of justice and compassion,
a God who knows when to praise us
and when to console us.
May your holy name be praised
today and every day
until your kingdom comes.
Amen.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession

Loving God,
we pray for those little acts of kindness
shown to us by others in our times of need.
A pot of soup or a prepared meal for us
in a time when we were ill
or stressed out with family problems.
Some shopping collected and delivered,
a meal bought and paid for,
a bouquet of flowers to cheer us up,
a favourite treat remembered by a friend,
a lift to an airport or train station,
a card of sympathy and friendship,
an unexpected visit
or a day trip away from home.

We thank you for the generous people in our life,
for their thoughtfulness,
their genuine love for us,
their willingness to put themselves out
to help, support or encourage us
in our difficult times and in our good times.

We thank you for the extravagant and the unexpected gifts,
for the people who give up their time and talents
to help other people in need.
We praise the charity workers and volunteers
serving people less fortunate,
to make the world a better place.

We thank you for those who are generous with their wealth,
who give to others not as a tax break,
but because they can and because they genuinely care
to be good stewards of the resources
with which they have been blessed.

Loving God,
we pray today for those who are lonely,
and have no one to love and be generous to them.

We pray for refugees and asylum seekers,
cut off from their homes and families
and trying to build new lives
in a strange and foreign country
that is not always welcoming to their needs.

We pray for those
who are bullied and mistreated,
who suffer domestic abuse,
and we pray that we may show them
our compassion and understanding.

Loving God,
hear us now as we offer in a moment of silence
our own prayers and wants.

Silence

Lord, hear us,
Lord, graciously hear us.
Forgive us our wrongdoing,
wipe out our sins,
and give us the grace
to be generous today
in the holy name of Jesus.
Amen.
In Remembrance

We could spend all our days reflecting on this part of the passion, but perhaps that is exactly the wrong thing to do. There is nothing to be understood here in any real sense. Understanding this doesn’t make sense. There is only being immersed in the breaking of bread, the pouring of wine and the greater darkness.

Why Judas did what he did; what Jesus thought he was meaning in the bread and wine, what kind of meal the Last Supper was, are all the wrong kind of questions and, on this night, quite irrelevant. Maundy Thursday is a day to become part of the great poem of the passion, a day to eat and drink of the body and blood and then find ourselves lost in the darkness, without an ending, left only with questions and ‘what ifs’ and deep sense of loss that comes only when you can see no way out of what is happening.

So today, read the story. Many times. Read it and sound every word for when the words run out, as they do this night and into tomorrow, the sound of them in us and the brokenness they hold will be all we will have. But they will be enough.

It is only in doing this that we might find the future, tucked up in words we too quickly say and even more quickly forget. “This is my body”; “Do this in remembrance of me”; “Sign of the new covenant”; “sealed in my blood”: all too quickly spoken like a ritual that performs some kind of magic behind the scenes. But this is all there is. What you see is what is happening: no more, no less. So today take time to say the words one final time and pause, not to understand what they mean for there is nothing to understand, but to feel them and know them for in them, lies the promise that is all we have to take with us through the next few days.

These words are invested with the whole desperate longing and broken intent of heaven. Who knows what they mean.

Perhaps you can hear them most clearly, only when there is nothing else to hear. Just silence. In darkness of the garden and through the praying that the cup that has just been drunk is taken away, in the stories told round the table that are simply echoes from the past, only then, when there is nothing else to hear, can we hear the Word: “Your will, not mine, be done.”

These words carry heaven in their breath. Everything that has ever been counts on this moment, the choice to take love as far as it has ever been and then further. In the darkness of the garden after the loneliness of the table is the pivot of salvation and the willingness to trust one last, final, terrible time that whatever has happened up to now has simply been promise.

Now, when we can least see it, believe it or understand it, comes the fulfilment: the giving of everything for what no one has yet found words for: Love.

So today, tell the story only. Dare not explain it as if you know something no one else does, as if there is a secret to all this. There is none. It is exposed to be just this: a man about to die but in that dying a man so alive he is able to give everything in death for those who choose to kill him.

Peter’s Diary

This is an extract from the secret Diary of Peter, discovered hidden in the corners of an upper room somewhere. It follows the pattern of diary entries found for Monday-Wednesday.

I can’t believe it! I just don’t understand what has happened! They arrested Jesus and we all ran away. Scattered in every direction like rats leaving a sinking ship. I, Peter the rock, who said I would never leave him, could not even admit I knew him when they asked me. ‘Jesus?’ I said, ‘Never heard of him.’ How will the Lord ever forgive me? Not once but three times I said I did not know him. Jesus had said it himself that I would deny him three times before the cock crowed, and I promised him that I would never ever do such a thing. And then I heard the cock crow as I lay cowering in the corner, terrified that I would be discovered, and I wept.

I cried so hard and for so long that I was unable to speak for a few hours. It was one of the ladies who had helped Jesus who found me, took me to her home, gave me a drink and nursed me. I was in a state of shock and I asked her what the news about Jesus was, and she told me that he was to go before Pilate in the morning; handed over to the gentiles. I screamed and then I passed out.

I cannot really believe all that has happened. It was one of our own who betrayed Jesus. Judas Iscariot, the traitor. How I hate him for kissing the Lord, not out of love but to condemn him as the guilty one. Yet who am I to talk, for I too have betrayed my Lord by running away. We all have—John, Simon, Thomas and all the others have done the same in different ways. We all loved him but could not stay with him.

We had supper together and we were laughing and joking with each other. We met in an upper room which Jesus had rented for the Passover. At the end of the meal he quietened us all down and he lifted the bread and broke it in two and said to us ‘This is my body, broken for you, do this in remembrance of me’. He passed the bread round and we each broke a piece and it tasted wonderful, not like the bread we had eaten earlier. Then he lifted up the cup of wine in the same way and he said to us ‘This is my blood which is poured out for many, my blood which seals God’s covenant’. He drank the wine and passed it round again as he had done with the bread. Those two simple acts brought an amazing calmness upon us all; it was as if we had shared something very precious with him. At the end we sang a hymn and praised God and we made our way to the Garden of Gethsemane.

In the garden Jesus called James, John and me to him. He looked so pale and wrought with despair and he told us his heart was at breaking point. This was a Jesus we had not seen before. He had always been so strong and commanding. He had been the one to give us courage and strength when we were weak. Yet there were tears in his eyes at that moment and my heart went out to him. He said he had to pray and asked us to stay awake with him.

It was a warm and balmy evening and I watched Jesus for what seemed an age as he poured his heart out to God. He kept asking that the cup of suffering be taken from him but I could not understand what he meant by this. The other wine we had at the meal must have been stronger than I thought and I fell asleep. It was Jesus who woke me and asked me to stay awake and pray with him that I might not fall into temptation. In his eyes there was a sad look I had never seen before and I prayed and drifted off to sleep again and again.

Then it happened. Judas came with a group of soldiers and kissed Jesus. I realised that they were arresting him and I took a sword from one of the soldiers’ belts and lashed out at someone. I think I caught him on the face but before I could strike another blow Jesus told me to stop. He said that he had to drink the cup of suffering which his Father had given him.

Those were the last words I heard. Thaddeus was the first to run and we all followed suit. I was surprised that no one tried to stop us but it was obvious that they only wanted Jesus.

I followed them at a distance to see if I could find out where they were taking Jesus. They went first to Annas who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, High Priest, that year. Then I heard that Caiaphas questioned him and before long they were taking him to the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate. It was at this point I was asked again if I knew Jesus and I said no. Then I ran away. This whole day has been a nightmare.
worship ideas

Call to Worship

Here is a table around which a story is told, not anyone's story, but everyone's story: a story that makes no sense and holds no hope unless we dare believe this is not all there is, for in the background, in the shadows that disturb the street below, whispers are passed that speak of betrayal, of this being the night of rulers and anti-rulers conspiring with the darkness to break the man of light, of religion's leaders and empire builders and puppet kings working together to crush the dream of hope, of followers confused, willing to deny, being possessed by fear, and too tired to care.

But as the world turns to trap him Jesus does one more thing that opens God's love to be shared evermore: he breaks bread and sips wine, and as the darkness builds around him the light of this story casts its brilliance down the centuries and bathes this table tonight for those who dare believe...

Reflection

On the table are twelve unlit candles. As each person is mentioned a candle is lit. Twelve different people could come from the congregation and light the candles, each representing one of the people.

The story of bread and wine does not begin here.

It is the story that holds every story and is mingled here with the story of Jesus every person Jesus met, every one he touched, every one he brought back into community.

With each of the next lines a candle is lit.

You: the woman at the well who drank that living water.
You: Zacchaeus the tree climber who broke the mould of tax collectors.
You: Jairus’ daughter who rose from sleep and knew new life.
You: Peter who chose to have his feet washed and then denied Jesus three times.
You: Lazarus who fashioned the way of resurrection.
You: Mary for whom Jesus could find no accusers.
You: the Syro-Phonecian woman who challenged Jesus with an inclusive kingdom.
You: Andrew who found a picnic and thought it might become a feast.
You: Martha the worker with no time to rest and listen.
You: the haemorrhaging woman who dared reach out and touch the hem of his garment.
You: when you deny me and hurt me and do all kinds of things to me.
You: Judas betrayer who tried to force the hand of the kingdom.

For each one Jesus broke bread and said this kingdom is for you.
For each one Jesus shared wine and said the promise is alive in you.
For each one Jesus requested: make this the one thing you always do to remember me.

Prayer of Approach to the Table

Lord Jesus, as the light thins and the world conspires, may we tell your story.
When hope seems gone and the future broken, may we tell your story.
When the hungry need fed and injustice is rife, may we tell your story.
For this night it seems it is all we can do.
Yet may we retell it not just in this place but every place we find ourselves, for this story is the hope of the world, this bread the means of a new world, this wine the promise for all, this table a meeting place for terrorist and terrorised for war monger and peace maker.
May this story be the one we tell that plants hope and sows longing into the fabric of the world.
So we come as we are, O Lord Jesus, with all the worry we have, the ability to change sides so easily, the fear of the future and the hurt of the past with what is broken in us and what is a burden to us.
We come as we are with all that we have done. May we trust the symbol of this table and the story it tells: renew us; refocus our vision; dare us to believe; call us anew and name us your body in the world.
Lord Jesus, as the light thins and the night thickens may we be here because there is no other place to be and may we remember you. So be it.
Amen.
Setting the Table

After each voice either bread or a wine goblet is placed on the table. There are six parts which could be read by two people on either side of the table or six different people. Depending on how much wine and bread you need, the elements could be placed after each voice or altogether at the end.

We gather the stories we remember from the bible and tangle them together in the story that remembers Jesus at this table.

Voice 1: I met him at a well, this border crosser who spoke to me when no one else did. “Give me a drink” this Jew said and this Samaritan almost did but my thirst was deeper and he knew.

Place goblet of wine on table.

Voice 2: He wanted to wash my feet, I said ‘No!’ He looked at me in that way he had that told me I had missed the point. I still don’t understand but I let him wash mine anyway. Creator of the cosmos, servant of all.

Place bread on table.

Voice 1: He drew a line in the sand for me and for them, one none of us dared cross: ‘Who will cast the first stone?’ he asked without looking up. And finally when he did they were gone for love had crossed the line.

Place wine on table.

Voice 2: He called my name, but not with mourning in his voice, ‘Lazarus!’ he called. I could do nothing but respond like some vacuum filling with air, my spirit heaved and I was unbound from those things that deaden and I was set free.

Place bread on table.

Voice 1: He did not want them to go hungry, neither did I. Five loaves and two fish were never going to be enough. The miracle happened and small offerings became a feast of vision as bread was broken and shared.

Place wine on table.

Voice 2: No one calls me a foreign dog and gets away with it and neither did he. You saw it in his eyes, it struck a cord: ‘even the dogs eat the crumbs’ and heaven suddenly got larger in his mind and us foreigners, were included.

Place bread on table.

Institution

These stories gathered here of people who met salvation in Jesus where lines were crossed and rules broken, where there was the promise of redemption for the outcast and foreigner and inclusion for all who had been excluded, these kingdom stories, are gathered here.

And for each of these Jesus said: ‘I love you, you are part of the kingdom’s story. Your stories come together here in bread and wine and a table of redemption and tonight of all nights make this the one thing you do together: remember me.

Sing ‘Put peace into each other’s hands’ (CH4 659)

But then there is one more story. The story that holds all others, that gathers them all here on the night with the deepening darkness and the labouring of love, this night when Jesus was at table.

Bread lay there untouched, wine un-drunk. The conversation was hushed. Matthew was talking of the parade five days earlier, Andrew interrupted him with the tables that Jesus sent turning with a quick look towards Jesus while he spoke but Jesus was unmoved.

Thomas was in conversation with Thaddeus about the fig tree and what Jesus must have meant by it. He was about to ask Jesus, but Jesus seemed to be somewhere else and so Thomas just left the question hanging.

Peter who found himself next to Jesus, kept looking at him worried about his friend. He had just had his feet washed and Peter wanted to ask him more about it but he the conversation never happened.

Mary came into the conversation with her perfume and its huge cost and a small argument broke out as James and John turned to Judas who just shook his head which was unusual for him as he was always ready for an argument.

But nothing seemed to move Jesus who stared into the distance.
Without any reason all the conversations and story telling ran out of words and they were all left with silence. It was then Jesus lifted the bread that had been untouched and as if all of heaven was listening he tore it and in a holy explosion crumbs scattered across the cloth.

"This bread is my body broken for you and whenever you eat make this the one thing you do together: remember me."

And he took the torn bread and passed it around his friends and each hesitated before they tore it again as if they felt his words more deeply and ate, once more confused by this turn of events. The questions increased as the bread slowly disappeared.

The silence deepened broken by Jesus once more who had lifted the cup of wine and paused, holding it. Shimmers of candlelight bounced off the surface as his hand shook.

"This cup, this wine, the new promise sealed in my blood, drink of it all of you, and make this the one thing you do together: remember me."

And so they sipped the wine and passed it on, each disciple looking at each other uncertain of what they were doing and what all this meant, trying to find a clue in each other's faces but they could find none and as the wine reduced the darkness increased.

On this Maundy Thursday let us not let Jesus do this on his own. Let us be here with him around the table. Let us share the cup with him. Let us taste the bitter wine together. Let us feel the crumbs of bread and make this the one thing we do together, remember him.
Ending

In many traditions there is no benediction, especially on Maundy Thursday. The congregation simply leaves in silence. The deed is done, Jesus is betrayed, and now arrested. There is no coffee or ‘fellowship’, just the loneliness of the night. These words may help shape that departing. The lights of the church are dimmed or off completely and the candles are blown out one by one (this is based on the memory of an idea experienced at Holy City organised by the Wild Goose Resource Group).

And when they had supped, the betrayer having already left, they went out into the night.

The trees twisted around them like the dark, whispers filled the night across the city, a baby cried but the garden was still.

And as Jesus prayed on his own the followers left him and fell asleep.

Blow out one of the candles with each of the following lines beginning ‘You’.

You: the woman at the well.
You: Zacchaeus tree climber.
You: Jairus’ daughter.
Can you not stay awake with me?
You: Peter denier.
You: Lazarus unbound one.
You: Mary set free.
Take this cup from me.
You: Syro-Phonecian woman.
You: Andrew the disciple.
You: Martha the worker.
Can you not remain here with me?
You: the disciples today.
You: when you deny me, hurt me, forget me.
Ah Judas you have come back.
Judas?! Blow out final candle.

No music, just silence as people leave.

Sending

Bread:
blessed, broken, given—
his body.

Wine:
thanksgiving, sharing, drinking—
his blood, poured out for many.

On this night, a meal is shared among friends at table.

On this night, darkness gathers.

In a garden, where prayers are offered, and disciples sleep, the sound of coins jingle in a purse as footsteps march in time growing nearer: the hour is at hand...

Praise/Hymns

Before I take the body of my Lord CH4 658
Go to dark Gethsemane CH4 377
Just as I am CH4 553
Lay down your head CH4 371
Now, my tongue, the mystery telling CH4 667
Put peace into each other’s hands CH4 659
Sanctus and Benedictus CH4 651
Stay with me CH4 793
This is the night CH4 375
Twas on that night CH4 376
why have you forsaken me?

bible notes

Drawing The Line

Mark’s Gospel is often referred to as a Passion Narrative with a long introduction. And the Passion—quite literally the “suffering”—comes to its awful conclusion in twenty-four short verses.

The author of Mark is a brisk writer. From the very beginning of the gospel story, it feels like a breathless retelling of the tale. Sentences are joined time and again by a simple, two-letter Greek word that can mean “and” or “but”: each instance of the word serving to move the story quickly along without fuss or excess filling.

It is strangely apt, then, that the two-dozen verses that detail the last hours of Jesus’ life seem so stark and matter-of-fact. Mark tells it like it was and allows the hard reality of it all to have its own impact without elaborate detail. That style of telling gives all the more room around the shocking, so-called ‘cry of dereliction’ from the cross: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” to let its chilling sound ring out. This is no calm, elaborate enacting of a costume drama, this is gritty and painful realism.

Mark’s style gives all the more space, too, for the dreadful mocking that Mark tells us took place. It is not sufficient that the crucifixion is undeserved and perpetrated on trumped-up charges. There is the humiliation of the broken, bruised and bloodied Christ. He was safely nailed to a tree. His mockers then could take pot-shots at him with impunity.

We are all brave to say the cutting word when we believe we are at a safe distance and untouchable. An episode of the cartoon Tom and Jerry had Tom the cat reading a newspaper headline that decreed that all dogs were to be tied up. He went out to Spike, the dog in the garden, to find him already tied to his kennel. Tom surreptitiously measures the length of the rope tying Spike, paces out the length from the kennel entrance and draws a line on the ground. He then taunts Spike from behind that line and, when Spike strains at the rope to try to get at Tom, the dog cannot reach; at least not until, when Tom is not looking, Spike redraws the line nearer to the kennel. The next time Tom taunts him, Spike races out of his kennel. Tom is so smug, still assuming he was safe. Little did he suspect…

Jesus is taunted as he hangs on the Cross. The Chief Priests and the scribes, who had felt themselves often in the ‘cross-hairs’ of Jesus’ sights were taking their revenge, smugly assuming that they had, effectively, drawn a line behind which they were now safe. Kill the man, kill the problem, they may have thought. And Mark’s stark telling of the tale makes the taunts all the more apparent. Little wonder Jesus cried out in dereliction.

The breathless telling of the Passion concludes with the very breath going from Jesus’ body in a final sigh. And the Chief Priests and the scribes will have breathed a different sigh, one of relief. But their line of safety was about to be redrawn. This is not cartoon-dog territory straining on a rope holding it fast. This is the tearing in two of the Temple curtain. There is no line containing God. There never was. When the Chief Priests and the Scribes were taunting the dying Jesus, assuming they had dealt with the difficulty and were safe to do so, little did they suspect…

Mark 15:16-39

(Psalm 22:1-2,14-21)
the story

Peter’s Diary

Further extracts from the secret diary of Peter found in an upper room somewhere.

JESUS IS DEAD.

They crucified him. Pilate passed the death sentence on him but many others had played their part in his death sentence.

I looked at the scene from a distance, too afraid to go closer, in case I was arrested and put to death.

I had watched crucifixions before. It is an agonising death and is usually only given to the very worst of people.

The soldiers seem to get some kind of satisfaction out of being as cruel as possible. I had seen people whipped and spat on before.

I remember once when they crucified a man who killed and raped a young virgin. The mob gathered around him, and I was one of them who gave him a good kick in the ribs.

Mary told me later that the soldiers mocked Jesus by placing a crown of thorns on his head and taunting him by crying out ‘This is the King of the Jews’. In fact they nailed this title above his head in three languages.

Mary also said that they divided up his clothes by drawing lots! How degrading is that? Leaving nothing for his family to remember him by.

Mary saw them nail Jesus to the cross. Even from where I was I could hear him screaming and my legs were shaking so much that I thought I would pass out.

I loved Jesus. I never thought it would come to this. Jesus had talked to us about a new Kingdom. He had made us believe that the kingdom was to be our inheritance and I believed him. I had given up family and home for him. I had given up my fishing business just to be with him. I believed that he was God’s son. I believed that all that he had said about God was true. His teaching had changed my whole life. But now I have nothing. Well perhaps not nothing, for I have my memories of him.

I remember that day we fed the whole crowd of people with loaves and fishes. Five thousand strong that day listened to him and we fed them all.

Then there was the day in the boat. What a day that was. Jesus had been teaching at the lake side and had gone off quietly to pray. I was in the boat with some others and we must have fallen asleep. The wind had got up and the boat had drifted from the shore. Jesus saw we were in danger and came walking over the water to us. At first we could not believe what was happening and then I asked Jesus if I could do the same. He called me to him and I jumped out the boat and walked across the water to meet him. When I realised what I was actually doing I panicked and began to sink. Jesus caught hold of me and rescued me again.

He was always there when I needed him. I only wish I could be there now to help him in some way but it’s too dangerous and too late.

He is dead now.

It’s hard to write these words for I loved Jesus so deeply. I cannot believe he is really dead, even though he had spoken about such things to us. I remember him saying he was going to die and I said to him that he would never die. How foolish I was.

Jesus never lied to us but it’s over now, he is dead and there is nothing we can do. I guess I should try and find some of the others to see if we can organise a proper burial. Surely that’s the least we can do?

worship ideas

Call to Worship

On this darkest of nights we gather together to face the worst that we and the world can do and look to the one who gave his all.

We cannot give what he so lovingly gave, and yet in the silence of eternity we hear the still small voice whisper: ‘follow me’.

So, let us worship.

Responses

Leader: Where is the darkness of the world?
All: On a cross on a hill.

Leader: Where is the light of the world?
All: On a cross on a hill.

Leader: Where do we find our hope?
All: In looking on and walking on and seeing the fullness of God’s glory.
Silence

How can silence be so deafening?
The discarded wood of the cross creaks gently as bloody rags flutter in the breeze.
The hillside, heaving with humanity just a few hours ago is now deserted, eerily quiet.
Folk have wandered home, spectacle over, not the high jinks anticipated, just another political crucifixion served up as propaganda, a warning to others who might consider stirring up dissent.

All that hype of Messiah talk—just another delusional magician who couldn’t magic his way out of execution.
The place of the skull is empty and those who do venture out of the city hurry past, shuddering at its eeriness, struck by the silence that hangs like a visible pall over the place where the criminals were killed.
It is a silence charged and pulsating a silence that feels as though it’s about to burst.
All is not well.

There is something terrible in that silence as though hell is about to burst through and only God can prevent it.

Candle Extinguishing Liturgy

If you have candles lit around the worship space, at each time ‘forsaken’ is spoken, one of the candles could be extinguished. This should not be rushed. Allow the silence between the words to speak. This is written for 13 candles.

Forsaken.
Jesus.

Life—forsaken.
Hopes—forsaken.
Dreams—forsaken.
Innocence—forsaken.
Friendship—forsaken.
Expectation—forsaken.
Rescue—forsaken.
Trust—forsaken.
God—forsaken.

My God, my God, why?
Eloi, eloi, lema sabachthani?
Forsaken.
Jesus.

Forsaken.

Reflection

From pillar to post tried by religious authorities, political authorities, and by ordinary people.

Tried and found wanting on trumped up charges from corrupt motives.

Tried, condemned and summarily sentenced to death, death by public execution, nailed to a cross of wood, witnessed by friends and family by criminals and soldiers experiencing total dereliction surrendering his spirit into the hands of God.

And the crowd moves on to find something new to catch their interest a dead Messiah can’t cut it any more.

And, even though we know the twist in the tale, we who know the joy of Easter Sunday are no less fickle as we seek new thrills and fresh scandal in which to become embroiled.

And still Christ hangs on to his cross determined to save the likes of us.

Hallelujah! What a saviour.

Praise/Hymns

‘Father, forgive them!’ online at http://carolynshymns.com/father_forgive_them.html

How deep the father’s love for us CH4 549 / MP 988
Mary’s song Songs for Every Easter, Out of the Ark
Praise to the holiest in the height CH4 378 / MP 563
The love that clothes itself in light CH4 384
The Servant King CH4 374 / MP 162
There is a green hill far away CH4 380 / MP 674
We sing the praise of him who died CH4 405
Were you there when they crucified my Lord? CH4 403
What kind of man was this ATAS 263
When I survey the wondrous cross CH4 392 / MP 755 or 1126
While Mary was watching CH4 383
‘Why has God forsaken me?’ CH4 388
Your will be done on earth, O Lord CH4 805
worship ideas

The Things He Carried

This is a series of readings that could be used on Good Friday, interspersed with music, or used during the days of Holy Week.

The Things He Carried:
A Cross

A benign piece of wood
that might have been whittled
and fashioned into something beautiful
became an instrument of torture.

Something once living
in the density of the forest
that grew up from a sapling
to become the fine specimen
that was cut down
to provide the means
by which the oppressor's
death sentence
was carried to completion.

Carried by a sinless man
hoisted up on a hillside
with its human cargo,
Jesus,
forced to undergo
a public and humiliating death.

Jesus, already suffering
from beatings
physically and emotionally
imaging all too vividly
what lay in store for him
Jesus forced to carry
that rough, heavy piece of wood.

Shouldering the cross
that the world might be saved.

Shouldering the cross
that you and I might know love.

Shouldering the cross
to show what love is.

The Things He Carried:
A Crown Of thorns

As if it weren't enough
to be sentenced
to a slow and agonising death,
Jesus was mocked.

A crown of thorns
placed on his head
roughly, crudely.

Perhaps the stabbing pain
as it dug into his scalp
in the warm sun of the day
subsided in the midst
of all the other pain he endured.

A crown of thorns
signifying his kingship
that no one would recognise,
neither religious authorities
nor civil authorities,
not even his followers.

A king.
A king who bore regally
all that was placed upon him that day,
who carried with dignity
a crown of thorns.

The Things He Carried:
Unfulfilled Hopes

Too good to be true.
Just knew it.
Everytime we pin our hopes
on some new liberator
we come up disappointed.

The talk was good.
Even the action.
But, in the end,
we're left high and dry yet again.

Is it us?
Our sense of judgement that's wrong?
Are we too easily led?
Whatever the reason,
we keep on backing the wrong horse.
And only when we've thrown in our lot
and given up our livelihoods
are our hopes dashed once more.

This really seemed to be the real thing.
A revolutionary who was so extraordinary.
Who came, bringing peace, not a sword.
Preaching love, not hate.
Who spoke so eloquently
and backed up his words with action.
Who had us, quite literally, eating out of his hand.

We tried to tell him
that he's gone far enough.
That he should keep it down for a while.
With so many folk in the city for Passover
it would have been easy to keep a low profile.

But Jesus always did it his way—or his Father's way, he claimed.
And so, instead of lying low
when the authorities were baying for blood
he walked right into their path.
He seemed to welcome arrest.

Even then, we thought that might be
some last heroic act.
But it doesn't look much like it now.

There he hangs,
like any other common criminal
silenced, defeated.
And with him, all our hopes.

The Things He Carried:
Rejection

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
The words Jesus cried as he gave himself up to death.
As his body stretched out of kilter
and his lungs were crushed
as he struggled with each agonising breath. 
As he pronounced forgiveness for the thief 
and for us.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

The man who went about doing good. 
Teaching, healing, restoring worth. 
Turning on its head 
all the practice of the law. 
The man who had to carve out space 
to be by himself 
because folk wanted 
constantly to be around him.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

As he watched his disciples 
skulk away 
and hide in the mob 
of angry people 
baying for his blood.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

As he looked in sorrow 
at his mother in her sorrow 
enduring the agony of losing her child.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

The man who gave himself for others 
Who loved and laughed and held nothing back 
In death alone, deserted, 
knowing the desolation of rejection.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

The Things He Carried: 
The Sin Of The world

We see the ugly lump of wood 
that he bears through the streets. 
We see the crude crown of thorns 
piercing his head. 
Less visible is the weight of our sin 
that bears down upon him relentlessly. 
So much weight there 
the big and the small 
the grand and the petty 
the local and the global 
the commission and the omission. 
All those wrongs that are ours 
sometimes when we don’t even know it.

He carries them 
and bears them away with him 
on the cross. 
Sometimes, we don’t even want to give them up, 
our sins, 
but he carries them anyway. 
He lifts them up 
with him on that cross 
and in carrying our sins 
offers us a chance 
to begin again 
free of our burden. 
He carried the sin of the world.

The Things He Carried: 
The Amazing Love Of God

How could he bear all those things? 
The weight of the cross. 
The piercing mockery of the crown of thorns. 
The burden of the sin of the world. 
The dashing of the hopes of his followers. 
The crushing rejection. 
Each a weight more deadly than the last. 
How could he carry all that 
and still cry: ‘Father forgive’? 
How could he carry all that 
and still say to the thief: 
‘This day you will be with me in paradise’? 
How could he carry all that 
and, on seeing his mother watching with breaking heart, 
say, ‘Woman, your son’? 
How could he carry all that 
and in the depths of rejection cry, 
‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ 
How could he carry all that 
and say, ‘I thirst’? 
How could he carry all that 
and cry, ‘It is finished’? 
How could he carry all that 
and, at the last, say, 
‘Father into your hands I commend my Spirit’? 
Bearing the weight 
of the cross, 
the crown of thorns, 
the sin of the world 
the unfulfilled hopes 
the rejection 
still Christ knew 
the amazing love of God 
there for him 
and for us 
there in the beginning 
and in the end 
all that he carried 
was carried in the amazing love of God

Sending

Clothed in purple, 
crowned with thorns: 
mocked and struck, 
led to a cross. 
Hammer and nails 
suspend him 
between heaven and earth. 
Darkened sky, 
forsaken cry; 
silence. 
All is still. 
We watch, 
and wait...
What If It Is True?

AS A CLIFF-HANGER LAST CHAPTER, Mark takes the prize. There is plenty of scholarly opinion that the gospel goes no further than verse 8 and that what comes after, came after, so to speak: that is, they are verses added to round things off by another hand than that of the original author and at a later date.

It is not that the added verses say anything in any way misleading. It is just that there is much to be gained by assuming that Mark’s gospel finished with the women running from Jesus’ tomb afraid and struck dumb. There is a ring of authenticity to it precisely because it feels so incomplete and unexpected.

Whereas the author of Luke’s Gospel is well-attested as the same author of the book of Acts of the Apostles, Mark has no sequel. We are left with “terror”, “amazement” and the women saying “nothing to anyone, for they were afraid”.

Rather like a musical melody that is left hanging on an unresolved chord, so the gospel tale ends on a frayed-knot rather than tied-up-loose-ends. Hardly the heroic ending of the black-and-white era Hollywood movies, this gospel ends with questions hanging in the air.

There is no developed resurrection narrative in Mark’s telling. It is distilled down to four words, “He has been raised”, spoken by a young man in a white robe. Cue the fear, cue the terror, cue the amazement, cue the fleeing and telling no one.

What were the women afraid of as they ran from the tomb? Perhaps that what the young man in a white robe was saying was true? They certainly had been catapulted into a state of confusion. Having gone to offer care to the remains of the one whose death has prompted within them grief, they suddenly become confronted with an unexpected turn of events. And what if it is true—this strange, extraordinary claim by the young man in a white robe? Grief and confusion mixed together is hardly a peaceable mix. Fear, terror and amazement are hardly a surprising outcome, not to mention the fleeing from the scene.

What if it is true? To put a spin on Betjeman’s “On Christmas” poem, what if the answer to the question, “Is it true?” spinning round in the women’s heads is Yes! The original poem, with its Christmas focus, talks of the “tissued fripperies” of Christmas not being able to obscure or compare with the outrageous claim,

That God was Man in Palestine
And lives today in Bread and Wine.

An Easter variation on the theme would deal not in “tissued fripperies” of Christmas but the nails, the Cross and tomb of Easter. And what if it is true that, as the young man in the white robe said, “He has been raised”?

Perhaps the women were precisely afraid that it may be true. After all, a death with a body is somehow complete, the focus clear, the grief centred. They were devastated by the death but the rebuilding of their lives was starting with the spicing of the one loved now dead. There was an orderliness to that. To find, as they did, the body now gone and a stranger saying “he has been raised” throws everything into a turmoil of disorderedness.

Mark’s account has the ring of authenticity precisely because the resurrection was bound to be unnerving. Rather than the end to the story of Jesus, it was the beginning of the tale of the church and that was going to require courage and faith and, in that, nothing has changed!
Peter’s Diary

Further extracts from Peter’s secret diary found in an upper room somewhere.

JESUS IS ALIVE!

I couldn’t believe it myself at first. Mary, Mary Magdalene and Salome had gone to the tomb to continue their mourning and discovered that the stone had been rolled away and Jesus was not there. They ran for over a mile and must have run faster than they had ever done in their lives before. Mary Magdalene burst into the room where John and I were and told us that the body of Jesus had been taken away. She was hysterical with grief. We tried our best to calm her down and eventually we succeeded. She told us again that they had gone to the tomb to continue the mourning period as was proper and could not believe that the stone had been rolled away and the Roman guards had disappeared. She said she came straight to us. She asked us if we thought it possible that Jesus was alive. We both said no.

John thought we should go and check out for ourselves whether Mary’s story was true or not. She was only a woman after all and it could have been that her mind was playing tricks on her. We walked at first and then started to walk quicker until we were both running very fast. John was quicker than I was and he arrived at the tomb first. We did not even stop to check if there were any guards there for it might have been a trap to draw us to the tomb to be arrested.

John found the garments which Jesus had been wrapped in lying just outside of the tomb. I saw them too but I went past John straight into the darkened tomb to see if the body was there or not. I searched every corner but I could find nothing save the cloth, which had been wrapped round Jesus’ head, lying neatly folded where they had laid Jesus’ body only three days ago. Mary by this time had caught up with us again and was standing outside the tomb. We told her to wait while we went for the others and we went back home.

The others had already heard the news and had gathered together again in the upper room. There was a tremendous buzz in the room but we did not know what to do. Then Mary arrived back. There was a look of radiance on her face. A calmness, a serenity, a brightness that I had never seen before. Mary was a beautiful woman and had a wonderful smile which always brought a glow into the heart of everyone she met. But somehow it was a different kind of look she had now. I asked her to sit down and tell us what was wrong.

She sat down by my side and looked at me. ‘I’ve seen the Lord. Jesus is alive. He sent me to tell you all that he is alive!’

There was a hushed silence in the room. It was Thomas who spoke first. “You’re talking rubbish Mary. Jesus is dead, we saw it happen to him. No one survives crucifixion and being laid in a tomb. Not even Jesus.”

Simon said that it could be true for Jesus did say that he would rise from the dead but none of us really believed he would. John and I thought that Mary had perhaps just wanted to believe that she had seen Jesus and had imagined it all. I told her this but she said, "No. Jesus is alive. I met him. I was in the garden standing beside the tomb like you told me to and I was crying. I was a little bit frightened to be there by myself but I found courage from somewhere and looked into the tomb myself. I saw two people dressed in radiant white sitting where we had laid Jesus’ body. They asked me why I was crying and I told them that they had taken my Lord away and I didn’t know where they had put him. Then a voice from behind me asked the same question. I turned round thinking it was just the gardener and asked him if he knew anything. He said my name, ‘Mary’, and at that point I recognised the voice and the face. ‘Teacher’, I said, and went to hug him but he told me not to for he had not yet gone back to God. Then he told me to come and tell you that he is alive.”

We debated for hours about what Mary had told us but none of us could really believe it all. It was late evening and the debate was still going on and we heard a voice say “Peace be with you”. We turned and there was Jesus standing there, right in the room beside us. We could see the marks of the nails where they had pierced his hands and feet and the spear mark in his side. He said again “Peace be with you”.

Then he said to us, “As the Father sent me, so I send you.” He breathed upon each one of us and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” When he did so, you could feel a tremendous burst of energy enter into your body. From that moment on we knew that Jesus was alive. We knew that he had defeated death and that all that he had said would happen came true. I kept repeating to myself ‘Jesus is alive’ and suddenly all my doubts and fears that I had experienced over the past few days vanished. I felt a tremendous relief over the guilt I harboured for denying Jesus and I knew that I was forgiven. I knew now that I would have a purpose in life to go and tell others this wonderful news about Jesus being alive. There was nothing else for me to do.

JESUS IS ALIVE! THANKS BE TO GOD!
Through the Season

Pages 4 and 5 contain ideas that can be used to help set the scene throughout this season linking each week’s theme to the wider narrative. To the large question mark that has been our focus throughout Lent now add an image of an empty tomb below the palm cross with a pathway leading away from the tomb.

Gathering Activity

As per the previous Sundays in Lent, prepare a slip of paper for each worshipper with the focus question for the week, in this case “How do we go on?” to help worshippers reflect and make choices about their attitudes to life and the kingdom. Do not feel limited by these suggested questions. Adapt or re-write them to bring out your focal point.

If you want to develop this idea a bit further there is an ‘Ups and Downs of Lent’ Journey Sheet in the resources on page 134 which can be added to each week.

Easter Sunday: Ups and Downs

Which of these attitudes is the snake that makes the kingdom slip away and which is the ladder to the kingdom come?

A. To live as a Christian is to attend to our religious responsibilities well.
B. To live as a Christian is to follow Jesus out and into the streets.

Call to Worship

Can it be true?
Could it be you rising from death to life?

Yes, proclaim the Good News:
God’s love has overcome;
it has been set free
to flow from the grave
through the streets
into the town,
across the borders
into our hearts,
from our hearts
touching all,
bringing hope,
creating life,
the Kingdom come.

So, let us come to the kingdom and worship the king of love.

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Holy God,
as this new day dawns
we are reminded
of that first Easter morning,
when sorrow turned to joy,
Jesus is risen from the dead.

We do not claim to understand how,
but we believe it to be true.

We gather here, Sunday by Sunday,
celebrating resurrection,
celebrating love
that overcomes death.

Like Peter, Mary
and all those who follow Jesus,
we are shocked
and surprised by your power over death.

Like Peter, Mary
and all those who follow Jesus,
we gather together
in this place
afraid, unsure and a little anxious
of what to expect.

But, as Jesus did with them,
he does with us,
by coming among us
and saying Peace be with you.

May that peace Jesus speaks
be felt here in this place,
as we try to get our heads
around resurrection once more.

Like Peter, Mary
and all those who follow you,
we come as we are,
simple people, flawed and imperfect
and we offer ourselves to you.

We are happy to confess to you
that we still have doubts,
that we still deny you at times,
that we still fail obey your commands.
We are sorry and ask for your forgiveness.

Like Peter, Mary
and all those who follow you,
fill us with your Holy Spirit
and send us out renewed and refreshed,
ready to serve you in the world
today and every day.

Amen.
Prayer of Dedication
Generous and loving God,
Jesus gave all that he had,
his whole life, body, mind and soul.
He gave because he loved us.
Receive what we give today;
and may our offerings be
used to take your message of love
out to all people.
May our offerings include
our whole life, body, mind and soul,
so that we can continue to love others
as Jesus loved us.
Amen.

All-Age Prayer
Holy God,
Jesus is alive!
How can that be?
You are the one
who created all life
and now you have
created new life from death.
Holy God,
thank you for sending Jesus
to show us how much you love us.
Thank you for sending us the gift
of your Holy Spirit,
who continues to guide us
in your way.
Holy God,
thank you for Peter,
who denied you,
and then became
your greatest follower,
for the women like Mary,
who anointed you
and who loved you,
for each of your disciples,
men and women,
who saw you risen from the dead,
and who worshipped you.
Holy God,
thank you
for this special day
when we celebrate you
rising from the dead.
As we sing songs,
and listen to the story
once again,
may we sense your presence
here among us
and may we know
that you are alive
yesterday, today and forever.
Amen.

Prayers for Others and Ourselves
Loving God,
today is a special day,
a day of celebration
a day of wonder and happiness
for Christians all around the world.
Today we celebrate resurrection,
a new life, an eternal life,
a life beyond anything
we can know or understand.
At this time of year
we are reminded of the fragility of life,
of our vulnerability and mortality.
Lord, as we celebrate
by sharing together in worship
here in this sanctuary
we remember those people
who are not able to celebrate openly,
whose lives are in danger
because of their faith.
May the risen one support them.
Lord, as we celebrate
by rolling hard boiled eggs
and by eating chocolate eggs,
we remember those people
who can’t afford special food
for special occasions,
and especially those who
have little or no food to eat.
May the risen one feed them.
Lord, as we celebrate
by spending time with family and friends,
we remember those people
who have been separated
from their family,
or who are lonely
and feel unloved.
May the risen one comfort them.
Lord, as we celebrate
and say thank you
for what Jesus did for us,
we remember those people
who do not believe
in the resurrection,
and who choose not to follow
in the way of Jesus.
May the risen one become real for them.
Lord, as we celebrate
a new hope today,
send us out to share
that hope with all people,
renew us and revive us,
that we might go
to love and serve
in the name of Jesus
all who are in need.
So be it.
Amen.
worship ideas

Reflection
Can we over-do the alleluia’s?
Can we mend all the broken ones from Friday?
Can we hear them unfold in the sunrise?
Might we have ears to do so
and live in the echo
of this promise
of the renewal of life
always.

Might we dare to believe
beyond tombs,
beyond crosses,
beyond graves
and towards new life
towards transformation,
towards resurrection
where we now live
in the renewal of life
and in the spirit of Jesus Christ
alive among us.

May we play in the morning dew
and search for footprints.

May we join the dawn chorus
with alleluias.

May we break bread
and see light explode among us
and in its shadow see Jesus here.

May we live as a community of resurrection
always living into the promise of transformation
believing into and living in
the spirit of Jesus Christ.

This is our prayer,
this is our celebration,
this is our now.

Activities

Easter Egg Hunt
Search for chocolate eggs around the church and talk about the disciples looking for the stone that had rolled away.

Lent Collage
Following the creation of the Lent Collage that the children may have been working on throughout Lent, have the children make things to celebrate the resurrection which can be added to the collage.

Other Ideas

Write Easter greetings on slabs /paths outside church or on church stairs using chunky pavement chalks. This could be done ahead of the service as the children gather.

Buy plastic eggs and small chocolate eggs. Put the small chocolate eggs inside the plastic eggs. Decorate the outside of the plastic eggs with stickers. Place the decorated egg inside small clear cellophane gift bags. Make a gift tag for the bags with Easter greetings on it. Punch a hole in the gift tag, thread ribbon through the hole and tie it round the gift bag. Make enough for all the children or the whole congregation.

Before or after worship, make an Easter garden in the grounds of the church with daffodils, decorated stones, sticks tied with string to make a cross. This could be on a small or large scale.
Statement of Faith

The idea is for the congregation to echo the last word of each line in the four line stanzas with a reader reading the parts in between and the start of each line.

Night turns, turns, turns, turns
Sun rises, rises, rises, rises
Stones roll, roll, roll, roll
Jesus is alive, alive, alive, alive

Very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb saying “Who will roll the stone away?”

Tomb is empty, empty, empty, empty
Grave clothes folded, folded, folded, folded
Death is gone, gone, gone, gone
Jesus is alive, alive, alive, alive

When they looked up they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. They entered the tomb.

Dawn breaks, breaks, breaks, breaks
Mary sees, sees, sees, sees
Alleluia’s echo, echo, echo, echo
Jesus is alive, alive, alive, alive

Do not be alarmed, you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, he has been raised, he is not here. He is going ahead of you to Galilee. There you will see him just as he told you.

Mary cries, cries, cries, cries
Mary believes, believes, believes, believes
Mary tells, tells, tells, tells,
Jesus is back, back, back, back

Sending

Alleluia!
The tomb is empty,
the stone is rolled away:
he is not here,
his is risen.

Alleluia!

With hearts rejoicing,
let us go and share the good news:
of hope reborn,
of freedom given,
of life in all its fullness.

We are a resurrection people—
let ‘Alleluia!’ be our song!
And may the blessing of God,
Creator,
Redeemer,
and Renower,
be with you all,
evermore.

Praise/Hymns

All heaven declares CH4 426 / MP 14
Alleluia! Jesus is risen CH4 429
At dawn the women made their way CH4 408
Christ is Alive! CH4 416
Christ is risen! hallelujah MP 74
Christ the Lord is risen today CH4 411 / MP 76
Comes Mary to the grave CH4 407
Early on a Sunday, women went to weep online at http://carolynshymns.com/early_on_a_sunday.html

Earth, earth awake CH4 420
Easter jubilation ATAS 52
For this purpose MP 155
Haven’t you heard that Jesus is risen? CH4 433
I danced in the morning CH4 404
I know that my redeemer lives CH4 423
I serve a risen Saviour MP 295
Jesus Christ is alive today MP 358
Jesus Christ is risen CH4 409
Jesus Christ is risen today CH4 410 / MP 357
Led like a lamb MP 402
Low in the grave he lay MP 453
Now the green blade riseth CH4 417
Mine/Our eyes have seen the glory CH4 476 / MP 549
See, what a morning MP 1105
Sing out an Easter song ATAS 215
The day of resurrection CH4 413
The Saviour died but rose again CH4 425
The strife is o’er the battle done CH4 412 / MP 670
They crucified my Saviour CH4 406
Thine be the glory CH4 419 / MP 689
It is at least interesting to note that the disciples were staying in an upper room in Jerusalem just as, of course, the Last Supper was also said to have been in an upper room. Interesting, from the point of view of the modern presumption that access issues would be addressed rather than the implicit assumption that those unfit of wind and limb would not be a part of the gathering. This is not the superficial observation it might at first seem. Rather, it prompts thought on the debilitating ways people can find themselves excluded when the truth is we are all simply differently-abled rather than a portion of people being what might be termed DIS-abled. As such, we are wise to see that even the fittest of human fiddles can find, through a perfect storm of circumstance, that life collapses inwards: as if a paralysis manifests itself in an otherwise sound body and a feeling of being imprisoned ensues. Such a storm hit the disciples.

It is consistently assumed that being restricted in terms of movement is all negative. It is a fundamental principle of prison punishment: the denial of liberty. And yet there can be benefits. This is not a sugaring of the bitter pill of incarceration or disability (that way lies excuse-laden inaction to rehabilitate or to integrate). Instead, the compulsory shrinking of the boundaries of one’s life, however permanent or temporary, can compel an introspection that clears the ground a little of the clutter of life’s distractions that keep a distance between ourselves and important decisions.

Delaying critical decisions has a long history. St Augustine famously prayed, “Lord make me pure, but not yet!” And, whatever else he meant by that prayer, it was a delaying of change required of him. Perhaps he was still imprisoned by a desire that he knew was right to temper but could not summon the courage to do so at that point. The prayer sounds rather like a declaration of commitment to the cause of purity, but a delay in its execution. Political prevarication is nothing new!

Crisis points bring discomfort, for sure. There can be a sense of being held behind the closed doors of habit, tradition, taste, predilection: knowing that liberty needs to be sought but delaying the day of the seeking because of the change it heralds. And then a crisis looms and that delaying is no longer an option.

The disciples, shut behind doors for forty days in one room were facing the biggest of crises. They had witnessed the earthly life of Jesus and grieved his crucifixion, confused beyond measure as to what that might then mean, only to encounter convincing proof of Jesus alive again. That will not have brought unqualified joy: it must have given pause and cause for thought that will have felt more than a little uncomfortable, somewhat along the lines of, “what then must I do, where then must I go, what shall become of me?”

The disciples were detained, so to speak, in their room: forced, in the process, to confront the reality that lay before them, with all its excitement and its uncertainty. Restricted, as they were for safety above all else, there was no hiding place from the need to face up to what faced them. Given the responsibilities they were about to assume as Jesus’ witnesses in the world, forty days of contemplation might almost seem a rush. But, to be sure, the deliberating will have been distilled down—a concentrated attention making them open to the promised Spirit and ready to serve as each was able.
the story

A Letter To Theophilus

Dear Theophilus

My second book! Wow!

The first one as you know was all about Jesus: Who he was. What he taught. The stories he told. The people he met. His friends and enemies. The women who looked out for him. How he died. How he came back from death and met his friends.

You remember where I finished the last book? I told you about Jesus meeting those two people walking to Emmaus and how at first they didn’t recognise him, and then when he broke bread with them they realised who he was. And I told you how the disciples thought Jesus was a ghost and he asked them for food—what kind of ghost eats food! I told you how Jesus reminded the disciples about what he had always taught them about what would happen to him and how he would come back from death and be with them.

And then I wrote a little bit about Jesus going to heaven and I had to finish because there was no more room on the scroll.

But now Theophilus... Book Two. I had to write it because after Jesus went back to heaven all sorts of exciting things began to happen to the disciples. Jesus was still with them even if they couldn’t see him any more, they knew he was there. And they began to do some of the things that Jesus had done: they told people about God, they met angels, they shared their stories and their food, they listened to women and respected them, they healed people.

But I’m getting ahead of myself. I want to start this book with the story of Jesus being taken into heaven and tell you a bit more about it. After that Sunday morning when Jesus had met the women at the tomb Jesus met with his disciples many times over the next forty days. He told them that they needed to stay in Jerusalem and that after he had gone back to be with his Father they would discover that he was still with them, but in a new way.

The disciples, as always, were full of questions, and Jesus kept on telling them that after he had left them they would travel to distant lands to tell people all about him. It was exciting and scary all at the same time.

And then Jesus left them. They found it hard to describe. They said it was as if a cloud had surrounded him and he had disappeared. And they saw two men who talked to them about Jesus—maybe it was the same men who the women had met at the tomb—maybe those men were angels... who knows?

And after that they all went back to Jerusalem. And they stayed together—the disciples, Mary the mother of Jesus, Jesus’ brothers and the women who were close to Jesus. And they shared their food and they talked and they prayed.

Oh Theophilus, you’ll find it hard to believe what happened next! Book Two... I think I’m going to call it the Dispersal of the Disciples or maybe the Acts of the Apostles... it’s amazing stuff!

Retelling For Young People

Ben’s Stories

Ben liked writing. He enjoyed keeping a diary. He liked writing stories at school. He liked writing letters to his granny. He even liked writing thank-you letters to the people who sent him presents for his birthday.

Ben liked words. He liked words that made sounds—words like sizzle and woof and splash. He enjoyed learning long words—words that he found in the dictionary—words like calamity and whipper-snapper. Ben liked rhyming words, words like clock and dock and sock. He loved words that had a tune to go with them, he knew lots of songs. And Ben enjoyed playing games with words. He often played Scrabble with his friends and he was very good at it.

Ben wasn’t sure what he wanted to be when he grew up but he knew that he wanted to do something that involved writing and words. Perhaps he could be a journalist and be sent to find news stories to write them up for the newspapers.

You can talk with the children about the difference between writing up stories and writing down stories.

Perhaps he could write plays and they would be performed in theatres. Maybe he could write a long story and it could be made into a book and his name would be on the cover. Perhaps he could write a song, but he would need to find somebody else to help him write a tune.

Ben sometimes read about other writers. There was a man called Samuel Pepys who had kept a diary and reading it now helped people to know about the great fire of London in 1666. And there were the Bronté sisters who lived in Yorkshire and wrote novels. And he had watched a programme on the television about James Barrie who had written the story Peter Pan.

In Sunday school Ben learned about the people who wrote down the books and stories in the bible. One of them was called Luke. Some people thought Luke was a doctor and that he travelled with St Paul.

Ben liked Luke’s story of Jesus. It was Luke who wrote down some of the stories about Jesus’ birth, the stories about the shepherds and the inn. Luke’s story of Jesus includes lots of the stories Jesus told. Without Luke’s book no one would know about the good Samaritan or the lost sheep or the two brothers. It was Luke who wrote down the stories of Paul’s travels and what happened in the early church.

St Luke’s books are famous. People enjoy reading them. One day Ben might write a book or a song or a play. He might become a games maker or a poet or a journalist. One day Ben might be famous too.

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Ben liked Luke’s story of Jesus. It was Luke who wrote down some of the stories about Jesus’ birth, the stories about the shepherds and the inn. Luke’s story of Jesus includes lots of the stories Jesus told. Without Luke’s book no one would know about the good Samaritan or the lost sheep or the two brothers. It was Luke who wrote down the stories of Paul’s travels and what happened in the early church.

St Luke’s books are famous. People enjoy reading them. One day Ben might write a book or a song or a play. He might become a games maker or a poet or a journalist. One day Ben might be famous too.
Pages 4 and 5 contain ideas that can be used to help set the scene throughout this season linking each week’s theme to the wider narrative. For the Easter season we suggest a focus on the body with a large cutout image. Add a pinkie finger (little finger) wrapped around/linked to the pinkie finger of your cut-out with ‘Promising Spirit’ written inside or beside it.

**Gathering Activity**

Have you ever witnessed something that you then had to testify to the authorities about? Or maybe you have seen something you could not quite believe? Share with your neighbour how it felt trying to remember all the details. Which bits were easy to remember? Which bits were hard to remember?

**Call to Worship**

Leader: Sitting in worship, we wait in expectation;  
All: the Spirit will come as God has promised!

Leader: To the timid and the bold and to all God’s children;  
All: the Spirit will come as God has promised!

Leader: As we worship now in prayer and praise;  
All: the Spirit will come as God has promised!

We are glad to gather  
as your people, loving God—  
ready to worship,  
longing to love,  
willing to work your will,  
through our lives.

We pray as we gather  
that we hear and heed your word—  
ready to change  
as you show  
to grow more into  
faithful followers of Jesus.

We are glad to gather  
for worship  
and then to scatter  
for service—  
fortified in faith,  
nourished in fellowship,  
sustained by your Spirit.

**Prayer of Praise**

We praise you, God,  
for your timing.  
When we miss boats  
and chances pass us by  
and opportunities go begging,  
you get it right:  
you always do—  
never failing  
to offer hope and strength  
and purpose for our days.

We praise you, God,  
for your timing.  
When we rush round  
as if there is no tomorrow,  
fearing the future  
unless the present is jam-packed  
with meaningful activity,  
you get it right:  
you always do—  
breathing space and peace  
into our flustered floundering.

We praise you, God,  
for your timing.  
When we find days  
all too heavy  
on our hands and hearts,  
you get it right:  
you always do—  
reminding us we are never alone  
in anything we face.  
Amen.

**Prayer of Confession**

We confess  
we sometimes allow ourselves  
in the rush of our days  
to shield  
on our heads, hearts and souls  
from what should detain us,  
on our walk with you,  
claiming busy-ness  
as our ‘get out of jail free’ card.

We confess  
we sometimes almost hide  
so that,  
even when some space and time  
come our way,  
still we shrink  
from being still before you  
fearful  
of what we might hear  
and how we must heed.

Forgive us for playing ‘hide and seek’.  
Forgive us for compartmentalising  
and categorising our lives  
as if to exclude you except where we will.  
Amen.

Sunday 3 April 2016
All-Age Prayer

Thank you, God, that whenever we are not sure of what we should do we know you are with us and if we listen, really listen—deep down inside ourselves—we will hear your answer.

Help us not to panic when you seem to be silent; not to run when you are nowhere in sight.

Lord, help us to wait, knowing you will lead us in kindness and love—you always do, you always do.

Prayer of Dedication

You promised, Lord Jesus, to come to us in a new way, your Spirit leading us in your Way.

May we now rededicate ourselves to that Way, giving of all we can, as we are able, of our time, talents and treasure.

Use us in your service, God of promise.
Amen.

Reflection

I’ve had people promise me things; promises that were never fulfilled!
The empty words of others: well-meaning, perhaps, but hardly worth the uttering!

Others have had me promise them things; promises that were never fulfilled!
The empty words of mine: well-meaning, perhaps, but hardly worth the uttering.

Good intentions: so much easier than words; Words: so much easier than actions; Actions: so often difficult to carry out.

God’s promises?
The promise of love, the promise of mercy, the promise of peace. the promise of the Holy Spirit to come down, come in and come amongst us?

Promises, promises, promises; uttered and fulfilled!
Promises, promises, promises; intentions and words and actions!
Promises, promises, promises.

Our God is a faithful God, who has come down, come in and come amongst us! Hallelujah!

Prayer for Others and Ourselves

We pray for those whose lives are at critical crossroads: where decisions of ways forward are clouded by conflicting demands: where courage is required through uncertain times.

We pray for those at the turning points of life: where changes in relationships, changes in family, changes in schooling, changes in employment, changes in health, changes in capabilities, changes in faith cause chaos and bring uncertainty.

We pray for these crises: for patient wisdom to be exercised and fear for change tempered by trust in your promised presence whatever we face.

We thank you, God, for the gift of your Spirit which binds our brokenness, brings us courage and helps us face all we might otherwise fear.

We pray for those whose lives feel as if they are on hold—the future fearful, the present tearful: as if boundaries have closed in, options closed off and what to do and to be is for now unclear.

We pray for the church—that it be a haven of calm, a source of healing, a place of space and time where truth can be discerned, trust shown and confidence grown for life, in faith, with love.
Amen.
**Take Home Ideas**

Children often give people ‘coupons’ or ‘vouchers’ for different activities… free hugs, breakfast in bed, cleaning the kitchen, and so on. They are promises from the child to give something when the person is ready and willing to accept.

Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to his disciples who had gathered, they did not want him to leave. As Jesus was taken up to heaven we read that the disciples stood and stared at the heavens. They were ready now, they wanted the Spirit there and then. The promise had been made and they were cashing it in.

Each day this week keep a promise diary and think of three things.

- Think of a promise you have made to someone and the difference it made to them when the promise was fulfilled.
- Think of a promise someone made to you and the experiences and feelings you encountered when it was fulfilled.
- Think of a promise of God that you have known, have heard, or have experienced and what that has done for your faith.

At the end of each day, what have the three promises you have recalled taught you about the nature of people, promises and God?

**Sending**

God keeps his promise, the Spirit came. We go now as witnesses for God, to tell Jesus’ story through our words and actions. Emboldened by the Spirit we go out into our community to serve.

**Praise/Hymns**

- Alleluia, sing to Jesus (CH4 445)
- Christ triumphant (MP 77)
- Clap your hands all you people (MP 81)
- Do not be worried and upset (MP 117)
- I bind unto myself today (CH4 639)
- Lift up your hearts, believers (CH4 446)
- Like the murmur of the dove’s song (CH4 592)
- O day of joy and wonder (CH4 582)
- O love, how deep, how broad, how high (CH4 354)
- Our eyes have seen the glory (MP 549)
- Out of sight, the Lord has gone (CH4 444)
- Spirit of God, descend upon my heart (CH4 495)
- There is a redeemer (CH4 559 / MP 673)
- To God be the glory (CH4 512 / MP 708)
- View the present through the promise (CH4 479)
- We see the Lord (MP 736)
- When our saviour Yesu went away (CH4 585)
age group ideas

gathering

Kim’s Game
You will need: a selection of random objects, cloth cover.
Play together Kim’s Game where the children have to look at a group of objects for a minute before they are then covered and they have to try and remember as many of those objects as they can.
Use this as a way into today’s story of Jesus disappearing from the view of the disciples.

Note, should you be focusing on witnessing rather than the Ascension of Jesus then play a game of ‘Chinese Whispers’ and see how the message can be distorted by being passed along and how we have to be careful to share the right message.

activities

Restoration 1
You will need: some completed age-appropriate jigsaws.
Was Jesus going to restore the kingdom to Israel? Was Jesus going to mend the country?
After the children have seen the jigsaws break them up and mix them up and ask the children to restore them but don’t show them the box with the guide picture. It must be done from memory.

Restoration 2
You will need: some completed age-appropriate jigsaws or pictures/photographs of different landscapes cut into random shapes.
Was Jesus going to restore the kingdom to Israel? Was Jesus going to mend the country?
You can do the same as Restoration 1 or cut up some pictures or photographs of different landscapes or people and ask the children to restore the images.

Out Of Sight
You will need: a variety of spectacles of different strengths (ask around the older members of the congregation for any old pairs they may have), blindfolds.
Jesus was taken from their sight. Let the children try on the spectacles. Challenge the children to focus on something on the wall then to put the glasses on. Has the image gone blurry? Has it disappeared? Let the children then put on a blindfold so that everything disappears; how would they feel if everything disappeared from their sight? Have any of the children had to say goodbye to a relative who has moved far away? Have the children known someone who has died (use sensitivity with this question)? How did they feel about not seeing them again?
If you have a copy of the trick ‘Bible Stories’ book you could show the pages that are in colour print and then talk about Jesus going from their sight and all they see is a blank void (turning to the blank pages). Copies of this are available from http://www.saturnmagic.co.uk.

Peripheral Vision
You will need: to take the children outside to a clear space, pictures of stars, comets, lightning.
This passage also talks about the ascension and the disciples gazing into heaven. When the children look up into the sky what do they see right now including their peripheral vision (you may need to explain what this is)? Perhaps people, birds, trees, clouds, sun, buildings. Have some images of stars, comets, lightning etc and ask if anyone has ever looked up at night and seen these things?

• What is the different looking up to the sky during the day and at night?
• What do you think about when you gaze up into space?

games

What Do You See?
You will need: a picture relating to the story (it could include, for instance, sky, cloud, sun, hillside, bird, and people), A4 pieces of paper and pencils.
The disciples were gazing and looking into heaven. In small groups give each child a number from one. Place the picture away from the children where it can only be seen by those chosen to see it. The first child in each group looks at the picture then goes to another area and attempts to redraw it from memory (without their team mates being able to see what they are doing). Switch the original picture with the new picture drawn by player one for each team. The second child looks at the second picture and then goes to another area to redraw it and then the same pattern takes place. This is like the listening game “chinese whispers” but using drawing as the communication method. Each child has 30 seconds to take in the picture and images and then another 30 seconds to redraw it.
When the whole team has done this you can then show all the images to see what difference there is between the original picture and the final picture. We all see different things that are important to us.

40
The ascension of Jesus took place 40 days later after the resurrection and Jesus was seen throughout this 40 day period. Give the children a list of 40 things they need to do. Run from one end of the room to another, sit still for 30 seconds, talk constantly for 30 seconds, hop across the room, open and close the door three times etc. You will need to tailor this to your own setting. You can make this competitive by challenging folks to complete the tasks first.
age group ideas

Crafts

Looking Up! age 3-5

You will need: blue A4 card or sugar paper, a large cloud shape cut out of white paper for each child, paper plates or food trays (large enough for small hands), white, brown, black and red paint, paintbrushes, felt pens, protection for tables and clothes and hand-wipes for cleaning hands afterwards.

Place the white paint in the paper plates then give each child a piece of A4 card asking them to lay it in front of them with the long edges down each side (portrait orientation). Ask the children to place one of their hands into the paint and ensure their palm and fingers are completely covered in the white paint. Show them how to place their three middle fingers together and spread their thumb and little finger apart to make a body shape with arms outstretched and then keeping that shape make a handprint in the centre of their paper. Allow the children time to do this then leave aside to dry for a moment while they are cleaning their hands. Ask the children to place their paper with the fingers pointing down and arms outstretched and then either paint or draw the head of Jesus onto the body. Set aside to dry.

Talk with the children about the story and in particular about the part where the disciples were looking up as Jesus ascended into heaven. Discuss how they feel when they have to leave behind their friends or family and not see them for a short time. Talk about how the disciples might have felt as they saw Jesus disappear from their view not knowing when they would see him again. To reinforce the story give each child a cloud shape and allow them to cover their print of Jesus with the cloud to make it seem as though he has disappeared from view.

Looking Up Binoculars age 6-8

You will need: an inner cardboard tube from a paper towel or roll of wrapping paper for each child, scissors, wool, ribbon or string, PVA glue, glue spreaders.

Optionally: a cork for each child, black paint and paintbrushes, sugar paper, stickers, coloured cellophane.

Give each child a cardboard tube and show them how to cut it in half to make two tubes of equal length. Placing the two tubes with their long sides together they should then glue the inner edges of the tubes together to make the basic binocular shape.

Note, if using corks then do not glue along the inner edges rather the cork should be placed centrally between the two tubes and it should be glued to each tube instead thus creating a spacer between the two tubes similar to real binoculars.

Using the point of the scissors the children should then make a small hole on each outer edge of the binoculars and then using the wool, ribbon or string thread it through and knot it at each edge to create a loop to allow the binoculars to hang around their neck.

Options depending on time available: the binoculars could be painted black; they could be covered in sugar paper; they could be decorated with self-stick stickers; they could have lenses added to them by cutting coloured cellophane into circles and attaching these to the opposite ends from the neck hanger.

Talk with the children about the story and in particular about the part where the disciples were looking up as Jesus ascended into heaven. Discuss why the disciples might have kept on looking up even after Jesus had disappeared from their view. Talk about how the disciples might be feeling not knowing when they would see him again.

Witnessing age 9-12

You will need: marbling inks, round tray, water, wooden cocktail sticks, paper or card.

Place the water in the tray. Encourage the children to place droplets of the marbling ink into the tray to create an ‘earth’ in the water—so blues and greens and browns and yellows—to try and recreate our planet in the bowl on the surface of the water.

Talk with the children about the image of the earth they have made and the story they have heard this morning particularly the part about witnessing to all the earth. Discuss with them what they think that means and how we do that. Visually look to the ‘earth’ they have created in the tray and then encourage them to mingle the colours together as a way of showing how we can witness to all the earth.

Now give them time to place their paper into the pattern created on the water to remind them of that witnessing. Encourage them to then use the paper when it is dry to tell someone about what they have heard this morning as a way of witnessing to others.

Yet More Looking Up! all age

You will need: cardboard cut into oval shapes (one for each child), scraps of card, scissors, cotton wool or cotton wool balls, PVA glue, glue spreaders, white card, coloured pencils or pens.

Give each child an oval shape and ask them to make a hole at each corner with the point of the scissors. Now using some ribbon they should thread it through one of the holes and knot it on the underside, then repeat for the other three holes. This will allow the decoration to hang. Ask the children to now spread the upper side of the oval shape with glue and cover it in cotton wool to make it look like a cloud. Now ask the children to draw a picture of Jesus onto the white card—decorating both the back and front of their image and cut it out. Show them how to make a small stand out of the scrap card by bending a strip of card into a box shape and ask them to glue their picture of Jesus to the stand and then glue the stand to the centre of their cloud. By tying all the ribbon ends together at the top the decoration should not only be able to hang but also the cloud should be able to move up and down along the ribbons.

Talk with the children about the story and in particular about the part where the disciples were looking up as Jesus ascended into heaven. Discuss why the disciples might have kept on looking up even after Jesus had disappeared from their view. Talk about how the disciples might be feeling not knowing when they would see him again.
discussion starters for teens waiting with purpose

Preparation
For the opening game remove clocks from the room, perhaps ask the young people to put their phone’s watches etc. on a table at the front of the room. The game uses the device of standing as a quiet physical sign of marking the time. If your group includes those who cannot stand perhaps another sign could be used, raising an arm or whatever works well for your group.

For Living It Out you will need the resource sheet from page 140. Print it out and cut out the slips ensuring you have one for each person. You will also need pens and paper for everyone.

Opening Activity
WAITING GAME
We are going to play the waiting game. In this game you have to try to keep count of time without using a watch, phone or another time keeping device. Then after five minutes (you may need to tailor the length of time to suit your group and what you think they can manage) you stand up out of your seat. The game starts when the leader says go, and ends when the last person stands up. The person who stands up closest to 5 minutes is the winner. The leader will need to keep a note of the time so they know who wins.

The Word
Read Acts 1:1-14 together.

Picture the scene and think about some of the details that you picture in your mind. For instance: what shape was the cloud Jesus disappeared into?

Activity/Discussion
In the reading the disciples are told to stop waiting about. When Jesus reappears to them he teaches them about the Kingdom of God. When the angels appear to them, the angels tell them to stop looking up where Jesus was, to go prepare for his return.

• Have you ever been a part of something so amazing it was all you could talk or think about?
• How long did that feeling last?
• How did your friends or family react to you during this time?

The way the disciples dealt with this waiting, preparing, wondering, (disbelief) was to meet together and pray. Spending time with others who had experienced the same amazing experience, telling and retelling the story, and praying together.

• Have you ever prayed as part of large group?
• How do you pray? (Do you use prayer books? Do you try and write prayers out in advance? Do you make it up as you go along? Do you use songs or poems? How do you speak to God?)
• Where do you go to pray? Is it always in a specific place?

Living It Out
For Living It Out we are going to try and write some prayers. Churches have many different prayers they use, many people use prayer for different reasons. Every one here will be given a slip of paper. On each slip of paper is a short insight into a person who prays. The descriptions are short and incomplete, allowing you to use your imagination to fill in some of the details.

You are invited to consider how you think the person on your piece of paper would see the world? How would they pray for others? How would they pray for themselves? How would they worship God in prayer?

For the next five minutes try and write down what a couple of prayers would be for each person.

• What would they be concerned about?
• How would they talk to God?
• How long and how often would they pray?

Finish this part by reading the prayers to each other if you wish.

Take the prayer you wrote home as a reminder of different prayers which could be used this week.

Prayer one

John is 10 years old. He likes playing Minecraft and YuGiOh! trading cards. He has attended church since he was born with his family. He has been baptized. He thinks about God as a person like Jesus who knows everything. He thinks God holds everything together. He always starts his prayers with the Lords prayer, and then adds his own words afterwards.

Prayer two

Kirsty is 14 years old. She lives dancing and music. She is good at school. She comes to church when her busy social life allows. She believes there might be a God but isn’t convinced by the white Christianity idea. Kirsty thinks God (If God exists) is both male & female and beyond, knowable and unknowable, both revealed in Jesus and a mystery to humans. She starts her prayers by addressing God as mother.

Prayer three

Adnan is 18 years old. He is a university student who is studying agriculture. For Adnan church is something he went to with his family but in university it hasn’t featured highly on his to do list. Currently he plays sport on most Sundays, but when he goes home to go to church with his family. He used to pray a lot, now he kind just chats to God in his head as he walks along.

Prayer four

Paula is 15 years old. She is getting ready for her big exams next year. She likes to be very organised, otherwise she gets too stressed by everything going on. She fears that the rest of her life depends on the grades she gets next year, her organisation means she schedules time to think about God each day, finding it calming and helpful to start with a prayer. Paula uses a notebook to write down things she wants to pray about so she can remember them.
The Precious Gift

All cities have them, though city authorities do their best to pretend otherwise during times of big international gatherings (for sport or politics or anything else). As cities gear up for such gatherings, a human-size metaphorical squeegee-mop is applied to sweep the beggars from the streets where visitors will be gathering.

Anyone who walks in the centre of any city at times other than these ‘sanitised’ times will encounter people with paper cups, pleading for alms. Of course, they will use terms other than ‘alms’: usually, “Have you any spare change?” And most people walk on by, without so much as a glance in the direction of the questioner; many perhaps content to dismiss the beggar as, to use a cruel late-twentieth-century put down, “a waste of space”!

And even those sufficiently prodded in their consciences to dip their hands in their pockets, will often hold their money out at almost arms length and drop it in the cup, again barely glancing at the beggar and then hurrying on.

Occasionally, there are generous-hearted individuals who stop, stoop down and engage the man or woman begging in conversation. And those are beautiful moments. There is an affirmation at work that this person, on the streets in dire straits for some reason or another, is being treated as an equal: a fellow human-being rather than an irritant to be disregarded.

Peter and John encountered a city beggar on their way into the Temple. The beggar, lame from birth, was brought daily to lie at the Beautiful Gate so that he could ask for alms. The disciples’ reputation was not yet preceding them, because the beggar just asked for cash in the way he always did. I would imagine he was quite used to being ignored. There is, after all, nothing new under the sun! But the beggar received something far more. He received the undivided attention of the disciples. And that is a precious gift.

To give a person not just your time but your total attention is to declare that that person matters enough to do that. The most crippling modern malaise is chronic and profound loneliness. It wracks and ruins spirits. To feel utterly alone, with no one to give you the time of day or to look you in the eye and genuinely ask how you are, is as crippling as any disease that caused the lameness in the beggar at the Beautiful Gate. Perhaps even more so. Which is why those who take the time and seize the chance to engage eye to eye and voice to ear are giving a blessing that even in its generosity of spirit is healing.

Peter and John looked intently at the beggar at the Beautiful Gate. Perhaps even more so. Which is why those who take the time and seize the chance to engage eye to eye and voice to ear are giving a blessing that even in its generosity of spirit is healing.

Peter and John gave what they had to give: their attention, their time, their compassion and their trust that God’s will is that broken spirits be healed. That the lame man would “leap like a deer” was a stunning bonus, but the healing of his heart by their caring was just as important and just as profound.
At The Beautiful Gate

It was a few weeks after Jesus had gone to be with God, his father, in heaven.

Peter and John and the disciples, as well as some of Jesus family and friends were in Jerusalem. Other people who had come to believe in Jesus were there too. They shared their food and their money. They had meals together. They prayed together. They were later called the first church.

One afternoon Peter and John went into the temple in Jerusalem to pray. They went into the temple through a gate that was called the Beautiful Gate. Nobody really knows why the gate was called beautiful. What do you think it looked like?

At the Beautiful Gate sat a man who was carried there every day by his friends. The man couldn’t walk and he asked people for money to buy food.

As Peter and John went through the Beautiful Gate the man asked them for money.

Peter and John looked at the man and Peter said to the man: “Look at us.”

They looked at each other and then Peter said to him, “I don’t have any money but I want to give you what I do have.” Then Peter said to the man, “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth get up and walk!” And Peter took the man’s hand and helped him to stand up.

The man’s feet and ankles became strong and he jumped to his feet and started to walk around.

Then the man went into the temple with Peter and John, something that he had never been able to do on his own before, and he walked and he ran and he even jumped and he said thank you to God.

Some of the people in the temple recognised the man, they’d seen him sitting, begging at the temple gate every day. They were surprised. They were amazed at what had happened to him.

And Peter and John were able to talk to the people in the temple about Jesus.

Home Visit

A dialogue between John and Peter.

Peter: John?

John: Yes, Peter.

Peter: What happened?

John: What happened?

Peter: What happened in the Temple this afternoon?

John: Peter, you know what happened. You spoke to a lame man who was begging at the Temple Gate and you told him, in the name of Jesus, to get up and walk and you pulled him to his feet and he was healed.

Peter: I know all that John, it was amazing. Everyone who knew the man and saw him walking around in the Temple was amazed as well... but, John, what happened?

John: Peter, what do you mean? What are you asking?

Peter: John, what’s happening to me? To us? How come that man was healed? What’s going on?

John: Peter, do you remember what happened to us on the day of Pentecost and how you stood up and talked to the crowds about Jesus and how people believed in him and were baptised?

Peter: I remember. I never thought I could stand up and speak like that, but I did.

John: You did, and you did it because something inside you helped you to do it.

Peter: Go on.

John: Jesus told us that he would always be with us, and somehow he is, it’s like he’s inside us and he’s as real to us as he was before he died. It was Jesus who healed that man this afternoon and he did it using your voice and your hands. Jesus is still with us Peter, with you, with me, with all of us. That’s what’s going on!

Peter: Wow! You really think so?

John: You know, Peter, I think that Jesus is really enjoying all this!

Peter: Enjoying?

John: Enjoying seeing us do things that he did, enjoying us finding out how God’s love works in us, enjoying listening to our questions and our prayers.

Peter: You know John, part of me misses the Jesus who was beside us before he died. I miss his smile, his jokes, his tears, his anger and his stories—I miss all that—and yet the way I know that Jesus is close to me now, giving me hope and strength and love, well he feels closer than ever.

John: I know what you mean Peter, and I think Jesus is really smiling now. You know none of us ever imagined you turning into a theologian!
worship ideas

Through the Season

Pages 4 and 5 contain ideas that can be used to help set the scene throughout this season linking each week’s theme to the wider narrative. For the Easter season we suggest a focus on the body with a large cutout image. Place the cutout of a hand and wrist on the head of your cut-out with ‘Healing Spirit’ written along the wrist (or beside it if you prefer).

Gathering Activity

What is it you hope for when you come to church? Take a moment to think about what your hopes are this morning. What do you want from worship this morning? What do you hope might happen to you through worship?

Call to Worship

Leader: Tuneful singers and tone deaf;  
All: with such voices as we have,  
Leader: we worship God the Father.
Leader: Able and less-able bodied;  
All: with such abilities as we have,  
Leader: we worship God the Son.
Leader: Loaded and skint;  
All: with such finances as we have  
Leader: we worship God the Spirit.

Gathering Prayer

From our cluttered lives  
to your spacious presence,  
gracious God, we gladly come.
From our noise-filled world  
to your quiet centre,  
gracious God, we gladly gather.
From our time-bound days  
to your timeless calm,  
gracious God, we gladly meet.

All-Age Prayer

‘Hurry up! Get your coat on!  
Move a bit quicker! We don’t have time!’  
Mum always says stuff like that!
They don’t know, Lord,  
don’t know there is always time  
to watch a wriggly worm  
or count cracks in the pavement  
or watch our favourite programme  
and over and over again!
There is time, Lord. Lots of it.  
The trick is knowing what to do with it.
Lord, help us to find the right thing at the right time,  
never to be so busy working we forget to play,  
whatever our age.
And help us to say thank you, Lord,  
every day,  
thank you to you,  
the God of this time and every time.  
Amen.

Prayer of Praise

Eternal God  
of all time  
of all places  
we praise you.
How can we  
in our time-bound lives  
begin to see  
what it means  
to say you are eternal?
Except, perhaps,  
that, with you is forever—  
much more than we could imagine or suppose—  
and that, without you is never.

Eternal God  
of all time  
of all places  
we praise you.
How can we not  
find our hearts lifted,  
our souls ablaze,  
our minds amazed  
that you entered our time  
and our place  
in Jesus:  
your eternal word, 
made flesh,  
made us.

Eternal God  
of all time  
of all places  
we praise you.
Prayer of Confession

We confess  
to frittered time:  
failing to seize days  
and even moments  
to work your will  
into the way of our lives.
We confess  
to wasted time:  
failing to focus  
on what we should be and do  
to live your love  
for the sake of others.
We confess  
to squandered time:  
failing to spend wisely  
the gift of days we have  
to show what matters  
as followers of Jesus.
We confess  
to too-full time:  
failing to measure  
the balance of rest  
and rhythm of work  
you call us to live.  
Amen.
Reflective Prayer

Thank you God
for each new day:
for each new day
gives us a chance—
a chance to care for those in need,
a chance to share that they can feed—
their bread the knowledge they are loved:
the love we give in time well-spent
in showing that they matter much
to you and also us.
Amen.

Prayer for Others and Ourselves

The world we bring
in prayer to you
is marked by needs
we see and hear
in broken lives
where illness, grief or tragedy
can strain the strands of hope
that bind at times
the wounds of fear and doubt.
The world we bring
in prayer to you
is marked by deeds
we see and hear
in generous lives
where love, mercy and compassion
strain the claim so often voiced
that you cannot be
or cannot be love.
The world we bring
in prayer to you
knows sorrows and knows joys:
where weeping with the weeping
and rejoicing with the rejoicing
is your call to us:
a measure of our care,
a pattern for our love.

We pray we measure up
and follow the pattern:
leaving no sorrow unaccompanied,
leaving no joy unshared.
We pray we take the time
to look and to listen:
that crying hearts are heard,
physical needs are seen,
and all know their worth
to you is priceless.
Amen.

Prayer of Dedication

Lord, receive from us what we have to give.
Not just in terms of the monetary offering
we make today or at other times,
but also the skills and talents that each of us possess.
Take all of this now,
and mix it up together with the cohesive powers of your Spirit,
use what we bring and offer for the good of your world.
We pray in Jesus’ name.
Amen.

Reflection

"BE HEALED IN THE NAME OF JESUS!"

“Be healed!”
Just like that!
In an instant,
like the flick of a switch, the turn of a page,
Just... like... that.
Be healed.
And yet I know folk who have not been healed;
not instantly anyway.
I know that in my body and mind and spirit and heart;
many a time I am not healed;
not all at once, anyway.
Not the TV healing
in exciting and bold and dramatic ways.
Yet it does happen: healing.
I know it.
I have seen it.
As the clock tick-tocks:
as moments turn to minutes,
minutes turn to hours,
hours to days,
days to weeks,
weeks to months,
months to years.
It can take time to heal
and we can heal in time.
And the God of eternity
who holds all time
and all souls
and all power
in his hands... the living God heals.
Dramatically.
Quietly.
Powerfully.
Peacefully.
Pause
Be healed in the name of Jesus.
worship ideas

Take Home Ideas

Peter and John went on a journey this week. They started out on the way to the temple, for prayers, presumably to encounter God, and they were stopped. The plans they had made changed. They met the lame beggar at the gates as he called out for help. They stopped and spoke to the man. Initially, the beggar may simply have heard ‘no’ in response to his request, but listening more deeply he was given a new chance in life.

This week:

Day One  think of those times your plans have changed by someone looking for help.

Day Two  think of those people who have challenged you to think or act differently.

Day Three  think of those in our communities who struggle to be seen or heard, even when they shout out for help.

Day Four  challenge yourself to look around you today and see the places, situations and people where God might be asking you to stop and help.

Day Five  think of those who have stopped and listened to you in your times of need.

Day Six  pray for those in authority that they make the right decisions in setting priorities to help those who need it the most.

Sending

Able to worship, we entered this sanctuary.
Safe in this place, we have raised our voices in praise.
Into the healing presence of God we entered.
Refreshed and restored we now prepare to leave this place, ready to serve.
Go now with the blessing of God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit with you always.

Praise/Hymns

At the golden gate of prayer I wait online at http://www.hymnary.org/text/at_the_golden_gate_of_prayer_i_wait

Be still and know  CH4 754, 755 / MP 48
Beauty for brokenness  CH4 259 / MP 806
Christ’s is the world  CH4 724
God of great and God of small  CH4 174
Jesu Tawa Pano  CH4 773
O, for a thousand tongues  CH4 352 / MP 496
Oh, oh, oh, how good is the Lord  ATAS 188 / MP 532
Our God is a God who makes friends  CH4 792
Peter and John went to pray  MP 598
She sits like a bird  CH4 593
Special kind of heroes, Emotions, Fischy Music
Teach me to dance  MP 936
What a friend we have in Jesus  CH4 547 / MP 746
Womb of life  CH4 118

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age group ideas

gathering

Happy!  
all age

Play a game where you have the children sit very still in a circle and explain to them that you are going to tell them a story.

Explain that while you are telling the story they have to listen very carefully to what you say because every time they hear the word ‘happy’ in the story they must jump up and leap around and dance until you once again signal them to sit down so that you can go on with the story.

Make up a story about someone’s feelings and encourage the children to listen carefully to your story and leap up when they should.

activities

No Silver Or Gold  
age 6-12

‘I have no silver or gold, but I give you what I have’.  

• If you had no money what could you offer to someone?

Make a list of possible giving that the children can give to others. Discuss each point and ask if they have ever done that. Examples: open the door for someone pushing a pram or wheelchair, helped someone with their homework, gave a person the extra five pence they needed to buy something, smiled at someone, carried a bag or parcel or said a prayer for someone. There are a number of images you can download from the internet showing someone pushing a wheelchair, or carrying too many bags or parcels, praying hands that you can use.

• Why should we be doing this?

Those Who Help  
age 6-12

You will need: information about charities or agencies that help the differently abled.

There are a number of agencies and charities that help people who are less able bodied. Your church may already support a charity that helps people who have a variety of disabilities. Download or send away for some materials for the agencies you choose to discuss.

Gates  
age 6-12

You will need: images of different styles and types of gate; garden, driveway, school, church, city, prison, lock (water gate) and some famous gates even though they might not look like gates (Menin Gate, Ypres).

• What do they think Beautiful gate means?

• Where would you normally find one?

The Beautiful gate was a very ornate gate at the main entrance to the temple and normally twenty people would be needed to open and close it.

games

Healing Relay  
all age

Create a couple of teams and then organise them in lines facing forward. Lay out a path around the room that the children need to take. For the first round have the first child of each team ‘race’ around the circuit you have created on their bottoms, returning to tag their next team mate to start. Once the whole team has gone around the circuit and you are back to the first child in the team, that person then sets off again, this time on their feet, but bending down and holding their ankles. Repeat the same through the whole team. For the third and final circuit, representing the man now healed, the children can run around the circuit.

Three-Legged Race  
all age

Try a three-legged race and then release the legs of the children and let them race again. Draw out the comparisons between running unhindered and trying to run with the legs bound together.

Wheelbarrow Races  
all age

The ankles and feet of the beggar were restricted initially but then made strong as they healed up. Try a wheelbarrow race with pairs of children, ‘restricting’ use of one of the children’s ankles so that they have to use their hands to move around, as the beggar man would have had to do.

Walk, Run, Skip, Hop  
all age

Try another race or tell a story where the children at various times have to run, walk, skip or hop.
age group ideas
crafts

Walking And Leaping  age 3-5

You will need: a head and body only template for the beggar, A4 card, pencils, scissors, felt pens, strips of sugar paper approximately 1-1.5 cm. wide depending on the size of your template and of lengths suitable to make arms and legs, clear sticky tape.

Give each child a piece of card and ask them to draw around the template of the beggar and cut it out. Ask the children to then draw a face and clothes on the beggar using the felt tip pens. Now give the children a strip of paper ask them to use it to make an arm for the beggar and then attach it to the body at the back using the clear sticky tape and repeat for the other arm. Now give the children two further strips of sugar paper and show them how to fold each one in a concertina fashion. Then taking one end of each strip the children should again attach the legs to the body at the back of the figure using clear sticky tape.

Now their beggar figure can be used as a prop in the re-telling of the story of Peter and John with the beggar’s legs folded up and under him when he is asking for healing and then springing down into action when he goes walking and leaping after being healed.

Talk with the children about the story and in particular the feelings of the beggar before and after meeting Peter and John. Discuss with the children the beggar’s reaction after being healed and what might make them want to jump and leap for joy in the same way.

Finger Puppet  age 6-8

You will need: a head and body template cut out of card with two circles drawn at the bottom which can be cut out for fingers to poke through and provide legs, A4 card, pencils, scissors, pieces of felt, PVA glue, glue spreaders.

Give each child a piece of card and one of the finger puppet templates and ask them to draw around the template and then cut out the shape. It is easier if the finger holes are made at this point, so show the children how to make a small hole in the centre of the finger hole and then cut out towards the outside of the hole to produce the finger space trimming off the cut pieces to leave a smooth edged hole.

Now ask the children to glue their finger puppet shape to a piece of felt and once more cut out the shape and finger spaces. Using the card first makes the finished puppet stronger for repeated use! They could even repeat this part of the process if they wish the back of their puppet to be decorated too. Their puppet can now be further decorated by gluing scraps of felt to it to create the face and clothes.

Talk with the children about feelings, what might make them happy or sad. Discuss how they show their feelings of being happy or sad. Talk about the story and in particular the feelings of the beggar before and after meeting Peter and John. Discuss the beggar’s reaction to being healed and talk about why he might have reacted in this way.

The children can then re-enact the story together using their finger puppets.

A Diorama  age 9-12

You will need: a paper plate for each child, a craft knife (for adult use only!), rulers, pencils, scissors, felt pens, three lollipop craft sticks per child, A4 card and materials to decorate their three figures and the background, PVA glue, glue spreaders.

Give each child a paper plate and ask them to draw a faint line roughly across the centre of the flat part of the plate to create a horizon between the sky and the ground. They should then decorate the upper part to create the scenery for their story: encourage them to include the ‘Beautiful Gate’ where the beggar sat. The lower part should be decorated in a dusty ground way to create the ground on which the beggar sat. They can decorate the plate rim to create a frame for their diorama.

While the children are preparing their figures (below) use the craft knife to create the scenery for their diorama by scoring it along the pencil line they drew at the beginning of this craft to create a slit along the flat part of their plate through which their figures can subsequently be pushed to re-tell the story.

Give each child a piece of card and explain that they are going to create three stick puppets to use in their diorama. Firstly, ask them to create the three figures in the story Peter, John and the beggar and then to decorate these figures. Next give them three crafts sticks and ask them to glue one of their figures to each stick. They should then start to glue in place by placing the feet of their figures about half way up the stick (giving a ‘handle’).

When dry, their figures can be pushed through the slit and moved along in front of the scenery to tell the story. The beggar can be held kept to the side as if lying at the gate at the start of the story, straightening up as he leaps and jumps with joy!

Discuss with the children why they think the beggar might have sat at this particular gate into the temple each day. Encourage them to think not only about it being a busy gate with lots of people passing but also about the fact that people might become so used to him being there that they might no longer notice him. Discuss whether they notice people begging on the street or do they no longer notice them. Talk with the children about the story and the feelings of the beggar on being noticed. Discuss the beggar’s reaction to being healed and talk about why he might have reacted in this way. Encourage them to re-tell the story to each other with their diorammas.

The Beautiful Gate  all age

You will need: collage materials, large pieces of card, scissors, PVA glue, glue spreaders.

Share the activity on Gates (previous page) and talk about the story and the Beautiful Gate where the beggar used to sit each day. Discuss why he might have preferred to be placed there by his friends every day. Encourage the children to think about him being noticed and therefore receiving alms from people and then move on to whether they notice beggars today on our streets. This beggar was healed by Peter and John. Ask them to think about how we might ‘heal’ beggars today.

Give each child, pairs of children or groups of children a large sheet of card. Ask them to imagine what the Beautiful Gate might have looked like and then to create it on their card using the collage materials provided.
discussion starters for teens seeing in a new way

Preparation

For the Opening Activity it is suggested to try some eye tests. Resources may include, colour eye test images (a search of the internet will reveal examples of these, they will need printed off), a distance eye test which can be done on a computer screen here - [http://www.essilor.com/en/EyeHealth/LensesForYourVision/TestyourEyes/Pages/EyetestforDistancevision.aspx](http://www.essilor.com/en/EyeHealth/LensesForYourVision/TestyourEyes/Pages/EyetestforDistancevision.aspx), and perhaps if you can find a 80's toy 3D ViewMaster, or use Google Cardboard with a phone for a modern 3D viewer or example of seeing a virtual reality. Some churches have braille hymnbooks which could be used carefully.

Feel free to add more tests as you wish, set them up around the room and encourage the young people to play with them.

For the Activity/Discussion section I suggest you do this over the craft of making 3D glasses which are the take home part of the living it out section. Instructions for making 3D glasses are multiple but I like this simple one from NASA [http://stereo.gsfc.nasa.gov/classroom/glasses.shtml](http://stereo.gsfc.nasa.gov/classroom/glasses.shtml).

Opening Activity

Sight Tests

Today we are going to check how we engage with seeing things, so around the room you will find a few of eye tests set up for you to try.

The Word

Read Acts 3:1-10 together.

Picture the scene together, thinking what it would have been like, how busy it might have been, and so on.

• How many people pass by this gate as Peter and John were there?

Activity/Discussion

While we have our discussion we are going to make some 3D glasses.

If Jesus is the answer then what is the question? The Holy Spirit had come, and filled the disciples, they could now see things differently, more like the way Jesus saw things.

• How many people in need do you pass on the way to church?

• How can your church provide the answers to these needs?

• How does learning about Jesus change the way you see things?

• Should the church meet the needs we are told about, or the needs we see?

By seeing things differently, the way Peter and John dealt with people and their requests changed. They performed miracles and saw what needed to be changed.

• How easy is it to have a conversation in a busy place?

• What difference does eye contact make?

• Why do you think Peter told the man to “look at us” (verse 4 (NIV))?

• What does Peter actually give the man? The love of God? Healing? An act of reconciliation? The ability to be a part of the family? Movement from a beggar to a giver (giving worship to God)?

Living It Out

How we view things guides us in how we react to them. The experience of God through Jesus and the Holy Spirit had changed Peter and John’s response to this man. Because of this the man was changed.

This week take home your glasses as a reminder of where Jesus and Holy Spirit change our view of the things that sometimes we miss.
Christian song by Patrick Appleford begins "O Lord, all the world belongs to you, and you are always making all things new." In each verse Appleford picks up on an aspect of Jesus’ ministry and using the claim found in Acts 17 ends each verse with the statement that this is "what’s turning the world upside down."

The two readings this week play off each other giving different aspects to the challenge of what was happening in Thessalonica as the early Christian community grew with people choosing to follow Jesus after hearing Paul preach and listening to the discussion and dialogue that would inevitably follow.

What must be said from the very outset is that ultimately the claims of the hard-line Jewish community in Thessalonica against Paul and Silas were true, or at least had a portion of truth to them. The message that Paul and Silas shared was indeed about turning the world upside down. While a defence could be made that Paul and Silas were just two voices speaking of a, by now, long dead Middle Eastern rabbi, the reality was that the message they brought had the power to uproot systems of power and domination that seemed immovable. Teaching of another King was intentionally to incite the powers that be and stir them up.

Sometimes that is what is required. At the time of writing these notes the #BlackLivesMatter campaign in the USA has been having major pushback by many conservative voices who talk in the same negative way as the Jewish community in Thessalonica: about people trying to turn the world upside down, upsetting the natural order of things, and deliberately misrepresenting the message of the #BlackLivesMatter campaign, for instance by glibly stating "Shouldn’t all lives matter?" In reality, the campaigners for #BlackLivesMatter are trying to make all things new, speaking out for otherwise voiceless black members of the community as more and more evidence of systemic racial bias in police forces is revealed with the attendant deadly results which campaigners refer to as "state violence" inflicted on the black community. The heat has been raised as politicians have been directly addressed by campaigners to state their position. Some of the responses have been less than understanding.

Despite the reaction of the mob, it is notable that Paul and Silas do not give up on speaking about Messiah within the Jewish community wherever they go. This is where they still feel their roots, and it is where understanding of Messiah should be greatest. Wherever they go, their first stop is to the local synagogue. And in some places like Beroea this pays off and they find a much more receptive audience. That is until the mob from Thessalonica arrive and ruin the party.

So we have two different responses, one positive in Beroea, and one negative in Thessalonica, there will be those who accept the message, and others who will reject it. And amidst all this mixed response amongst the Jewish community, there is a growing acceptance of the message amongst the Gentiles, with women and even affluent folk.

There is an authenticity about this. In Paul’s letter to the church in Thessalonica we see him tending to focus on the positives of the church community there, not dwelling on the difficulties that he and Silas faced, which is perhaps a natural reaction for someone engaged in building up communities. It does, however, compare to Luke’s account which pulls no punches over the mixed way in which the message was received despite Paul having spent three weeks talking, debating and discussing. Sometimes the message simply is not received.

Despite that, the message is one of reconciliation, and perhaps especially in circumstances where the message is not fully received, that sense of reconciliation gains teeth and traction as a community strives to find a way to live in a world that has been turned upside down, or, rather, right side up.
World Turning?

They’re turning the world upside down—acting against the decrees of Caesar!
They’re turning the world upside down—proclaiming another King—Jesus!
They’re stirring up trouble and talk, the preacher man seems no bluffer.
They’re stirring up trouble and talk, saying the Christ had to suffer.
What is this dangerous message—he’s sure it’s the truth he’s telling.
What is this dangerous message, so passionate, so compelling!
They’re causing division and strife, with talk of a dead man rising.
They’re causing division and strife, some trusting and some despising.
Three weeks he’s been in full swing—relentless and fierce debating.
Three weeks he’s been in full swing—what a gift for outright persuading.
What is the power of their words—the pull on their hearts, this Jesus?
What is the power of their words—convinced of a love that frees us.
Where will this revolution lead—empire’s values spurning?
Where will this revolution lead—can the world be turning?

Retelling For Young People

Paul Goes Visiting

One day Paul was visiting Thessalonica.
He went into the synagogue in town.
He went to tell some stories about Jesus.
He went and people gathered all around.
He stayed three weeks because it was important that people heard that Jesus is the one who helps us to say yes to all that makes life best said Paul, “Jesus is God’s only Son!”
Some people thought he was amazing, some people thought he was OK, some people thought he might be crazy, some people wished he’d go away.
Some people listened very carefully and trusted that what he said was true and they felt their lives had turned inside out and upside down, when they trusted Jesus loved them through and through!
One day Paul was still in Thessalonica.
He went into the synagogue in town.
He went to tell some stories about Jesus.
He went and people gathered all around.
He stayed so long because it was important that people heard that Jesus is the one who’s a friend and always near, speaking love to all our fear said Paul, “Jesus is God’s only Son!”
Some people started feeling jealous, some people started getting mad, some people wanted to destroy him, some people tried to call him bad.
Some people listened very carefully and trusted that what he said was true and they felt that something changed, it was exciting, new and strange, when they trusted Jesus loved them through and through!
worship ideas

Through the Season
Pages 4 and 5 contain ideas that can be used to help set the scene throughout this season linking each week’s theme to the wider narrative. For the Easter season we suggest a focus on the body with a large cutout image. Place the cut-out of our new person beside our existing one to portray the handing over of an olive branch. In the gap between the arms passing on the branch of peace, add the words ‘Reconciling Spirit’.

Gathering Activity
Is there someone you wish you had not spoken to in a certain way? Or someone you have let down? How you could you make this better? Quietly as worship approaches resolve to do something about this.

Call to Worship
Leader: The Church:
liberal / conservative,
male / female,
homosexual / heterosexual,
employed / unemployed,
young / old.
The Church:
such a mixed bag!
All: Let us gather as friends,
and together, as one body,
praise the God of all.

Prayer of Adoration and Confession
May the word get around, O God,
that you are God.
That you disrupt our ways,
challenge our being,
cause confusion on our presumptions,
confront our prejudices
and for this we praise you.
May the word get around, O God,
that you are God.
Not some quiet deity in some distant past
but the life-force of justice,
the spirit of wisdom,
the word that shouts in the streets
that love has been set free
to cause disquiet in the corridors of power
and for this we praise you.
May the word get around, O God,
that you are God.
Found in the middle of the arguments for truth,
in the debates about power,
in the disputes for peace,
ready to build the kingdom
right where the world wants to destroy itself
and for this we praise you.
May the word get around, O God,
that you are God
and we praise you.
Amen.

Prayer for Others and Ourselves
Invite people to think about church, community and world and invite them to write a single word or sentence on a sheet of paper or in the Order of Service (create a blank box on the Order of Service if you can for this exercise) during this prayer after each stanza, leaving time after each for people to do that.
Encourage people to take the sheet or Order away and continue to pray so that, in Paul’s words: “Every time we think of you, we thank God for you.” Add other areas of concern as you feel appropriate.
For the church,
we pray.
For the world,
we pray.
For our community,
we pray.
For our neighbourhood,
we pray.
For our nation,
we pray.
For our families,
we pray.
Amen.

Prayer of Dedication
A prayer based on Paul’s words to the Thessalonians:
Every time we think of each other
may we thank you, O God, for us all
for the community we are becoming
and the place each of us has, as a Child of God.
May we pray for each other,
day and night
through the love we share
and the community we create together,
keeping in mind
each other’s belonging through faith
and labour of love.
May we support each other
in following you
and we see your love through each other
knowing each is blessed with holy gifts:
God’s hand on each one:
a blessing to the world.
Creator,
may we recognise the Spirit with our community
and create a space here for her creativity
changing us into your people day by day.
May our lives be an imitation of Jesus
and despite trouble in the world
and confusion around us
may we be a light as your people,
always.
So be it.
Amen.
All-Age Prayer

Repeat each line.

We are the church.
We are your people.
We are your wonders.
We are your children.

We learn in faith.
We lean through love.
We learn of you.
We learn in Jesus.

Open our hearts.
Open our minds.
Open our community.
You all that you are.

Reflective Prayer

Sometimes, O God,
it is easy;
sometimes, O Love,
the questions rise;
sometimes, O Truth,
we cannot find you;
sometimes, O Wisdom,
you seem so distant;
sometimes, O Peace,
you see so illusive;
sometimes, O Grace,
you are impossible;
sometimes, O Light,
we cannot see you;
sometimes, O Justice,
you are our friend.

We live our faith
in difficult times
and we long to have more
and long for those questions
to lead us into new understanding.

Spirit,
Guide,
in all our living:
the highs and lows,
the simple and difficult,
the successes and failures,
the light and shade,
may you travel with us
so that nothing is lost
and each moment
is found to be a moment of the kingdom:
a lesson to learn,
an insight to gain,
and time of support,
a possibility of renewal,
and a way of faith.
Hear us.
So be it.
Amen.

Reflection

Power, politics and personalities;
the world is full of such interesting dynamics
and the church, too, knows the struggles of such things.

The power we are to wield is the power of love:
giving, serving, blessing.

The politics we are to adhere to are the politics of grace:
forgiving, supporting, empowering.

And personalities?
What personality did Jesus have?
Is it right or wrong for us to be
more introvert than extrovert;
more extrovert than introvert?

God has made us as we are.
God knows how we are wired.
Experiences mould us as time passes by.
Interactions with others press all sorts of buttons
and so the Church,
the body of Christ,
she has a dynamic all of her own!

You laughed, Lord,
you cried.
You were gentle, Lord,
you were angry!
You liked being alone, Lord,
you were often the centre of attention.
And we, Lord,
your Church,
are all these things and more.
We are all so different, yet similar.
People,
just people,
seeking community and fellowship
and togetherness.

May we be one—
as the Father, Son and Spirit are one.
May we be equal—
as God has made us all of the same value.
May we become—
what God would want us to be:
supporters of one another,
sharing each burden,
encouraging one another,
building each other up,
not knocking each other down.
worship ideas

Take Home Ideas

There are so many ways that we are pulled from living the message and the hope of God.

• In what ways have people tried to stifle your ambitions for changing and improving your community?
• How can we live as a part of God’s family, alongside others who also want to bring hope and inspiration to the community we serve?
• What challenges might that bring?
• What obstacles might people put in our way to stop us bringing about God’s kingdom values in our areas?
• In the face of opposition how should we, as people of God, react and what should such opposition do to our plans?

Pray for the reconciling spirit to descend in your life, your family, your community, your nation, your world.

Sending

Look around you... see the people you have shared your time with.

Each one a beloved of God.
Each one part of this community we call church.
Each one as individual as you are.
Each one reconciled with God through the Spirit.

Until we gather again together go with God’s blessing, always.

Praise/Hymns

Give thanks with a grateful heart CH4 180 / MP 170
Holy Spirit, ever living CH4 615
I am the church, you are the church CH4 204
Praise and thanksgiving let everyone bring CH4 170
Praise the Spirit in creation CH4 588
O, thou who camest from above CH4 625
Spirit of God, unseen as the wind CH4 600
Spirit of truth and grace CH4 608
Thank you, Lord MP 635
Thanks be to God MP 637
Thanks to God whose word was spoken CH4 605
The Church’s one foundation CH4 739 / MP 640
There’s a spirit in the air CH4 616
Welcome everybody I wonder why, Fischy Music
age group ideas gathering

Silent Calling  all age

Put the children into pairs and give them some time to work out ways of attracting each other’s attention without using words or their voice at all. Perhaps give them some examples to start their thinking: like waving their hands in the air, acting like an animal, hopping on one foot, or something similar.

When they have had a little time to decide on their own particular way of calling to each other gather the children together and then one pair at a time send each of them to opposite ends of the room and get them to ‘call’ to each other.

Use as a way into the story by talking of different ways to call to each other, greet each other or give each other a message.

crafts

Greetings Card  age 3-8

You will need: A4 card in a variety of colours (folded in half to make a greetings card), PVA glue, glue spreaders, felt pens, coloured pencils, self-stick stickers, ribbon, scissors, glitter and any other card making materials you wish to provide for the children.

Talk with the children about greetings and the different ways we greet people when we meet them. Discuss how we could greet people if we were not meeting them face to face. Talk with them about the story and Paul’s letter to the people of Thessalonica and how he greeted them in that letter. Discuss how the people receiving the greeting might feel.

Explain that they are going to make a greeting card for someone and discuss what type of greeting they might wish to send to this person, for example, ‘Thank You’, ‘Get Well Soon’, ‘Happy Birthday’, ‘Thinking of you’, and so on.

Ask the children to choose a card shape, decide who they are going to send it to and why and then write their chosen greeting on it for that person. They should then decorate their card as they choose.

Build A Church  all age

You will need: a selection of cardboard boxes in varying sizes and dimensions, strong tape, PVA glue, glue spreaders, scissors.

Ask the children to work together to produce a church of their own design.

Talk with the children as they build about what they are doing, what they want their church to look like and why they want it to look like this way. Talk about different church buildings around them and why they might look different to the one they are creating.

‘Messages Of Thankfulness’  age 9-12

Scrolls

You will need: A4 paper in a cream colour, used tea bags, waterproof felt pins or thin writing crayons, thin strips of ribbon.

Read the passage from Thessalonians with the children using a child friendly version. Talk with the children about the way Paul greeted the people of Thessalonica at the beginning of his letter and encourage them to think of all the ways Paul was thankful for them. Discuss what or who they are thankful for in their lives, then extend this to what or who they are thankful for in their church life, for example Sunday School leaders, Girls’ or Boys’ Brigade Officers, Messy Church leaders, Minister and so on.

Explain that they are going to make a scroll on which they can write their letter to the person or group they wish to thank.

Give each child a sheet of paper and ask them to gently tear part of the side edges to make it look like an old document. Allow them time to write their chosen ‘Message of Thankfulness’ to their chosen person or group using the waterproof felt pens or crayons. When they have completed their message dampen used tea bags in water, gently squeeze and then give one to each child to rub gently over their paper to create an aged effect, hence the waterproof pens or crayons! Allow to dry and then ask the children to roll their scroll and tie it with a ribbon in preparation to give to their chosen person or group.

Note while they are drying it would be good to have some of the children share what they have written in thankfulness and talk about some of their ideas.
Greetings! age 6-12

In the epistle of 1 Thessalonians Paul sends greetings to them in his letter.

Ask the children how many ways they know of greeting people. Hello, hi, good morning, good afternoon, good day, welcome, greetings, salutations and ‘how’s it goin’ to name a few.

- How do you greet each other when you see each other?
- How do you greet the leaders at the Sunday School/Junior Church in the morning?
- If you are writing a birthday card how do you start writing it? With ‘to’, ‘dear’, ‘hi’ and then the name?
- Do you send greetings at the beginning of whatever you write?

For the older children you could translate some of these words into a different language and they probably already know it in another language already!

- Why is it good to send greetings?

Places Of Worship all age

You will need: copies of the activity sheet found on page 141.

The activity sheet contains different buildings where people of faith worship. Ask the children to identify the type of building and which faith they think is associated with it. Talk about the different faiths that are in your area at present. Do they know anyone who is a follower of another faith? If you do your research you can give them some information about the faiths. Discuss the point that Jesus was brought up within the Jewish faith.

Church Connections age 3-5

You will need: items that are synonymous with church (bible, hymn books, and so on depending on your situation).

Place around the room different items the children would connect with church; a bible, hymn book, picture of your building, picture of the minister and any other significant thing for your church. Ask the children to look around the room and collect all the items—you may want to make this a hot/cold game where the closer they are the hotter it is and the further away the colder it is with the leader giving directions on what temperature it is for a given object. Once everything has been collected, talk about what these objects stand for and why we use them: that they help us in our faith, it is where we can come together which is important.

Church Snap age 3-5

You will need: use the images found on the activity sheet for the Places of Worship Activity (see left) to create cards with different pictures of places of worship. You will want to add some more downloaded from the web, and some pictures of places local to you. Make sure you have more than one copy of each image (an even number so that they can be paired).

You can take the images of the buildings of faith and make them into cards and play snap.

Upside Down World age 6-12

You will need: pictures of the world (a copy is available on page 142, ideally printed out as a poster so that it is larger (most printers allow this function, but you will need to trim and stick the sheets together yourself. You need one picture per team), small stickers.

When things are going wrong for people they feel their world has been turned upside down and the some of the people of this time felt like that. Place the map of the world either on the floor or on the wall but place it upside down; it really does look very different! Give each team names of countries that they must find and mark with a sticker. The fastest team to finish the task wins. Countries could be; Scotland, Israel, Greece, Macedonia, Turkey and any other country that is significant to your church or area.

Imitation age 6-12

Can we be imitators of Paul and Timothy: this could lead to a game of following and copying everything the lead person does. Additionally the children could try and mirror image each other. The best piece of advice: go slow on this one.

Call My Bluff age 9-12

Play a version of Call My Bluff where three children are asked to describe a word (have some good odd-sounding words available with a short description of what the word means) and see who can be the more persuasive and win over the rest of the children. One definition will be correct and the other two will be wrong and invented by the two other contestants. The children are trying to decide who is telling the truth.
Preparation

For today’s session you will need a selection of newspaper/media reports for the Opening Activity and a way of showing YouTube videos.

Opening Activity

A Difference Of Outlook

Gather some newspaper/media reports about a significant news item from during the week, for example an important political decision. Try to find articles that give a different viewpoint or perspective on the decision/event and tease out with the group why it has been reported differently by different newspapers or websites.

• How do we know what is being reported is accurate and how do we decide who is telling the truth?

The Word

Paul’s encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus was clearly life-transforming. It is perhaps most evident in situations like this one in Thessalonica. His preaching was met with a variety of responses yet he returned to the Synagogue for three weeks while the situation became more and more volatile. Paul’s message would have felt like a threat to the power base of the status quo and there are similarities in his situation with the suffering of Jesus at the hands of the Jewish and Roman authorities.


Activity/Discussion

• How did people react to Paul’s message about Jesus?
• Why do you think some people reacted so strongly/aggressively?
• If Paul was right about Jesus being the Christ who might have the most to lose?
• If you were Paul do you think the events in Thessalonica might convince you to stop preaching? Why?
• What causes or beliefs are you willing to stand up for?

Living It Out

Malala Yousafzai is a young Pakistani woman who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014 for her work campaigning for the right of all women to receive an education. At 17 she was the youngest person to win the prestigious award. After the Taliban began attacking girls’ schools in the area she lived, Malala, then aged 11, began giving speeches and blogging about the conditions living under the Taliban regime.

When she was 14, Malala and her family learned that the Taliban had issued a death threat against her and she was later shot when a gunman boarded her school bus. Despite continual threats against her she continued in her campaign and remains an inspiring voice for change.

In October 2015, a documentary about Yousafzai’s life was released called ‘He Named Me Malala’. If time allows show the trailer for the documentary to the group. It could open up a discussion about the personality and characteristics needed to stand up to injustice; the difference that young people can make; or how those who have power react when they are challenged. Ultimately Malala’s story is an example of the incredibly difference one ordinary person’s voice can make.

‘He Named Me Malala’ Trailer available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vE5gSHJkusU.

It might also be an opportunity to mention the #UpForSchool campaign calling on governments around the world to ensure that all children gain the right to education. It has been backed recently by the Moderator of the Church of Scotland, along with Gordon Brown and the Church of Scotland Youth Assembly.

The website for the campaign is http://www.aworldatschool.org/upforschool.
The role of a preacher in a community can be a strange one; not because the role is odd, but rather that it is often a peripatetic role, the preacher moving on from one place to another rather than being fixed to one locale. This is perhaps different to the role of a pastor or minister who may indeed put down roots in one place and make that their home, with preaching being a part of a wider ministry to that community. A minister buying a funeral plot in a particular community is a sure sign of that kind of rootedness!

Paul definitely fits the model of the peripatetic preacher, moving from one location to another, and his missionary journeys around the Mediterranean bear testament to his desire to spread the message as far and wide as he could, while encouraging self-sustaining communities wherever he could. In this week’s passage from Acts, Paul has reached Corinth, a prosperous and diverse community with many trading links.

Paul is often noted for his legal mind, formulating complex theological arguments (as the book of Romans testifies) or rich symbolic language (as found in his letters to Corinth), but here in a lovely touch by Luke we have a picture of a down-to-earth Paul setting up shop with Aquila and Priscilla to make tents together—a rootedness to his own background and also settling him in with the community in a trading town that would no doubt look favourably on such an entrepreneurial spirit, seeking to make a living for himself while still taking the time to preach and teach at the synagogue.

Again, as with last week’s passage, it is notable that Paul’s first port of call is to the Jewish community where he accepts the hospitality of Aquila and Priscilla. It is also notable that females are named, with Priscilla in the Acts passage and Chloe in the verses from 1 Corinthians. This would have been unusual at the time, and indicates something of the changes that were afoot as this gospel spreads.

That being said, the church in Corinth was not a harmonious place. There were many tunes being sung, with different leaders of those tunes, but they did not fit together into a harmonious whole. This is a different concern to that which Paul faced in Thessalonica. Here there are internal divisions within the young community of faith and Paul is at pains to try to remind the flock of their inherent unity in Christ, not in Paul himself, or Apollos, or Cephas.

One might picture Paul dictating this letter to a scribe who is busy scribbling away as Paul rattles off the names of some of those he baptised, and then remembers others he also baptised whom the poor scribe has to add to the text.

There are big issues here that this young community is facing in a diverse and multicultural setting much like that in which much of the Western church now resides. Are divisions and conflicts inevitable in such circumstances? What might we do to focus on what we share, culturally or in our faith, rather than what is different? And how do we give due place to the differences that help enrich cultures without those becoming alienating of others. These are issues that communities are facing in a very real way currently as large numbers of immigrant refugees seek shelter in countries that provide a place of peace.

Paul is pretty scathing of mere eloquent words (a clear dig at Apollos, who was known to be an excellent speaker), and so might we be in confronting the challenges of disunity in our own communities and world, unless they lead to actions too as a result of our changed lives in Christ.
Who Am I With?

Who do I belong to in this church of ours? Who gets my allegiance? Who am I with? Well, let me think...

I'm with Paul. Great guy! He baptised a few of us. But his real gift to us has been his preaching. Not that he's a polished performer. He's persuasive, though, and persistent. But not always polite! In fact he can get pretty argumentative. I don't know where he gets his energy—he can go on debating for hours! Yep, that's Paul.

And I'm with Apollos. Great guy! Now Apollos, he's much more your skilled speaker. He was taught well by our Priscilla and Aquila. When we first knew him, the only baptism he knew about was from the practice of John the Baptist and his fiery message of the need to change our ways before the Messiah came. Paul put it well when he said that he planted the seeds among us and Apollos watered them. That's the kind of teamwork we've really benefitted from!

Then there's Peter. Great guy! I'm with Peter all the way. Where would we be without him? The Rock and then some! Travelling and teaching, being challenged and changed, embracing the Gentiles, enlarging his vision and thinking as he grasped the wide sweep of God's love for all.

But most of all, above all, beyond all, I'm with Jesus. Paul and Apollos and Peter never stop bringing us back to Jesus. In whose name are we baptised? Who gave up his life rather than his integrity? Who lives again, as real to us in spirit than he was to Peter in flesh?

Paul. Apollos. Peter. Christ. They get my allegiance. I belong to them. They're the ones I'm with. I thank God for them. One body. Many parts.

The Best Teacher?

One day after school, four children from the same class were walking home together. Katy, Tolu, Rachel and Kevin were talking about four of their visiting teachers. On a Monday, Miss White came before lunch to do their drama lesson. Katy thought Miss White looked like an actor in her colourful clothes and with her ability to speak convincingly in lots of different accents! On a Tuesday, Mrs Jamieson came to take gym time, which was sometimes in the gym hall, sometimes outside in the playground and occasionally meant a trip to the swimming pool. Tolu loved the way Mrs Jamieson was so enthusiastic about keeping fit and healthy. She had so much energy and never seemed to get tired with all the running around and exercise. On Thursday afternoons Mr Kelly came with his keyboard or his guitar and usually some percussion and always some great new songs for the class to do their music. Rachel had learned so much from Mr Kelly about how to play the guitar herself. On Fridays after lunch Mrs Galbraith came to teach art. Kevin used to hate art but now he quite liked it because Mrs Galbraith always said it was great to try out lots of ideas and keep experimenting without worrying if things turned out looking perfect or not.

"Who do you think is the best one of our four visiting teachers?" asked Katy.

"The best one of all? Let me think…" wondered Tolu.

"That's hard to decide…" said Rachel.

Kevin screwed up his face, thinking about Miss White and Mrs Jamieson and Mr Kelly and Mrs Galbraith. Who was the best? Finally he asked Katy, "Well, what do you think? You asked the question, Katy. So who do you think is the best?"

"Well, if what mattered most was colourful clothes and interesting voices, it would be…"

"MISS WHITE!" the other three laughed.

"And if what mattered most was keeping us fit and healthy, it would be…"

"MRS JAMIESON!" the other three laughed.

"And if what mattered most was singing and keeping the beat, it would be…"

"MR KELLY!" the other three laughed.

"And if what mattered most was experimenting and learning to make mistakes and not give up, it would be…"

"MRS GALBRAITH!" the other three laughed.

"But I think that what matters most is being a great person and a great teacher, so the best is…"

"ALL OF THEM!" joined in Tolu and Rachel and Kevin as they all giggled and felt glad.

"Isn't it brilliant?" said Katy. "Not just one best teacher, but four! We're so lucky!"

You could ask the children what good but different qualities they see in some of their class teachers and visiting teachers.
worship ideas

Through the Season

Pages 4 and 5 contain ideas that can be used to help set the scene throughout this season linking each week’s theme to the wider narrative. For the Easter season we suggest a focus on the body with a large cutout image. Place the cut-outs of our new people on either side of the existing pair. Link their hands together to portray them all holding hands. Add the words ‘Uniting Spirit’.

Gathering Activity

Share with the person next to you your favourite musician, sports person or film star. What is different about your choices? Try another topic.

Call to Worship

All: Some love traditional liturgy! Some love contemporary praise! Some like the prayers! Some like the songs!

Leader: Anyone like the sermon?

All: Whatever our tastes and differing desires, we worship in love and grace and peace and unity.

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

May we find ourselves using humble words, earthy words, everyday ways to speak of you, beyond the eloquence, but earthed in what is real: really felt, really known, really questioned, really trusting.

May we be your people as we are beyond the differences we make, finding the core of who we are in the love we need and the love we need to share.

May we live the story of faith and find the word alive within and between us all.

May we never take hostages of the faith but be ready to experience the diversity of who we are together.

May we speak into faith with questions and speak question faithfully, challenge what we take for granted and be challenged by what we take for granted.

Let our words be honest and true; not shaped to win arguments but graceful enough to welcome all and beyond all words and all debate may we be seen to be cross-followers, love-shapers, justice-bringers and kingdom-builders.

Prayer for Others and Ourselves

This prayer is about unity and recognising our divisions more than our diversity. The prayers for others therefore perhaps need to be more towards confession and renewal thus you are invited to light candles with pauses and let the silence speak confession and the light speak of hope. Please add other areas of significance as appropriate for this week and your situation.

As we pray for a world divided may our silences hold our confession and the light reflect our hope.

Hold a moment’s silence and light the next candle.

For the nations who speak too much about differences and too little about our rich diversity we pray.

Hold a moment’s silence and light the next candle.

For the people who live in prejudice and seek an exclusive God we pray.

Hold a moment’s silence and light the next candle.

For the churches broken by schism and the creeds that divide us we pray.

Hold a moment’s silence and light the next candle.

For our neighbourships, and divided communities who have forgotten their common life we pray.

Hold a moment’s silence and light the next candle.


Prayer of Dedication

We dedicate ourselves to our common trade of faithful living and share our life in common with each other, shaping a common wealth of grace and truth that your community lives towards the common goal of communion in you and with each other.

May our faith be the common sense of the gospel sharing what we have in common: your good news, your love, your live. Amen.
All-Age Statement

Invite people to shout out their names whenever the word ‘church’ is mentioned.

We are the church: (shout names)
the tall and the small,
the young and the old,
the wise and the fooling.
We are the church! (shout names)

But in being so
may we learn from each other,
have ears open to the good news
and hearts open to be God’s family.

We are the church: (shout out)
a family,
a body,
a place to be ourselves,
a new way of living,
a community of forgiveness,
a song in the world,
a story of renewal.

We are the church (shout out)
and you are all welcome.

Reflective Prayer

For those on the edge of things
because we have put them there,
we pray:
for the women quietly mentioned
yet silenced since;
for the stranger we fear
and the exceptions that brings;
for the foreigner not like us
only because we have decided so;
for the child too young
yet knowing mystery beyond us;
for those on the edge of things
because we have put them there,
we pray.

In each division we make of Christ’s body:
with gender and fear,
with strangers and prejudice,
the road back to unity
is so much longer than the schism.

May we find
in the deeper truths between us
the same questions,
the same uncertainty
and the same Christ crucified.

May we find our common meeting place
in cross and resurrection,
in love beyond death,
in all our hopes for the church
and for each other.
So be it.
Amen.

Reflection

Me and you.
Us and them,
those and such as those.

What are we like in our
self-identifying,
barrier-building,
security-giving,
cosy little tribes?

I’m in, you’re out.

They’re not like us,
we’re not like them.

Difference highlighted,
divisions created,
arm’s lengths distanced.

Gender,
sexuality,
theology,
religion.
tastes,
age,
nationality,
belief.

All so different,
all so varied,
all so mixed.

Who to trust?
Who to draw close?
Who to keep away?

“I appeal to you . . . that there be no divisions amongst you.”

No divisions. None.
All in.
All welcome.
All one.

One people,
one humanity,
one world,
one faith,
one God.

Me and you.
Us and them.
One.
worship ideas

**Take Home Ideas**

This week, think about ways in which you have contributed to unity within your church family. Think about your church family: where have there been divisions and how have these been reconciled?

Throughout the week, think of your part in unity and division, disagreement and hope within your church and indeed, within your community. In what ways can you be a child of God and bring a uniting spirit of hope to areas of disagreement and trial?

Each day this week, pray for places where you are aware of disagreement within your church and community, and seek God’s uniting spirit on the people and situations of which you think.

**Sending**

United in worship, we are the church:
a family,
a body,
a place to be ourselves,
a new way of living,
a community of forgiveness,
a song in the world,
a story of renewal.

As we leave this place, let us continue to be all these things out in the community we call home.

**Praise/Hymns**

**Build up**

*Build up*, Fischy Music

- Christ's is the world in which we move CH4 724
- Creator of the water online at http://carolynshymns.com/creator_of_the_water.html
- For everyone born, a place at the table CH4 685
- I am the church, you are the church CH4 204
- Let there be love MP 411
- Let us build a house CH4 198
- Lord, make me an instrument MP 437
- Lord of life, we come to you CH4 782
- Spirit of God, come dwell within me CH4 722
- We are one in the spirit SGP 111

**We gather at your table, Lord** online at http://carolynshymns.com/we_gather_at_your_table_lord.html

- We lay our broken world CH4 721 / SGP 113
- When the bonds of love are breaking CH4 690
- Your (Thy) hand, O God, has guided CH4 511 / MP 705
age group ideas

gathering

Building Together  
all age

You will need: some packs of playing cards.

Gather together a few packs of playing cards and put the children in groups together with a pack. You may have tried this with the children in a previous week, this time you could try it with a gentle competitive edge. Set them the task of working together to build a house of cards as large as possible. You could give them a time limit and see which group can create either the largest or tallest house of cards.

games

Unite The Cards  
age 3-5

You will need: some snap cards, or even regular playing cards.

Play a memory game with the cards all face down. The children can turn over two cards at a time, if they find a match, then they keep that pair. For the playing cards, any two cards of the same value would be a pair. The idea is to unite the cards with each other.

The Bustling City Of...  
age 6-12

You will need: two dice for each team, copies of the activity sheet on page 143, pens.

Split the group into teams. Give each team two dice.

Any number thrown above 7 does not count and the children need to throw a 7 to start. If they throw a 7 they get a capital 'C' letter. This allows them to start building the word ‘Corinth’. They can add the other letters in any order after that; 6=o, 5=r, 4=i, 3=n, 2=t, 1=h. Use the worksheet as their guide. Note that they have to fully complete one ‘Corinth’ before they can start on the second. After they have built the word Corinth twice they then need to write down words starting with those letters that represent division on one side and unity on the other.

crafts

Note that all the craft ideas this week are cooperative tasks designed to encourage the children to think about how they can unite and work together.

Vanilla Truffles  
age 3-8

You will need: check for allergies, 10 digestive biscuits, 2 tablespoons of desiccated coconut, 2 ounces of margarine or butter, 1 small tin of condensed milk, 2 tablespoons of cocoa powder (or drinking chocolate powder), 1 teaspoon of vanilla essence, vermicelli or chocolate sprinkles, plastic bag, rolling pin, bowls, plates, mixing spoon, dessertspoon, small paper cake cases. Note that you may need to double the numbers depending on the numbers in your group, and that adults will need to melt the margarine/butter and open the tin of condensed milk.

Everyone should first wash their hands!

Assign tasks to the children so they are working together. Show the younger ones how to place the digestive biscuits in the plastic bag and crush them down with the rolling pin to a fine crumb and then let them do this together. Ask some of the older children to measure out the dry ingredients and place them in a bowl. Let some of the children place the vermicelli or sprinkles on a flat plate in preparation for rolling. Give some the task of laying out the paper cases in preparation for filling. A few could accompany the adult to melt the butter and some could scrape out the tin of condensed milk, and so on.

To make the truffles: melt the butter and then add the condensed milk to it and mix together. Place the crushed biscuits in a bowl and add all the other dry ingredients to them and mix together. Now add the melted butter and condensed milk mixture and the vanilla essence to the dry ingredients and mix thoroughly together. For those children in charge of rolling the mixture into balls: place a dessertspoon of the mixture into the palm of their hand and ask them to roll it into a ball and then place it on the plate of vermicelli. The balls can then be coated in vermicelli by rolling them around the plate and then placed in a cake case to set.

Talk to the children about Corinth: it was a city where people from lots of different places and cultures merged to live. Discuss what might happen when all these different people with different ways come together. Talk about how little groups could arise and perhaps even end up arguing with other groups because they do things differently or think differently. The children may have experiences of this within their classes at school that they could share. Talk about their truffles and how by working together they have produced something tasty for them all to eat and share and encourage them to relate this to the story and see that perhaps divisions could be ended when people work together for the goo of them all.
**age group ideas**

**Patchwork Hanging  age 9-12**

You will need: squares of plain coloured material or sheeting, fabric pens, large-eyed sewing needles, embroidery or cotton thread, scissors.

Give each child a square of material and ask them to firstly write their name in a decorative way with the fabric pen and then to further decorate their square in a way which speaks of them, for example, they may be a swimmer, or take part in karate, or play football or rugby, perhaps play a musical instrument. When they have completed their squares they must then work together to decide where each square should best be placed in the hanging and then lay them out in front of them as they will appear when finished. Again working together they should then begin to sew the squares together by placing two squares right side together and sewing along the appropriate adjoining edges with an overstitch. The completed hanging can then be hung for all to see.

Talk to the children about Corinth and it being a city where people from lots of different places and cultures merged to live. Discuss what might happen when all these different people with different ways come together. Talk about how little groups could arise and how divisions could appear among them. Discuss how they think these divisions might be overcome encouraging them to think of working together on a common cause. Relate this to the story and their example of working together as different individuals yet working together to produce their hanging.

**A Unity Mobile  all age**

You will need: a selection of pre-cut shapes on a theme (such as stars, shooting stars, planets, rockets, spaceships, astronauts for a space theme; or ladybirds, butterflies, crickets, birds and animals for a nature theme; or flowers, trees, watering cans and garden tools for a garden theme), felt pens, scraps of collage materials, two wire coat hangers (formed together to make a cross shape as the frame for the mobile), thread, sewing needle.

Give each child one of the chosen shapes to colour and decorate. When it is complete make a hole in the shape and thread through a long piece of thread securing the thread in place by knotting it tightly. Then working together get the children to decide where each shape should go on the mobile and then secure each shape into its chosen place by tying to the coat hanger frame—also ensuring the mobile balances when held by the top—discuss why perhaps a shape has to be moved to another space to allow the mobile to balance. When complete their unity mobile can be hung.

Talk as you are creating the unity mobile about how the children having made their own chosen shape as they wished are now having to work together to ensure everyone’s shape is included in the mobile and also that the shapes are placed in the right position to ensure the mobile balances. Discuss with them how they felt working together did they find it easy or was it difficult at times. Talk about the people of Corinth all coming from different places but being encouraged by Paul to try and get on with each other and work together for the good of everyone.

**activities**

**The Nine Trades Of Dundee  age 6-12**

You will need: copies of the activity sheet found on page 144.

Paul was a tentmaker by trade. There are many different trades around, even today. Many cities have organisations that unite the trades. In the city of Dundee there are nine, for example, as part of a group. The activity sheet shows the crests for the nine trades. See if the children can identify them and ask them what kind of jobs they would do. The nine trades of Dundee are Baker, Cordiner (shoe maker/cobbler), Glover, Tailor, Bonnet Maker, Flesher, Hammerman, Weaver, Dyer.

- What trades do the children know of today?
- Do they think like-minded people and people of the same trades should stick together?
- Do people of faith stick together?

**Tentmakers  all age**

You will need: furniture and large sheets.

What a great way to start the day off by letting the children build tents and become tentmakers. Let the children use tables and chairs and give them material to drape over the furniture. Alternatively start storing up large cardboard boxes and let their engineering talents take over and cellotape and staple bits together to make a tent. Also if you have access to modern day tents why not bring these along and let the children put them up—the pop up tents are quick and easy—albeit not so easy to get back into their bags!

**I Belong To...  all age**

You will need: someone with a bit of musical knowledge to assist.

A famous song in Scotland begins, “I belong to Glasgow, dear old Glasgow town...” Try writing your own song for your town, representing in the lyrics some of the aspects of the town that the children consider important to celebrate, particularly as they relate to the different peoples that make up your community.

An verse written for the town of Forfar:

I belong to Forfar, dear old Forfar town.  
There’s nothing the matter with Forfar for the people are all around.  
We’re all like one another, as anyone here can say, and when we get together to praise the Lord, it is such a special day.
discussion starters for teens working together

Preparation
For this session you will require some pens and large sheets of white paper. Think of a team game/challenge to use for the Opening Activity (it does not need to be complicated). For the closing Living It Out team work activity you will need a selection of paper cups, string, and some thick rubber bands.

Opening Activity
Saboteur
Play a team game or challenge for the opening activity. However beforehand choose a group member to secretly sabotage the team’s efforts and make them fail to complete the activity.

After the challenge is attempted reveal the secret saboteur and ask the group how they felt during the activity.

• Was it frustrating when the team weren’t all working together?
• Did splits in the group form?
• Did anyone get annoyed?

The Word
Read 1 Corinthians 1:10-18 together.
There are times in Paul’s letters to the various churches that he describes problems and situations that are familiar to those of us who have been in church for a long time. It is not so much that there are disagreements in the Corinthian Church—all churches, groups and teams have disagreements—but the problem is that it is over petty issues. As a result some within the church have created factions. Paul is keen to point out that being a part of the church is not focused around individual personalities but that he, along with Apollos and Peter, share the common task of serving Christ.

Activity/Discussion
Split the young people into two groups and give both a sheet of paper with the letters A to Z written down the side. Give the young people 5 minutes to think of words connected/associated with Cooperation and Disagreement. Have one group focus on Cooperation and the other on Disagreement. Once completed encourage the groups to choose their three top words that best describe their title word.

• What was the cause of the disagreements in the church in Corinth?
• Was it disagreements about important matters or insignificant things?
• What was the real problem?
• If you were Paul what advice would you give the church to work together better?

Living It Out
Cup Stack Challenge
There should be an individual piece of string for each young person in your group. Before the challenge starts, they should all tie the end of their string (evenly spaced out) onto a thick rubber band.

The challenge is for the group to build a pyramid out of the paper cups (three on the bottom, two in the middle, one on the top, which can be adjusted for more cups should you wish to be more adventurous). Group members cannot touch the cups with their hands or any other part of their bodies, even if a cup falls over or on the floor. Each person holds onto one of the strings that are attached to the rubber band and they use this device to pick up the cups and place them on top of each other (by pulling the rubber band apart and then bringing it back together over the cups).

Afterwards debrief with the following discussion questions:

• Was anyone frustrated at all during the activity? If so how was it handled?
• Did you learn anything about yourself or others?
• What is the hardest part about working in a team?
• What are the most important skills needed for good team work?
• In what ways might we use what we learned in this challenge in our everyday lives?
Faith and Hope are rather important themes within the Christian faith; not just as themes to consider, but also as mantras to live by. Yet it is really something to consider the unparalleled certainty of the final words of this chapter which state in unequivocal terms that, yes, faith and hope are pretty special, and will remain so forever, but of much greater importance and significance is ‘love’.

No wonder these are the words recited at Christian, and non-Christian, weddings around the world. Within a church context we might find it quite unusual were these words not be heard at a wedding. At the other end of life these words equally have much to say in the context of a life-time of love shared within a relationship that in earthly terms has come to an end with the death of one who has loved, and has known love.

We do need to be careful however with such words as these because it would be quite easy for over-exposure to dilute the significance of a theology that is intended to be heard, digested, and above all practised. It is not enough for these words to slip off the tongue and make us all ‘gooey-eyed’ as we consider love in the most human of ways. These words, in the context of what the author is seeking to convey, have much to tell us about our relationship with God, and through God with each other.

Sandwiched between chapters 12 and 14, we would do well to remember that this chapter is part of a section of the Bible which is seeking to teach us about ‘gifts’ given to us by the God who cares deeply about his people, who seeks relationship with his people, and who wants his people to use the ‘gifts’ they have been given in living relational lives which mirror the relationship God has with us in Jesus Christ.

It may be rather obvious to state, that as with all the gifts we receive in our human life, we must recognise that the gifts given to us by God are meant to be used. Obvious, yes, but there is no harm in stating the obvious when in actual fact the statement carries with it an undeniable truth. Not to use the gifts that God gives us is a sin. When the very gift of love is bought with the hefty cost of the death of God’s own son, it is in this supreme act of generosity that we see the real value of this gift that Paul describes as the greatest of all of God’s gifts.

The depiction of love as we find it in this chapter is foundational to our understanding of God and the purpose of our lives. Within the framework of this section of the first letter to the Corinthians we recognise that as the ‘greatest of the three’, the empowerment that this special gift of love brings to us is of upmost importance in the challenge set before us to live in such a way as to ‘build up’ our fellow humanity.

The description of what ‘love is’, brings a clarity to the impact love makes when used properly and lavishly in our relationships with others. The passage is also at pains to point out what ‘love is not’. In fact the passage as a whole provides a perfect balance which help us picture the effects of love which God seeks to be carried forward by his people in all their interactions. God’s loving Spirit is carried forward in the actions of those who make love the supreme influence of life, faith and action.
the story

Love is Patient

This is an all-age retelling. Try gathering a ‘rap group’ of young and old and rehearse this rhythmic retelling of Paul’s challenging words about love, then lead it. You could do it once then get everyone to join in. You could give everyone a copy of the words and invite reflection... put your own name or your church’s name in place of ‘love’ for a second time, for instance. Which descriptions are you/your church living up to well? Which are most challenging?

Love isn’t selfish, love isn’t rude.
Even in bad times, love can bring out the good.
When love gets hurt, it doesn’t hit back.
Love can stand up to taking the flak.
Love is always honest, love is always true
Love brings out the best in me and in you
Love keeps going - love never gives up, never stops trying; never says, ‘I’ve had enough!’
Love has the faith to keep strong every day
Love means living in the very best way!

worship ideas

Through the Season

Pages 4 and 5 contain ideas that can be used to help set the scene throughout this season linking each week’s theme to the wider narrative. For the Easter season we suggest a focus on the body with a large cutout image. Replace the original cut-out (complete with last week’s alterations) in the centre of the people chain. Add the words ‘Loving Spirit’.

Gathering Activity

Love is... what is love?
Have cards (business card size will do) with images depicting love in all its ‘Corinthian-ness’ and hand each person one as they arrive. Invite them to share the card they have been given with their neighbour and chat about the different ways love manifests itself.

Call to Worship

Leader: A life without love would be no life at all!
All: I worship, in love, today!
Leader: A church without love would be no church at all!
All: We worship, in love, today!
Leader: A world without love would be no world at all!
All: We shall pray for more love, today!

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Holy God, how amazing is our love!
We look at all that surrounds us and we are awestruck, love is there to see, in each leaf, each blade of grass, each new thing.
Your handiwork is everywhere, and we witness it day by day.
Your love, in every moment, is for us to enjoy and to give back to you.
And yet... so often we take it for granted—love so awesome—yet we overlook it.
Forgive us when we are so preoccupied with worldly love, we forget holy love.
Forgive us when we forget the things that are really important: not money and esteem; but love and faith and hope...
Forgive and renew us we pray so that we may be part of this glorious creation and worthy of your precious love.
Amen.
worship ideas

Prayer for Others and Ourselves

God of LOVE!
We gather our thoughts,
our hopes,
our dreams,
our prayers
and we come to you
to put into words
the deepest longings of our hearts.

We hear those words:
faith hope and love;
we know that LOVE is all.
And if only we, they, everyone
could love for love's sake—
what a wonderful thing that would be.

Yet it is not so.
We bring these our prayers in anticipation of what is not yet,
but that we pray will one day come.

We pray for our world:
the events and situations which trouble us
and cause us to ask questions:
take them and fill them with hope, we pray.

We pray for our country:
the season of change beckons;
wisdom is sought;
help us to pray intentionally,
to know the loving solutions,
loving actions,
loving responses to all that we see.

We pray for our community:
the people who live and work where we live and work;
be with them and us,
sowing seeds of love and hope in times of concern.

And we pray for ourselves;
for the things which frighten or trouble us;
for the uncertainties and worries we have,
that you make take them,
heal them,
and fill us with hopeful love,
today and always.
Amen.

Reflection

“If I have no love, I am nothing.”
That’s not really true, is it?
We could all pause there
and consider that question.
If I have no love...
I am nothing...
Is that because it is true:
I am completely love—
made of it,
shaped by it,
imagined through it,
honed in it,
called to it,
created with it.

So being made of love
I am always going to be less than I am created to be
if I live without it,
deny it,
limit it,
hesitate with it.
If I have no love
I am a pale shadow of who I am called to be,
defined by the world
and not heaven,
important by world standards perhaps,
but dull by heaven’s.
If I have no love, I am nothing...
...nothing like who God created me to be.
Take Home Ideas

This week, challenge yourself to think of love every day. Not simply a love that is easy to recall and relive, but a love that will cause you to expend more time and effort.

- Think of those times that you were offered love, despite everything that was happening at the time.
- Think of those times that you demonstrated love to someone else when everyone around you was doubtful.
- Think of those people you failed to love, those situations in which you may have some guilt or regret for not playing a loving role.
- Think of those situations you read about, hear stories, or see firsthand, where love is badly needed. How will you play your part, as a child of God, to help and intervene?

Sending

As you leave this place where love is found, look for and search for love in the world.

Where you find none, be that love.

Where you find it, return it ten fold.

Be God’s love in the community and world.

And know his love is with you, always.

Praise/Hymns

Break not the circle of enabling love  CH4 206
Come down, O Love Divine  CH4 489 / MP 89
God is love: let heaven adore him  MP 187
God is love, his the care  CH4 193
God’s love is for everybody  CH4 765
God, whose love is always stronger online at http://carolynshymns.com/god_whose_love_is_always_stronger.html
Jesus is risen, alleluia  CH4 409
Lord, make us servants of your peace  CH4 527
Love divine  CH4 519 / MP 449
Love is the touch of intangible joy  CH4 115
Make me a channel of your peace  CH4 528 / MP 456
Mothering God, you gave me birth  CH4 117
O God, this time of grieving online at http://carolynshymns.com/o_god_this_time_of_grieving.html
Open are the gifts of love  CH4 390
There is a Redeemer  CH4 559 / MP 673
To God be the glory  CH4 512 / MP 708
When we are living  CH4 726
age group ideas gathering

What Is Love?  all age

You will need: copies of 1 Corinthians 13 (you can readily copy the text from https://www.biblegateway.com/, highlighter pens.

Put the children in mixed age groups and give each group a copy of 1 Corinthians 13 and a highlighter pen.

Ask them to look through the passage and find all the things that love is or does (all the attributes of love) and ask them when they find something about love to highlight it with their highlighter pen.

Compare their findings as a way into the story today.

A Gift Of Love  age 9-12

You will need: red card, box template (see page 145), pencils, scissors, coloured felt-tip pens, PVA glue, glue spreaders, heart shaped stickers, tissue paper, either small red scented tea-lights or small packs of love hearts.

Give each child a box template and ask them to draw around it onto the red card or alternatively photocopy the box template onto red card and give each child one. Ask the children to cut the box shape and show them how to lay it out so that the right side of the box is uppermost. Help them to identify what will become the lid of the box and then ask them to write decoratively on the lid: for example in bubble writing which is then coloured in using the words ‘Love is...’

Now explain that they are going to complete that phrase by using words from the passage (for example: patient, kind, not jealous, not boastful, bears all things, never ends and so on) and write one of their different endings to the phrase on each face of the box again in decorative writing. They can then decorate the other spaces on the box using patterns or stickers before then folding the flaps and gluing them to construct the shape to make the box. The box can then be filled with a little tissue paper and either a scented tea-light or some ‘Love Heart’ sweets and be given to someone they love.

Talk with the children about love and how we can show love to others. With this age-group it would be interesting to ask them to read some of the verses aloud but replace the word love with their name and then discuss with them what that should mean for them and how they should behave and show God’s love to others.

Crafts

Heart Badges  age 3-5

You will need: red card cut into heart shapes, coloured pens, coloured pencils, self-stick stickers, sticky tape, safety pins, clear self-adhesive plastic.

Give each child a heart shape and ask them to decorate it using the materials provided. Make the heart shape into a badge with the children by helping them to cover their heart with self-stick clear plastic, which also helps to keep their design in place, and by attaching a safety pin to the back of the badge with sticky tape. The children can then wear their heart badges.

Talk with the children about love and how a heart is often used as a symbol for love. Talk about the people who love them and how they know that they are loved. How do people show they love them? Talk about God’s love and how they might show God’s love to others.

Love Biscuits  age 6-8

You will need: a supply of small heart-shaped biscuits, tubes of coloured icing (available in supermarkets), paper plates, doilies, felt pens, cling-film, stick on parcel bows.

Give each child four heart-shaped biscuits and ask them to pipe with the icing the letter ‘L’ on one, ‘O’ on another, ‘V’ on another and ‘E’ on the last one. While the icing on their biscuits is setting ask them to decorate the border of their plate. Give each child a doley and ask them to place it on their plate. Now they can arrange their biscuits on the plate to spell out ‘LOVE’ and then wrap the whole plate in cling film. A decorative bow can then be added to the top of their cling-film.

Talk with the children about love and the people they love. Discuss the different ways we can show someone we love them. Talk with the children about who they might like to give their ‘Love’ biscuits and why they chose that person or those people.

Growing Love  all age

You will need: white paper towel, plastic disposable plates, pens (not felt tips, they will run!), cress seeds, water.

Give each child a sheet of paper towel and ask them to draw a heart shape in the centre of the sheet. Ask the children to place the sheet on the plastic plate and then using some of the water dampen the paper. Giving the children cress seeds ask them to sprinkle them carefully within the heart shape only. Explain that if the paper is kept damp the cress seeds will grow in a heart shape and when grown the cress can then be cut and shared with others in the family. The children can then take their heart shapes home.

Talk with the children about love and how a heart is often used as a symbol for love. Discuss different ways we can show God’s love and ask them to think about how God’s love can be grown. Talk about how the seeds they have sown could be seen as seeds of love and how these seeds of love will grow and how that love can then be shared with others allowing God’s love to grow even more.
activities

Synonyms/Antonyms  age 6-12
You will need: copies of the activity sheet found on page 147, different coloured pens.

Ask the children to highlight in one colour the words that are similar to ‘love’ and then in a different colour those that describe the opposite to ‘love’.

Love In Our Community  age 6-12
This passage is about love for the community so gather together some information about your own community where love is being shown in the community, whether to a particular group of people, buildings, the environment. How can children help maintain this love and then develop it even more?

God Is Love  all age
You will need: do a little research to find some different translations for ‘God is love’ to teach to the children.

You will need to adapt this activity for each age group. Speaking in various tongues. Ask the children first if they can speak any words in another language. Then proceed to teach them a few words or phrases in another language. The internet can give you many translations but try starting with ‘God is Love’.

The Tongue  all age
You will need: copies of the activity sheet found on page 146, pens.

Paul talks about the tongues of humans at the start of this week’s passage to refer to languages, but what about our physical tongues? They are amazing! Use the worksheet and quiz to explore the tongue and how we refer to it with different sayings.

games

Patience  age 6-12
You will need: packs of playing cards, refresh yourself on different variations of the game of Patience (Solitaire).

Remembering that one of the attributes of love is patience, teach the traditional card game of Patience to the children, perhaps in a few different forms (for example, Clock Patience).

Yes / No  age 6-12
Pick someone to be ‘IT’ and then ask them lots of closed questions that one would naturally answer with ‘yes’ and ‘no’. For example, ‘Is your name John?’ The twist is that whoever is ‘IT’ is out if they say yes or no. They must find other ways to answer, which takes a lot of concentration, patience and good use of your tongue! If IT is caught out, then the next person becomes IT.

Tongues Will Cease  all age
You will need: timekeeper/stopwatch.

For this you can try and get the children to stay quiet for 30 seconds and after this you can then get children to count in their head another 30 seconds while staying quiet and then get them to stand up when they think 30 seconds has past.
Preparation

You will need two versions of today’s reading and paper and pens to draw cartoons.

Opening Activity

Love Is...

‘Love is...’ was a popular series of cartoons starting back in the 1960s by Kim Casali that explored today’s theme.

There are lots of these cartoons online (https://www.pinterest.com/goldegirl/love-is/). “Love is... not having to be reminded to take the garbage out”. “Love is... when his voice is music to your ears”.

Try and come up with your own Love is... and Love is not... statements. Be creative and funny!

You could try drawing your own cartoons too.

The Word

Today’s passage is a famous one. It is used a lot at weddings so has become quite familiar to lots of people.

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 from two versions (NRSV and The Message give a good contrast).

Activity/Discussion

• At first glance, how do you feel about the parts of this passage? Break this up into: the first 3 verses? Verses 4-10? Verses 11-13?

It’s easy to see why this reading is popular at weddings but to see it as being just about romantic love is to miss the point. This passage is about us and God.

• How would it feel to substitute ‘love’ with your name in verses 4-10?

• Would we be able to live up to that description? Why, or why not?

• We say God is love, so what does this passage tell us about what God is and is not? Is that surprising? Comforting? Challenging?

• Are there times when you are a creaking rusty gate or a clanging cymbal?

• Do you speak in a way that is loving?

• How does it feel when you do and when you speak in a way that it not loving?

• How does it feel when someone speaks to you in a way that is loving or not loving?

Living It Out

Try and see how much you speak in a way that is loving and how much of a clanging cymbal you are this week.
Paul’s Conviction

This is a fine example of Paul ‘throwing everything bar the kitchen sink’ at the Corinthians in an attempt to convince them of things that for many are unseen. It is undoubtedly a persuasive piece of systematic theology where building blocks towards faith are provided by Paul to enable the Corinthians to follow a structured path towards constructing something in their faith community, and individual lives, which is outstanding.

With real passion and conviction Paul perhaps begins by seeking to address particular questions, or indeed issues that have come to light in the community, but then appears to move on instinctively to build a whole connected system where one brick is connected to another. A system where the pieces of the ‘faith jigsaw’ are added one at a time and can only be added when the piece before has been neatly put in place.

In the opening section, Paul is at great pains to portray a succession of ‘faith handouts’ that have been passed out by the God who sought people to have a glimpse of the resurrected Jesus. He is also at pains to position himself at the bottom of that list. There is perhaps significance in this in that Paul, as a fledgling follower of the Christian ‘new way’, is conscious of his past hostility towards Christians and is feeling the shame of some of his past actions. This is backed up in the wonderful line from verse 10, ‘…I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain’. Here we have a recognition of unique identity, individualised story, and a personal relationship with God that is ultimately dependent on the grace of God more than it is about our earning the right to such relationship.

However far down the list Paul places himself, still he describes how he was party to some sort of experience of God and the risen Lord Jesus Christ. In contrast however to those higher up the list—for example, Thomas—it does not appear to be a bodily experience Paul claims for his own such encounter. Yet, it clearly changed Paul. And he tells part of his own story in an attempt to legitimise his standing as an apostle and give energy to his appeal to others to believe for themselves.

It is quite hard to see how someone’s passion about a personal experience with God can be considered grounds on which to seek to convince others about the truth of the resurrection, life after death, and all that traditionally goes with Christian belief. Is it fair to expect that our own accounts of a personal experience of God have the power to convince others of the merits of both the experience itself, and that faith to which the experience points? Not really, yet that has been the story and context of the movement of faith throughout the years of the Christian Church. Teaching is passed on from one person to the next; one generation to the next. Faith is something prized as the best gift we can pass on to our children for it offers so much more than the world can offer on its own. And so the personal stories of encounter with God are told; and people reflect on the life-changing effect of these experiences they witness in others, and they open a little door in their hearts that leaves them in a better position for God, by his grace, and by the activity of the Holy Spirit, to do his work in leading people to encounter something of the holy themselves. Not necessarily to the extent that the particular person will be able to write about it; but encounters with God, as we know, come in all shapes and sizes and, more to the point, when we get used to discovering them, we discover they are found everywhere we find ourselves.
Life Or Death

Andy: Hey Ada, am I dead or alive?
Ada: He told them about all the witnesses who saw Jesus alive. It was not just one or two people but thousands who witnessed over a period of time the miracle of Easter.

Andy: So how does the death of Jesus affect us now?
Ada: Well, Paul wants to remind people that we all die, but that in Christ we all come alive again!

Andy: Really?
Ada: Really!

Andy: So how does that happen?
Ada: Well, just like Adam, we all die.

Andy: Adam? Was that the guy in the Garden of Eden?
Ada: He was.

Andy: But he died thousands of years ago!
Ada: He did, but the day will come when he will rise just like Jesus did.

Andy: So if that happens to him, will the same also happen to my mammy, God rest her soul!
Ada: Yes, and your Auntie Jean, and all those other people who believe in Jesus.

Andy: So, how long until this happens. When is it going to be?
Ada: Well, no one quite knows the date, but Paul was really assuring the Corinthian people that believing in Jesus now meant an end to the fear of death and the promise of life in all its fullness through Jesus in the present time and in the future.

Andy: So we do not need to fear death.
Ada: No, for in Christ all are made alive in him.

Andy: So we don’t just wait to drop dead and Jesus to come back again to live with him, we live with him now by doing the things he taught us to do.
Ada: That’s it, Andy.

Andy: Oh, glory hallelujah!
Ada: Amen to that Andy!

Andy: Hey Ada, am I dead or alive?
Ada: Now I don’t want any of your funny comments!

Andy: In that case, I would say that you are very much alive! Why do you ask?
Ada: Well it’s this man Paul in the Bible. He keeps talking about being dead and then being alive!

Andy: Well yes, Andy, he does, because that is what the Good News of Jesus is based on?
Ada: Sure, it is never good news to be dead! ...Well, I can think of a few folk I would like dead!

Andy: Paul doesn’t really want us to wish people dead or kill people just for them to be faithful Christians.
Ada: Thank goodness for that! I don’t fancy the idea of getting knocked down by a bus, or falling off a mountain, or being shot by a madman!

Andy: Well, that would not be good news for you Andy... or me of course!
Ada: So what is Paul going on about in his letter to the Corinthians? It sounds as though he wants everyone to die, just so as they can live like Jesus.

Ada: He does.

Andy: He does?
Ada: Yes, he does!

Andy: Oh Ada, I am really confused. This is really hard to understand?
Ada: Do you want me to try and explain it?

Andy: If you can Ada, that would be wonderful!
Ada: Can you remember when you first became a Christian?

Andy: Aye, I can remember that moment. The Minister preached a sermon about the love God had for us all, and I felt so overwhelmed that I cried.

Ada: Yes, they were not tears of sadness but tears of joy.

Andy: That’s right. I was happy. Happy that God loved someone like me.

Ada: Well, Paul was reminding the Corinthians of the day he first explained the Christian faith to them. It was a day when many of them were moved to become Christian. He told them the Easter story about how Jesus was crucified on a cross. How they laid his body in the tomb, and how he arose from death on that first Easter Sunday morning.

Andy: Yes, everybody knows that story!
Ada: However, Paul wanted to remind the Corinthians that this is not a myth or a good story, but a fact. That this was not just a story about a one off event but an ongoing story about life and death.

Andy: And?
Retelling For Young People

Building Blocks Of Faith

This is a visual story using LARGE building blocks or cardboard boxes (33 of them!) with the words taped on to them. You can build the blocks up yourself, or if you have more time you can have two teams competing to see which team can find the words first and what they can build out of them (perhaps a tower, church, castle, or some such).

My name is Paul I brought you GOOD NEWS about Jesus but you have to keep BELIEVING in JESUS.

If you want to build up your faith, remember what I told you in the BEGINNING, that Jesus DIED for our MISTAKES, he was BURIED in a tomb, then he walked out of the tomb and he was ALIVE again!

Lots of people saw him.

PETER, 500 FAITHFUL FOLLOWERS, JAMES, and last, but not the least, me, PAUL!

I was once BAD but Jesus made me GOOD, and the HOLY SPIRIT, stayed with me, and helped me do Godly things!

And this God, does the same for YOU! And all others who continue to BELIEVE today.

Some people may DOUBT, that all this HAPPENED, but we know that it did, we believe that it did, and just like Jesus we all LIVE with him.

No Lies, no half truths, Jesus is ALIVE, and we are alive in him!

So let us SHOUT OUT that message from the CHURCH, the PAVEMENT, the MOUNTAINTOPS, for all to hear.

No one should feel sorry for us, for our HOPE is in Jesus, even if we die, he assures us of life in all its FULLNESS! And that promise is to the first man Adam and to you, and all those who live after us.

Christ will be KING, CHAMPION over evil, bringer of life, JOY, and PEACE to all.

Just keep the faith.

And build his Kingdom STRONG and SECURE.
worship ideas

Through the Season

Pages 4 and 5 contain ideas that can be used to help set the scene throughout this season linking each week’s theme to the wider narrative. For the Easter season we suggest a focus on the body with a large cutout image. Using the newly ‘dressed’ cut-out, add the words ‘Living Spirit’.

Gathering Activity

Give everyone a card (business card size) with the words ‘I am alive’ on it. Invite them to think about the things in their lives that are life giving. What is it that energises them and makes them feel alive? If they want to write this on the back of the card and during the prayer of thanksgiving to bring these forward and place them in a bowl or basket at the front of the church. Or if the offering is uplifted during the service invite them to place their cards in the bag/plate along with their offering.

Call to Worship

All: Alive!
Leader: Together we celebrate; celebrate just being alive!

All: Alive!
Leader: Together we demonstrate; demonstrate a faith that’s alive!

All: Alive!
Leader: Together we educate; educate how to be more alive!

Reflection

I want to feel fully alive.
I have friends and loved ones who have passed away.
They no longer have life here.
I do have life here.

I want to feel fully alive:
avive to the smell of the earth,
the wet of the rain,
the glare of the sun,
the distant star of the night sky.

Where does it even come from,
this thing we call life?
God, yes.
That is the correct answer, right?
The minister will be happy with that, right?
But, I mean,
what is this thing “life” that God the giver gives?
Is it a heartbeat,
a breath?
Is it DNA,
an atom,
spirit?

Alive! Fully alive!
I want to die, living;
really living.

Living in each moment,
living like I mean it,
living like there’s no tomorrow.
I want to feel fully alive.

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

God of life,
we praise you!

We come to you,
to your place,
your time,
and we choose to live!

The life we have comes from you;
the life we have we give back to you
in praise and adoration.

Praise your name!
Praise your life!
Praise this world for all its teeming variety.

New life is visible everywhere we look;
green shoots;
new born lambs
growing and springing forth.

We praise you for showing us
such abundance everywhere we go.

God of mercy and hope,
even in this abundance we are aware
that we do not always live up to that life-full promise.
We do not always value what we have, what we see.
We overlook goodness and grace,
and we take for granted that we have breath.

Forgive us our complacent hearts,
our neglect of living life to the full;
forgive us when we take advantage of others,
and abuse the potentials of living.
Forgive us and renew our lives
so that we may truly reflect life in all its variations
today and always.

Amen.

Prayer of Dedication

God of life and love:
we bring you our gifts;
freely given;
offered to you to build and shape;
to use and value.
We dedicated our money,
our time our talents,
our whole life to you
and you alone,
this day and always.

Amen.
Prayer for Others and Ourselves

God of life,
how amazing is a spirit-filled life!
How awesome to be your people,
living the life you chose for us.

We gather our thoughts and prayers
to give voice to the places where life is diminished,
and living is fragile.

We pray for the world:
in so many places individuals are abused and mistreated;
life is considered to be cheap.

God of life:
touch those hearts that are crushed and desperate,
bring a glimmer of light and hope.

God of justice:
touch those who have the power;
let them see each person as an individual,
loved by you with a life that is valued.
Enable those who can to bring light
and hope into dark lives.

We pray for our country:
so many times,
so many places where life could be better;
where living could be fuller
in homes and schools,
in office blocks and factories.

God of life,
let each one know that they are loved
and their life is cherished.
May your light touch them
so that each one is able to hold on to life and light

We pray for our communities:
where there is sorrow or loneliness bring hope and calm,
where there is fear and dread bring peace and joy,
where there is anxiety and uncertainty bring love and life
and we pray for ourselves:
may we too, value ourselves;
love our lives;
live out your promises,
today and always.
Amen.

Take Home Ideas

This week think about:
• What do you feel brings life to your church? Where are new forms of life visible? What signs of life do you give thanks for?
• What do you feel needs to be ‘let go of’ in your church? What things need to ‘die’ in order that new life can spring up?
• What do you feel are the essentials of ‘life’ within your church and your wider community?
• Where is God in your place? Do you feel God’s presence in both the things that bring life and the things that need to be ‘let go of’?

Pray for new signs of life, and for you to be equipped to be a part of them.

Sending

Go and live this life we have.
Live in faith and with purpose.
Live like you mean it.
Life like Jesus wants you to live it.
Free, in hope, in peace.
Make your life count.
And do it with the many blessings of God
Father, Son and Holy Spirit;
enveloping and sustaining you,
this day and always.

Praise/Hymns

Alleluia! Alleluia!  CH4 427
And can it be that I should gain  CH4 396 / MP 33
Come and join the celebration! online at
http://carolynshymns.com/come_and_join_the_celebration.html
God we praise you. God we bless you  CH4 120
Grace is when God gives us  CH4 163
How good it is to thank you, Lord  CH4 56
Listen, sisters! Listen, brothers online at
http://carolynshymns.com/listen_sisters_listen_brothers.html
Lord, bless and pity us  CH4 45
Lord, you have always been our home  CH4 54
O God, you are my God alone  CH4 43
Praise to the Lord, the almighty  CH4 124 / MP 564
Rejoice! the Lord is King  CH4 449 / MP 575
Send out the Gospel! Let it sound  CH4 681
Take up the song and sing the praise of God  CH4 171
The strife is o’er, the battle done  CH4 412 / MP 670
There is a green hill far away  CH4 380 / MP 674
We sing the praise of him who died  CH4 405 / MP 738
Word of the Father, come, Lord, come  CH4 480
age group ideas
gathering

Who? all age

Play a game together where the children sitting in a circle take it in turns to describe someone in the group without naming them or looking directly at them and the other children have to try and decide from their description who they might be describing.

Use this as a way of introducing the story for today talking of being exactly who we are: ‘I am who I am’ and being fully ‘alive’.

crafts

I Am Who I Am age 3-8

You will need: A5 card, paint, small trays for the paint, felt pens, newspaper for covering tables, wipes for cleaning hands.

Look with the children at their fingers and thumbs and talk about the differences and similarities and establish the fact that because God has made us all different our fingerprints are all unique and if we print them on paper someone might even be able to tell from our fingerprint just who exactly we are just by looking at it.

Now give each child a piece of card and show them how to make a figure of themselves by using only their thumbprints to form the body, head, legs and arms and so on. Let the children create their own figure, it may just be a simple outline of themselves or it may be a picture of them actually doing something they enjoy doing, like jumping or playing football. Once they have completed their picture and it has dried let them add their own features with the felt pens to create who they are.

Take time to talk with the children about their creations and perhaps even play a game of trying to guess who each person is just from their images on the card.

I Am Alive! age 9-12

You will need: old socks, googly eyes, small pom-poms, scraps of wool and material, scissors, PVA glue, polyester stuffing.

Give each child a sock and ask them to create a puppet of themselves by using the materials provided.

Talk with the children about the sock before they made their puppet: about it being old, being useless, appearing lifeless. Discuss with the children how they have brought the sock to life, made it seem alive. Talk with the children about the things they do and enjoy that make them feel alive, those things that give them life.

We Are Alive! all age

You will need: A4 sized people shapes cut out of card in ‘dull’ colours (one per child), lots of glitter, PVA glue.

Alternately you could use bright paints, paintbrushes or scraps of material and scissors to bring the shapes to life.

Talk about the people shapes and how they look dull and rather lifeless. Talk about how the children might ‘bring them to life’ and make them look alive.

Give each child a person shape and allow them to bring the person to life by spreading the outline with glue and then scattering glitter all over it or using paint or material scraps.

When dry these figures could be strung together like bunting by placing a figure between each of the following letters W-E-A-R-E-A-L-I-V-E: We are alive!

Talk with the children about the things they do and enjoy that make them feel alive, those things that give them life.
activities

Facts About Me  age 6-12

You will need: paper and pens.

This could be used as an alternative to the Gathering Activity or as a development of it.

Ask the children to write down some facts about themselves, boy/girl, age, eye colour, sisters/brothers, school attended, and so on. As you read out facts about each person all the children are to write down on a piece of paper who they think you are talking about.

Our Stories  all age

In this passage Paul writes to the people in Corinth and reminds them of the terms he preached to them the Gospel. Remind the children of the stories they have talked about over the last few weeks and build a picture up for them of the journey so far. Discuss with them why it is important that we remember the stories and activities of Jesus and how it affects us in our day to day lives. If you have made any crafts over these last few weeks it would be great to have some at hand as reminders.

Either before or after this ask:

- Do your parents or carers remind you or retell stories of family events in the past? What kind of events do they recall?
- What do your teachers at school remind you of about the past?
- What story of your own past would you pass onto someone or enjoy sharing?

Describing Me  all age

You will need: large pieces of paper or rolls of lining paper, pens, header slips of paper with the following words: thinking, talking, shouting, singing, reading, listening, hearing, walking, running, jumping, skipping, sitting, helping hands, seeing, observing.

Let the children use the large pieces of paper to draw around their body shape and then to draw in eyes, ears, nose, mouth, hands, feet, knees and so on.

At the top of the large sheet of paper write in bold ‘WE ARE ALIVE’. Using the header sheets ask the children to discuss and talk about what each word means to them in relation to being alive and believing in Jesus. They then stick the headers onto the picture where they fit.

Additionally, you could ask the children to give examples of singing about Jesus, how they observe Jesus and the love of others in themselves and other people, what do they do to help others. They can write these down and add to the sheet also. Hopefully it will be a very busy picture!

games

New Life  age 3-5

You will need: symbols of new life, for instance pictures of babies, lambs, buds on a tree, spring flowers, a running stream, butterfly, and so on.

Place around the room the different symbols for the children to identify them and collect them. Talk about flowers and trees ‘dying’ back in winter but coming back again in new life in spring.

Who Am I?  age 6-12

Play the game ‘Who am I?’ with the children being allowed twenty questions to ask and the answering person only replying yes or no.

Building Block Words  age 6-12

You will need: copies of the 33 words from the Retelling For Young People (page 119), one per sheet, perhaps planks of wood with string handles.

This game is about team work and building up one another’s faith. Using additional copies of the 33 words that are being used in the story Retelling For Young People (page 119) today lay them on the floor face down at the other end of the room from where the children are. They must work as a team to reach each of these words—one word at a time—it could be one team against another. They must always stay together as they try to reach the words from their starting position.

They can hold hands, lie flat on the floor holding hand to ankle and so on, use planks of wood with string handles to form sets of ski’s and each person has a foot on each ski. Once all the words have been collected they try to rearrange the words to make a story however note if there is more than one team some words will be missing from each. The teams might have to come together to form the complete story.

Coconut Shy  all age

You will need: four coconuts or buckets, beanbags, labels on coconuts or buckets with 1, 5, 500 or 5,000.

Jesus spoke to so many people and so many others believed. For this game you can make up a coconut shy or place buckets at different distances and throw bean bags into them. Each bucket or coconut has a different number on it to represent people, 1, 5, 500 and 5,000. Total up all the numbers knocked down or bean bags in the bucket.
discussion starters for teens
re-membering

Preparation
You will need Post-it notes, pens and rubber bands large enough to fit on someone’s head.

Opening Activity
Who Am I?
Play one of the many ‘guess who’ type games. You could stick the name of a famous person to everyone’s forehead using a Post-it note and a rubber band to keep it in place, or use one of the many phone apps.

Everyone has to guess who they are by asking others questions. You could also play ‘20 questions’ where someone chooses a person and the group have 20 yes/no questions to guess who the person is.

The Word
Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-26 from The Message.

Activity/Discussion
• What do you think of today’s passage?
• What is Paul trying to do?
• What is his message?

We are still in the season of Easter, even though Easter Day was seven weeks ago now. In this passage from Paul’s letter to the new church in Corinth he is recapping the message so far.

There is one thing that is the most important point of all, that Jesus rose from the dead. That is the central thing in the story. Without that the rest does not make sense. Easter is what it is all about.

Re-membering
To remember means to put the parts of something back together. Try to retell the Easter story as a group. Try to be as precise as possible. There are different versions of what happened in the Gospels so try and remember as much as possible and perhaps separate the events into their different Gospels.

• How hard was it to remember all the parts of the story?
• Did you miss anything important?
• Did you get all the characters?
• Did people remember the story differently?
• Did you argue about what was the most important part?

Paul is talking about foundations, the solid base that we can build on. He is saying that the foundation of faith is Easter.

• Is it easy or difficult to believe in Jesus rising from the dead after three days? Why?

Living It Out
Think about the news this week. Are you being told the facts or is what you are told someone’s opinion.

• What difference does it make to how you think about the story?
Enlivening The Gifts Of God’s Spirit

I

ndividual Life, and the world, look very different when we have a sense that God’s Spirit dwells within us, and works in and through the activities of humanity and creation itself. For people of faith, when we actually consider the importance of Pentecost and God’s gift of the Holy Spirit, we must recognize that it ranks very close in significance (if not equal) to: Christmas—the arrival of the Son of God on Earth and the establishment of a reaffirmed relationship between God and humanity; and Easter—the victory of life over death and the assurance of God’s presence in the world ongoing.

In our individual lives there is great comfort in knowing that we are not reliant on our own means. No matter how capable, strong and confident we think we are, the challenges of life cannot be something avoided forever. In addition, the tasks we are asked to be responsible for both in terms of everyday life, and the wider responsibility of playing our part in cultivating and protecting our world are beyond even the most capable of us, if we have to rely on our own steam. Yet to know that ‘we are of God’—that there is part of God in each of us—means that as individuals we are greater in potential than even the combined parts of our body and mind, personality and skill-set.

In terms of our world, knowing that there is something beyond that which we experience daily, or witness first-hand through national and world news reports, is a comfort that leads to blessing and encouragement. To know that the Spirit flies free in the situations of our world, no matter how hopeless and chaotic they appear as seen from our human eyes, is a saving grace that comes out of God’s gift of his Spirit. As we harness that gift of hope, carried in the energy of the Spirit, we can begin to see the world through Jesus’ eyes and see it as a place of possibility, fertile (even in its desolation) with the seeds of God’s redeeming and life-raising power.

The Holy Spirit is in the business of giving away ‘gifts’. We all have gifts: each one of us might be lucky enough to have a natural talent (or two, three, four…) in such areas as music, sport, art, communication or some such. As Paul writes about the spiritual gifts given to each of us, it is likely he is talking about qualities that go beyond these natural talents we all have. It is what we do with our natural talents and opportunities that matter in connection with spiritual gifts.

When we allow God’s Spirit to direct and give energy to what we do with our body and mind, character and personality, then our natural talents are infused with the energy of God, and the Holy Spirit directs our talent to the purposes of God’s work in the world. When this happens, God, through us, can touch people with the full breadth of his love. Spiritual gifts benefit the person who receives them and indirectly benefits others through what that person does with their life.

In our individual lives and in the life of the world, Pentecost reminds us that God’s Spirit is ‘alive and kicking’ and that is worth celebrating and igniting in us. That is our faithful response, a fully focussed attempt to harness the power of the Spirit in our life of faith.

Gifting Spirit


(Mark 1:4-8)
Ada: Will that mean that the Holy Spirit will come and do all my ironing and washing and tidying up after you?

Andy: Not quite Ada, but the Holy Spirit does give each of us different gifts, to help ourselves know God better, and to enable us to help others, and make the world a better place.

Ada: What kind of gifts make the world a better place?

Andy: Well Dr Simpson over there helps make sick people better. Miss Purves is a great wee teacher. Mrs Keddie is an amazing organiser…

Ada: Ah right! Mr Murning has the gift of preaching, Mr Kennedy has a musical gift, Mrs Wilmington is a good listener.

Andy: Aimee Fisher in Junior church is a great wee gymnast, Ross is good with the computer, Jack is a good footballer, Gillian is kind to others,…

Ada: You know, Andy, I can think of lots of people in our congregation who are good neighbours, friendly towards one another, who are passionate about the environment, who care for the most vulnerable, who are zealous for justice.

Andy: And it was the same Spirit that came down upon those first apostles that touches our lives today, and gives us talents to help make the world a better place.

Ada: So Pentecost is not just a festival that happens in the past, but is ever present in the world today, in that God unleashes the gift of his Spirit in each one of us?

Andy: Exactly!

Ada: Wow Andy. You have really got me thinking now. If we all used these gifts to help each other, and people in this community, just think how good life could be.

Andy: Yes, he is a clever God, who helps all of us fulfil our potential.

Ada: Amen to that, Andy. Amen to that.
Retelling For Young People

Abigail’s Party

Abigail invited me to her birthday party! I don’t really know why she invited me? Abigail is one of the cool girls in our school and her close knit group of friends hardly ever speak to the rest of us! She also invited my friend Chantelle and neither Chantelle nor I really wanted to go to her party.

Abigail lived in a big fancy house, and she was always dressed in expensive label clothes. All her friends wore expensive clothes at the party and Chantelle and I came with our little party dresses that my mum made.

Abigail ignored the gift that we gave to her. She just tossed it on the floor and went off to be with her friends!

They played some party games like musical chairs and pass the parcel and it was no surprise to Chantelle and me that Abigail ‘won’ all the party games.

It was turning out to be a really bad party for Chantelle and me. And it got worse when the food came, because everything had nuts in it, and I am highly allergic to nuts!

So Chantelle and I left the party early and Abigail never even said good bye, nor offered us one of the party bags that sat in a big box at the front door.

I was upset at what happened to me. I told my Junior Church leader all about it the next day, when she noticed that I was much quieter than usual.

“Heather” she said, it may only have been a few hours of your life, and I know it has made you feel sad, that Abigail did not treat you as an honoured guest.

Remember the story that Jesus told when the king invited everyone to a party and he gave them clothes and food so that everyone would be the same?

“Yes”, I said. “I liked that story.”

“Well”, said the teacher, “God’s party never really stops. He goes on inviting people to come and share in the feast and he makes sure that all are treated equally. He makes sure that none of us are left out and when people leave the party to go home, God gives to everyone a suitable gift that they can enjoy. That gift can also be used to make other people happy.

“Today is called Pentecost, and it is often remembered as the birthday party of the church. On that day God offered people the gift of the Holy Spirit to help them live out their lives in the presence of God.

“He gave people different types of gifts. Some were given the gift of kindness, like you Heather. Some were given the gift of being a good friend, like you Chantelle. Some were given the gift of peace keeping like James. Some were given the gift of love to share with others like Mrs Bain.

“Some were given beautiful singing voices like Emily. Some were given…”

I get it! Lee was given strength and stamina which is why she is a great swimmer.

Owen is great at drawing things, and Billy is a very good football player.

“Exactly,” said Miss Pauline.

“God throws the best parties in the world, where everyone is invited, everyone is fed and nourished and have their thirst quenched and everyone gets a gift they need.”

A way of encouraging the children to think about the meaning of Pentecost.

P is for power, our God shares today.

E is for everyone, God reaches and teaches.

N is for new, the gifts God gives you.

T is for truth, that God loves you.

E is for ending, the world we don’t like.

C is for Christ, our Jesus we try to be like.

O is for oneness, together we stand.

S is for Spirit, Holy and true.

T is for time, for us all to do.

PENTECOST flames the Spirit did spread.

Into the world by Jesus we’re led.

Use all the gifts and the talents that God gave to you,

Make this world better is God’s plan for you.
worship ideas

Through the Season

Pages 4 and 5 contain ideas that can be used to help set the scene throughout this season linking each week’s theme to the wider narrative. For the Easter season we suggest a focus on the body with a large cutout image. Add the red and yellow strips around and over the cut out figures to represent the Holy Spirit, wrapping it around them.

Gathering Activity

Give everyone a gift tag as they arrive. On the gift tags have images relevant to Pentecost, for example: flame, dove. Invite them to tie/pin their gift tag onto a Cross at the front of the church. Perhaps the gift tags could be a mix of yellow, orange, red and white.

Call to Worship

Leader:  Gifted? Me? That’ll be right!
All:  Gifted? Yes, you! God has gifted you!
Leader:  Gifted? Us? That’ll be right!
All:  Gifted? Yes, you! God has gifted you!
Leader:  With the different gifts God has granted;
All:  Let us worship our gift-giving God!

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Holy God, holy Spirit, holy Son, holy are you!
Spirit of truth and grace we welcome you!
Spirit of hope and joy we greet you!
Spirit of life and love, we come—to worship you, the living God this day of Pentecost.

We come to you.
We worship and adore.
We sing your praises and we seek your touch in our lives.
We praise you for all the gifts we receive from you—known and unknown; used and unused—so many skills and talents to help and discover.

Holy Spirit: sometimes those gifts lie dormant for too long—we confess we do not always use our gifts to the fullest potential; we do not always offer our talents. Forgive us we pray.

Holy God—parent of all humanity—forgive our feeble efforts; our half-hearted use of the gifts you gave us; and help us to achieve more than we ever thought possible, today and always, through your Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Prayer for Others and Ourselves

Spirit of life and love.
Holy Spirit, holy God we come to you now with our prayers for the world; with our words of hope and petition.
In the world, may your Holy Spirit pour out—filling us to overflowing; touching lives that are empty and drained, so that your gifts will arise and bring hope and joy.
In our country we pray that your Spirit will inspire and move others to action for justice and mercy.
In our lives we pray for the Spirit’s breath to flood in; so as we breathe in the Spirit we may shine with your holy love and inspire others to seek and respond to your prompting, today and always.
Amen.

Prayer of Dedication

Holy God, parent, spirit, friend: we bring you all we are; we bring you our money; our talents and the gifts that are poured out in this season of Pentecost and we dedicated it all: life and love; work and play to you and you alone, this day and always.
Amen.

Take Home Ideas

This week...

Think of those gifts that you have been given by God. How can you use them in service of church and community? Identify ways in which you might offer yourself to service within the church and community.

Look around your church and community: where do you see the skills gap? What is missing? How can you help?

In what ways have you stopped trying new things? This week, try to develop a new skill, or use something you are good at to make a difference to someone else. Perhaps paint a picture, pop in to see a vulnerable friend, bake a cake, carry out the DIY for someone who struggles, think of the opportunities that arise.

This week, we think of God’s spirit at work in the world in new and extraordinary ways. Allow that spirit to transform you in new and extraordinary ways. in what ways can you deepen your relationship with God, by seeking to use your gifts for God and for others?
Reflection

That woman over there,
(the one sitting in the corner);
God has given her gifts.

That man on the right hand side
(looking like he's falling asleep);
God has given him gifts.

Those kids
(including that noisy one and the cheeky one);
God has given them gifts.

These folk called elders,
and these folk not called elders;
God has given them gifts too.

And me!
ME!
God has given me gifts.

That is what it says in black and white:
"he gives gifts to each one".

Baking.
Cleaning.
Comforting.
Speaking.

Giving.
Encouraging.
Listening.
Sharing.

Is moaning a gift?
Gossiping?
Criticising?
I don't think so;
they are not God-given gifts.

Praying is.
Loving is.
Helping, forgiving, assisting are.

I see those gifts in many.
I wonder what the many see as gifts in me:
this woman / man sitting reflecting right here;
they really are God’s gift!

Sending

What gifts do you have to give?
How can you use them this week?
How can you serve Jesus in the week ahead?

We all have something to offer,
a smile, a thank you, a good deed,
something we can offer through our lives
that says something of our faith.
Be inspired by the Holy Spirit this week
to find some way of serving.

May the blessing of God our Father,
Jesus our Saviour
and the inspiring Holy Spirit
go with you, today and always.

Praise/Hymns

Breathe on me, Breath of God  CH4 596 / MP 67
Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire  CH4 586 / MP 90
Come, Holy Spirit  CH4 589
Come, Holy Spirit, come  CH4 594
Come, gracious Spirit, heavenly dove  CH4 587
Glory be to God the Father  CH4 110
Go in grace and make disciples  CH4 682
Holy Spirit, come, conform us  CH4 640
Holy Spirit, gift bestower  CH4 590
I am the church, you are the church  CH4 204
If you believe and I believe  CH4 771
Let us talents and tongues employ  CH4 673
Like fireworks in the night  CH4 584
Like the murmur of the dove’s song  CH4 592
Longing for light, we wait in darkness  CH4 543
O Breath of life, come sweeping through us  CH4 595 / MP 488
O day of joy and wonder  CH4 582
O holy dove of God descending  CH4 591
O the life of the world  CH4 141
One bread, one body, one Lord of all  CH4 665
Praise the Spirit in creation  CH4 588
She sits like a bird, brooding on the waters  CH4 593
Spirit divine attend our prayers  CH4 583
When our saviour Yesu went away  CH4 585
age group ideas

Gathering

God Has Given You... all age

You will need: gift bags and boxes, cards with words ‘God has given you...’ printed or written on them.

Get the children to pick out a card one at a time and through discussion fill in the blanks. For example, ‘God has given you a lovely smile’ or ‘God has given you the gift of listening’.

Crafts

Pentecost Party Hats age 3-8

You will need: strips of card about 5 cm wide, sellotape, flame shapes about 12 cm in height, crayons, PVA glue, glue spreaders, glitter, scissors.

Give each child four or five flame shapes and get them to colour them in using crayons and then to decorate with glitter. While the glue is drying, get the children to make headbands from the strips of card. Place the strip of card around the child’s head so that it sits on the ears and overlaps slightly. Cut to the right length. Get the children to decorate the headband with crayons, making sure they include their names. Sellotape the headband at appropriate place, then get the children to attach their flames to the headband (either use sellotape or a stapler).

Talk about the story of Pentecost and how the followers were given gifts to help them tell the good news. Discuss with the children ways of using the gifts they have to help to show God’s love.

Flame Gift Jars age 9-12

You will need: glass jars, battery tea lights, orange, red and yellow tissue paper, PVA glue, glue spreaders.

Give each child a glass jar and a selection of tissue paper. Get the children to tear the tissue paper and stick it onto the outside of the glass jar using PVA glue. It is okay to overlap colours but try to have the children avoid too many layers or the light from the tea light will not shine through very well.

Talk about the story and the different gift God gives us. Discuss with the children what they think their and other people’s gifts are and talk about how they can use these gifts to help others and to let God’s light shine.

Party Bags all age

This craft fits in with Retelling for Young People on page 127 and could be used in all age worship setting.

You will need: one self coloured gift bag per person, cup cake template, flame template, coloured card, scissors, pencils, glue sticks, felt tip pens, small gifts to put in bags (notebooks, pencils, balloons, bubbles, and so on).

Give each child a gift bag. Get the children to draw around the cupcake template and the flame template onto coloured card and then to cut out shapes. Get the children to decorate the flame and cupcake using felt tip pens and then to glue the flame onto one side of the gift bag and the cupcake onto the other. Put small gifts into the bags.

Talk about the story of Pentecost and how the followers were given gifts to help them tell the good news. Discuss with the children ways of using the gifts they have to help show God’s love.
activities

Weird Wind

You will need: copies of the Beaufort Scale cartoon found on page 148 (from the excellent website of child oriented D.I.Y. http://www.howtoons.com).

The Holy Spirit is described as a wind in this week’s Pentecost passage. Talk to the children about the different types of wind that you get: breeze, gale, hurricane, and so on. Introduce them to the Beaufort Scale explain what the scale 0 to 12 means and then show them the cartoon in the appendix. You may want a few copies, or perhaps cut out the individual parts so that they can all be placed in order.

Ask what experiences the children have had in the wind. Perhaps in severe weather, or flying a kite, trying to keep your hat on your head! Does anyone know that ancarophobia is the fear of wind? If you have access to electric fans bring them along and try out the different speeds. You could attach ribbons to the wire frame, place confetti in front of them and so on. We cannot see wind, but we can see the effects of wind on other things. We cannot see the Holy Spirit, but we can see the effects of the Holy Spirit in the lives of people.

God’s Gifting

God has given us all so many gifts. Tell the children of any gifts you feel God has given you and the kind of gifts that are often described as God-given.

• Do you think you have any gifts?
• How could these gifts benefit other people and God?
This could be an opportunity to teach the children a new skill. You might find they have a gift for the skill.

games

The Spirit Comes

Get the children all together close up as though in a small space or room. Ask them to copy you as you tell the story of everyone in the room together, giving them actions to follow as you tell the story. For instance, gathering together in the room—hug self, a big noise—hold ears, like wind—sway gently then more and more violently before everyone runs to a different part of the room as the Holy Spirit spreads around.

Inside/Outside

You will need to get all the children in a circle facing each other to symbolise the disciples inward looking. They are to stand with arms crossed over in front of them with the right arm over the left arm and join hands with their neighbour. When asked to the first person twists their arms up, over and around and the next person and the next person without any hands leaving their neighbours hands until everyone is facing outwards because the Holy Spirit allows us to take a different perspective.

Chase The Flame

You will need: lots of paper flames in red, yellow and orange.

Each child is given a set amount of flames and they tuck these into their waist band of their clothes or under their arms. The object of the game is to grab as many flames from each other as they can. Award each colour of flame a score and then add the totals up at the end.

Happy Birthday!

You will need: old birthday cards cut into two separate halves.

Place the two halves of cards in separate piles and challenge the children need to find the matching halves. For the older children they could shout out ‘Holy Spirit’ or ‘Happy Birthday’ every time they match a pair. Again for the older children you could cut the birthday cards into 4/6/8 pieces! Note that Pentecost is sometimes described as the birth day of the Christian church.

God Poured Out The Holy Spirit

You will need: empty plastic 2 litre bottles, scissors, two buckets and water.

Organise the children into two teams. Give a number of bottles and strong scissors to each team. The children need to cut the bottles in half, length ways, and then to arrange them to form a channel for the water to flow from the start to the finish. The bucket at the start will have a set amount of water for each team and a paper cup and the children need to hold the half bottles against each other to form the channel. The water is poured down the channel into an empty bucket. Which team has the most water at the end? If playing indoors substitute water with pulses of some kind.
discussion starters for teens
the spirit’s gifts

Preparation
You will need materials to make posters.

Opening Activity

Talent Show
Give everyone a bit of time to think about the strangest talent that they have, something they can do that not everyone can do. Then have some fun with a kind of talent show of people’s strange abilities. Be prepared to show off one of your own strange talents!

The Word

Activity/Discussion
- How do you discover you are good at something?
- Does practice make a difference?
The 10,000 theory suggests that if you practice something for 10,000 hours you will become an expert at it. That is 12 hours a day for almost three years!
  - What do you think of that theory?
  - Will some people just naturally be better at some things, no matter how hard people might practice?
  - What do you make of today’s passages?

Spend some time telling each other what we appreciate about each person and what gift they bring to the group.

- What do you think of the list of gifts in Corinthians?
- What are they for?
- Can you think of other gifts that would help people in the church and the community?
Remember, gifts are sometimes things we see as ordinary or dull but are actually essential.
Make some posters encouraging people to discover and use their gifts.

Living It Out
Challenge the young people to think about how they will use their gifts to make the world a better place.

You could listen to or watch the music video for Michael Jackson’s anthem for a better place, ‘Heal the World’, which can be found at: https://youtu.be/BWf-eARnf6U.

Heal the world
Make it a better place
For you and for me
And the entire human race
There are people dying
If you care enough
For the living
Make a better place
For you and for me
extra resources and activity sheets
THE UPS AND DOWNS OF LENT

1st Sunday
Snake: Ladder:

2nd Sunday
Snake: Ladder:

3rd Sunday
Snake: Ladder:

4th Sunday
Snake: Ladder:

5th Sunday
Snake: Ladder:

Palm Sunday
Snake: Ladder:

Easter Sunday
Snake: Ladder:
My Lent Calendar

Each day think about the challenge for this day of the season of Lent, perhaps revisit activities from previous days when the chance comes up.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday 10 February</th>
<th>Wednesday 11 February</th>
<th>Thursday 12 February</th>
<th>Friday 13 February</th>
<th>Saturday 14 February</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Think of something you can take up or give up for Lent</td>
<td>Hold open a door for someone</td>
<td>Ask a parent or carer if they need help</td>
<td>Tidy up your room without being asked</td>
<td>Give your parents or carers a hug for Valentine's Day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wednesday 17 February</th>
<th>Thursday 18 February</th>
<th>Friday 19 February</th>
<th>Saturday 20 February</th>
<th>Sunday 21 February</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Find out about a saint today</td>
<td>Say good morning to the first person you meet today</td>
<td>Make up your own lunch</td>
<td>Watch less television today</td>
<td>Listen to some music that is different for you</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday 22 February</th>
<th>Tuesday 23 February</th>
<th>Wednesday 24 February</th>
<th>Thursday 25 February</th>
<th>Friday 26 February</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Take up a new activity</td>
<td>Help prepare dinner or set the table</td>
<td>Read a story in the paper or school newsletter</td>
<td>Smile at someone today</td>
<td>Talk to God today and say why you are thankful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thursday 28 February</th>
<th>Friday 29 February</th>
<th>Saturday 27 February</th>
<th>Sunday 28 February</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Try not to eat your snack today (this is ‘fasting’)</td>
<td>Give someone a compliment</td>
<td>Avoid playing computer games for the day</td>
<td>Put some of your pocket money in a charity box/tin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday 29 February</th>
<th>Tuesday 1 March</th>
<th>Wednesday 2 March</th>
<th>Thursday 3 March</th>
<th>Friday 4 March</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learn something new about Fair Trade</td>
<td>Give a friend or neighbour a helping hand</td>
<td>Remember to say please and thank you</td>
<td>Write down as many charities as you can remember</td>
<td>Ask other people what they are doing in Lent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Saturday 5 March</th>
<th>Sunday 6 March</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avoid playing computer games for the day</td>
<td>Give a homemade gift to your mum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday 7 March</th>
<th>Tuesday 8 March</th>
<th>Wednesday 9 March</th>
<th>Thursday 10 March</th>
<th>Friday 11 March</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Check what you are recycling at home is as much as can be</td>
<td>Draw or paint a picture to give to someone</td>
<td>Try not to judge anyone today</td>
<td>Try not to argue with someone else</td>
<td>Give someone a compliment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Saturday 12 March</th>
<th>Sunday 13 March</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hand in some goods to a local charity shop</td>
<td>Try not to picky about your food, try something new</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday 14 March</th>
<th>Tuesday 15 March</th>
<th>Wednesday 16 March</th>
<th>Thursday 17 March</th>
<th>Friday 18 March</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Help someone at school today</td>
<td>Do as you are asked the first time</td>
<td>Do not eat any sweets today</td>
<td>Prepare your school bag tonight ready for the morning</td>
<td>Do not compare yourself to anyone else</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Saturday 19 March</th>
<th>Sunday 20 March</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wear your favourite colour</td>
<td>Spend time with family today</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday 21 March</th>
<th>Tuesday 22 March</th>
<th>Wednesday 23 March</th>
<th>Thursday 24 March</th>
<th>Friday 25 March</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do not tell any lies today</td>
<td>Share a snack or something from your lunchbox</td>
<td>Watch the news and learn something about the world</td>
<td>Eat some bread and drink blackcurrant juice to remember Jesus</td>
<td>Tell someone something good that you are thinking about them</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Saturday 26 March</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make a list of the good and bad things you remember doing this week</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I Love God...

Can you fill in the acrostic by completing sentences starting “I love God...” using the first letter provided? We’ve given you an example for the first one.

I ...in everything I see, feel and touch.

L O V E

G O D
These are all well known phrases that contain the word “end”.

What do you think they mean?

Is there more than one meaning?

We have given you a picture hint for the first one.

*End of the rainbow*

*End of the day*

*End of school*

*End of the story*

*End of the line*

*End of the road*

*End of time*

*End of the world*

*End of life care*

*It is the beginning of the end*

*Everything will be alright in the end*

*The end*
Which Way To Heaven?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prayer one</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>John</strong> is 10 years old. He likes playing Minecraft and YuGiOh! trading cards. He has attended church since he was born with his family. He has been baptised. He thinks about God as a person like Jesus who knows everything. He thinks God holds everything together. He always starts his prayers with the Lords prayer, and then adds his own words afterwards.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prayer two</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kirsty</strong> is 14 years old. She loves dancing and music. She is good at school. She comes to church when her busy social life allows. She believes there might be a God but isn’t convinced but the whole Christianity idea. Kirsty thinks God (if God exists) is both male &amp; female and beyond, knowable and unknowable, both revealed in Jesus and a mystery to humans. She starts her prayers by addressing God as mother.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prayer three</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adnan</strong> is 18 years old. He is a university student who is studying agriculture. For Adnan church is something he went to with his family but in university it hasn’t featured highly on his to do list. Currently he plays sport on most Sundays, but when he goes home to goes to church with his family. He used to pray a lot, now he kind just chats to God in his head as he walks along.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prayer Four</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paula</strong> is 15 years old. She is getting ready for her big exams next year. She likes to be very organised, otherwise she gets too stressed by everything going on. She fears that the rest of her life depends on the grades she gets next year. Her organisation means she schedules time to think about God each day, finding it calming and helpful to start with a prayer. Paula uses a notebook to write down things she wants to pray about so she can remember them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Where Do We Worship?

Can you link the building to the faith?
People of which faith would worship at this place?

Buddhist Temple

Christian Church

Sikh Temple

Greek Orthodox Christian Church

Jewish Synagogue

Muslim Mosque
The Bustling City Of...

Take the two pairs of dice and roll them in turn. Someone needs to first roll a 7 and then you can add the first letter ‘C’. Once you have that letter then you can add the others where 6 = o, 5 = r, 4 = i, 3 = n, 2 = t and 1 = h. If you roll a higher number, the turn passes on.

Mark the letters from top to bottom on the dashes provided. When you have completed one, then you need to complete the other.

(7) __________ (7) __________
(6) __________ (6) __________
(5) __________ (5) __________
(4) __________ (4) __________
(3) __________ (3) __________
(2) __________ (2) __________
(1) __________ (1) __________

Once you have the letters filled in forming the trading city where Paul spent a lot of time, add a word starting with each letter of the city’s name. In the first column with words representing division (breaking apart) and in the second column words representing unity (coming together).
The Nine Trades of Dundee

In many towns and cities there are organisations that unite the local business trades. In Dundee there is “The Nine Incorporated Trades of Dundee”. Below are the crests for each of the trades. What do you think each of the Trades are and what they do?

What do you think would be the most important trades today in your community?
folding box

folding guide
Paul starts his famous passage about love by talking about speaking in the tongues of humans... which might make you think about the tongue in your mouth, which is an amazing thing!

The tongue is a muscle and averages 10 c.m. in length, it is split into different sections: right hand side and left hand side and also front (anterior) which is two thirds of the tongue and back (posterior) which is one third of the tongue.

There are eight muscles in the tongue. Four that change the shape of the tongue and four that change the position of the tongue in your mouth. The tongue has special sensory fibres for taste, and general sensory fibres for sensation. The tongue has lots and lots of taste buds which detect different tastes (see the diagram below). The tongue also helps us to crush our food, swallow and speak.

**A Tongue Twisting Quiz**

Can you complete these well known phrases?

Tongue _ _ _ _ (struggling to speak out aloud)

_ _ _ _ _ _ in tongues (using different languages)

_ _ _ _ _ _ tongue (smooth talker)

_ _ _ _ _ _ tongue (deceptive person)

Tongue _ _ _ _ _ _ (word difficult to pronounce)

Tongue in _ _ _ _ (something said that is not seriously taken)

_ _ of the tongue (retrieval from memory)

_ _ _ _ _ _ tongue (native language)

Missing words: Silver, Mother, Tip, Cheek, Forked, Speaking, Tied, Twister
Love is... / Love is not...

Using two differently coloured pens, highlight which of the following words are similar to ‘love’ and in a different colour which words are the opposite of ‘love’.

Affection

Devotion

Cherishing

Dislike

Delight

Hate

Apathy

Worship

Amour

Enmity

Coolness

Tenderness

Respect
The Beaufort Scale

The Beaufort Scale is a system used to describe wind speed by using descriptive terms. It consists of 13 categories, numbered 0 to 12, each corresponding to a different level of wind speed and weather conditions. Here's a breakdown of the scale:

- **0**: Calm, wind less than 0.5 miles per hour.
- **1**: Light Air, wind from 0.5 to 1.5 miles per hour.
- **2**: Gentle Breeze, wind from 1.5 to 3.3 miles per hour.
- **3**: Moderate Breeze, wind from 3.3 to 5.4 miles per hour.
- **4**: Fresh Breeze, wind from 5.4 to 7.2 miles per hour.
- **5**: Strong Breeze, wind from 7.2 to 9.2 miles per hour.
- **6**: High Wind, wind from 9.2 to 11.1 miles per hour.
- **7**: Gale, wind from 11.1 to 13.0 miles per hour.
- **8**: Strong Gale, wind from 13.0 to 17.0 miles per hour.
- **9**: Storm, wind from 17.0 to 20.7 miles per hour.
- **10**: Violent Storm, wind from 20.7 to 25.5 miles per hour.
- **11**: Hurricane, wind over 25.5 miles per hour.
- **12**: Typhoon, the wind speed exceeds 37.8 miles per hour.

Each category is further defined by specific characteristics such as the size of waves, leaf movement, and the height of objects that can be seen. The Beaufort Scale is widely used in weather forecasting and maritime navigation.