



Year A

Engage Together

Intergenerational worship ideas

Compiled by:
Chris Barnett, Emma Parr
and Melissa Neumann

Originally written and produced by Emma Parr, Chris Barnett and Melissa Neumann, 2017.

This publication can also be found at

www.ctmresourcing.org.au

www.sa.uca.org.au/intergen

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FOR FURTHER INTERGENERATIONAL RESOURCING SUPPORT:

Chris Barnett

Intergenerational Ministry Consultant

National Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia

E: chrisb@nat.uca.org.au

Melissa Neumann

Intergenerational Discipleship Developer

**South Australian Synod of the Uniting Church in
Australia**

P: (08) 8236 4246

E: mneumann@sa.uca.org.au

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Introduction

WHO IS THIS FOR?

This resource is for churches and communities of faith seeking to explore and play with the idea of intergenerational worship. Rather than choosing themes that might be considered “intergenerational-friendly” and straying from a typical order of service, **Engage Together** takes a traditional worship pattern and follows the themes of the Revised Common Lectionary. Thus, whilst it is especially suitable for particular denominations (such as the Anglican, Lutheran and Uniting Churches), it can in fact be used by any church.

Engage Together recognises the reality that in many contexts the “first twenty minutes” of a service is the most appropriate place for stretching our intergenerational imagination. To this end, **Engage Together** provides a variety of ideas that could be taken up by churches seeking to be more intentionally intergenerational in some aspects of their gathered worship life.

WHAT WILL YOU FIND HERE?

The material in this edition of Engage Together, covering the Sundays from Sunday May 28 (Pentecost) to Sunday July 30 2023, complements services originally prepared and distributed by Rev Brian Cole. In most cases you will find that the words and songs suggested by Brian remain unchanged.

What this resource includes is a range of additional suggestions that encourage greater participation by people of all ages and facilitate intentional intergenerational engagement. These ideas are highlighted with “Say”, “Prepare” or “Do”. For most weeks you will find suggestions that relate to a Call to Worship, Song, Prayer of Confession and Bible Reading.

In addition, each service includes a "Take home" idea that encourages ongoing reflection or action. Whilst placed after the Bible Reading, feel free to include it at the point in the service most appropriate for your context.

WHO HAS PUT IT TOGETHER?

Engage Together has been compiled by Chris Barnett (formerly Uniting Church Synod of Victoria and Tasmania), Melissa Neumann (Uniting Church Synod of South Australia) and Emma Parr (formerly Uniting Church Synod of NSW and ACT) – with original production by Merryn Gray (formerly Uniting Church Synod of Victoria and Tasmania). Design of the 2020 edition Sarah Hellyer (Uniting Church Synod of Victoria and Tasmania), Design of the 2023 edition by Uniting Church Assembly.

THINKING ABOUT INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP

When thinking about intergenerational worship, questions to wonder about include “What makes worship intergenerational?” and “How is intergenerational worship different to multi-age worship?”

A good starting point for response to the “intergenerational” aspect of these questions is to remember that an intergenerational space is one in which there is intentional encouragement of

- interpersonal interactions across generational boundaries
- a sense of mutuality and respect between participants of different generations.

For leaders, especially, the curating of intergenerational space includes the intentional facilitation, hosting and celebrating of the shared life and connections of all and any generations together.

The “multi-age” dimension of the question is perhaps best addressed by recalling the foundational elements of multi-age worship – including the importance of being multi-sensory, multi-intelligence and multi-ability aware. An excellent resource for thinking through these principles in practise is Lucy Moore’s **All-Age Worship**. When it comes to multi-age worship, some key tips to take on board include...

- Be clear
- Use senses and emotions
- Repetition
- Use story
- Repetition
- Include participation
- Use invitation
- Integrate content
- Repetition
- Be real

(Another resource that is invaluable when it comes to engaging the practical dimensions of multi-age worship is Beth Barnett’s *Party on Together*. Containing succinct chapters on subjects such as Music in Multi-Age Community, Opening the Bible in the Ways of Jesus and Prayer, *Party on Together* also includes numerous worked examples and ideas to implement.)

Where does this leave us in relation to “*How is intergenerational worship different to multi-age worship?*” One potentially helpful way forward is to see

Intergenerational Worship
= Multi-Age Worship + an Intergenerational overlay

That is, rather than seeing “intergenerational” worship as taking us into completely new and unfamiliar (and, for some, scary) territory, in fact it is an opportunity to build on our existing experience in the area of multi-age engagement. The challenge is not to come up with something completely new and novel, rather it is to add an intentionally intergenerational flavour to an existing foundation. The joy – and potential – of intergenerational worship is to see people of all ages engaging, worshipping, learning and growing in faith together.

OTHER RECOMMENDED RESOURCES TO EXPLORE

- **Holly Allen**
[Intergenerational Christian Formation](#)
- **Dave Csinos**
[A Gospel for All Ages](#)
- **Lucy Moore**
[All-Age Worship](#)
- **John Roberto**
[Generations Together](#)
- **Cory Seibel**
[Intergenerate](#)

Pentecost 0A

28 May 2023

PREPARE

Today is Pentecost Sunday and it can be a great Sunday to celebrate with people of all ages in church for the entire service, if possible.

To minimise confusion for children and people with limited church background, avoid

- using the term Holy 'Ghost'
- using both the dove and the flame as symbols for the Holy Spirit. The dove's significance may only become clear when someone knows the account of Jesus' baptism.

SONG TiS 685 "Lord I come to you"

PREPARE

Before the service invite people of different generations to come forward to a central cross, take lengths of red cloths and unfurl along the aisles or hand over people's heads to pass to the back of the church and wave them like wind during the song (then carefully lay down the cloths between chairs).

SAY

During our first song, to provide a visual image of the coming of the Holy Spirit we are going to pass red cloths over our heads (or along the church aisles) and wave them like wind.

DO

Now let's sing...

WELCOME

SAY

We acknowledge the _____ people, the first inhabitants and custodians of this place from time beyond remembering.

Welcome to our worship at _____ on this Day of Pentecost! – the special Sunday in the year when we celebrate the birthday of the Church and remember the day when the Holy Spirit came to Jesus' followers.

We're going to hear that really exciting story and discover how through God's gift of the Holy Spirit we can live and grow as a loving community of God's people!

There's something in the air today. Do you feel it? I hope so. It's God's Spirit among us — helping us celebrate, helping us know that God is here among us and that God is worthy of our worship.

SENTENCE

SAY

Jesus said to each of his followers

“Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” When he had said this he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” (John 20:21-22)

THE PEACE

SAY

Sisters and brothers in Christ, peace be with you. **And also with you!**

(For something a little different, you might like to invite people to stay in their places and 'pass the peace' around the church like a Mexican Wave ie. beginning at a particular place and standing up when it is their turn).

CALL TO WORSHIP

PREPARE

Prepare a slide with the Call to Worship and the age group for who to say which parts. Adapt the age groupings to best suit your congregation.

SAY

I invite you to join in with the response to the Call to Worship, starting with those aged over 80 years old.

Let us worship God!

Over 80s:

There are diverse gifts;

but it is the same Spirit who gives them.

Over 60s:

There are different ways of serving God

but it is the same Lord who is served.

Over 40s:

God works through people in different ways

but it is the same God whose purpose is achieved through them all.

Over 20s:

Each one of us is given a gift by the Spirit

and there is no gift without its corresponding service.

Everyone:

There is one ministry of Christ and in this we all share.

Everyone:

Together we are the body of Christ

and individually members of it! Amen

SONG TiS 675 “Lord the light of your love is shining”

SAY

(if unfurled red cloth at start of service) I invite you to pick up the red cloth and wave it during the chorus.

DO

Let's sing...

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

PREPARE

On separate posters have each of the fruits of the Spirit. As the prayer is said turn the posters for those words over to hide the words and then reveal them at the end.

OR...

Have the fruits of the Spirit projected on to a screen and as the prayer is said have those words removed and then have a final slide with all the words again.

SAY

Let us pray

Loving God, the fruits of your Holy Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. **[show posters/slide with all words]**

Yet often we put conditions on our love, and our words and actions deny there is any joy and peace **[hide love, joy, peace]** So we sing **Spirit of the living God fall afresh on me**

We confess that we look for instant results and so forget what it's like to be patient. We find ourselves neglecting the needs of others because we run out of time. **[hide patience and kindness]** So we sing **Spirit of the living God fall afresh on me**

When we make self centred rather than Christ-centred decisions; when our words and actions are unloving **[hide goodness and faithfulness]**

So we sing **Spirit of the living God fall afresh on me**

We confess the times when we don't exercise a spirit of gentleness or even self-control **[hide gentleness and self-control]**

So we sing **Spirit of the living God fall afresh on me**

Gracious God, forgive us and by the power of your Spirit enable us to love one another as Christ loves us **[return all words]**

So we sing **Spirit of the living God fall afresh on me**

God, refresh and renew us with the Holy Spirit so that we are faith-filled followers of Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

SAY

Those who are in Christ are a new creation everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God with whom we have been reconciled through Christ. (based on 2 Corinthians 17-18)

Your sins are forgiven; **Thanks be to God!**

DOXOLOGY TIS 712 "Create in us a clean heart O God"

FIRST READING Acts 2:1-21

IDEA 1

PREPARE

Particularly if your congregation is multi-cultural, have people read the Bible passage in different languages at the same time.

SAY

Let's hear the story of the birth of the church.

DO

Read Acts 2:1-21 in multiple languages.

OR IDEA 2

PREPARE

You will need a narrator and someone to be Peter (preferably a younger man in 20s or 30s).

Have the Bible reading projected and clearly identify the verses for the congregation to read aloud.

If possible, show a map of the places in verses 9 – 11 and show in relation to Jerusalem in 1st century Israel.

SAY

Let's read the story of the birth of the church together.

..... will narrate (read v1-7; 12a, 13a, 14a)

..... will read Peter's part (v14b – 21)

and we will all read the crowd's responses (verses 7b – 11 and 12b and 13b.)

DO

Let's read together Acts 2, the story of the birth of the church. (Narrator begins....)

TAKE HOME

PREPARE

Have a packet of red balloons – enough for each person or household.

SAY

We invite you to take home a red balloon, blow it up and hang it somewhere in your house. During this week, when you see the balloon may it remind you to say a prayer either thanking God for his God's Spirit or pray for pray for our congregation, for our wider community or for God's church around the world.

EARLY WORD

SONG TiS 412 "God sends us his Spirit"

GOSPEL John 20:19-23

SERMON

SONG TiS 655 "O let the Son of God enfold you"

OFFERING AND DEDICATION

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

NOTICES

SONG TiS 409 “O breath of life come sweeping through us”

COMMISSION AND BLESSING

BLESSING SONG TIS 755 “You shall go out with joy”

Pentecost 1A

4 June 2023

PREPARE

Have a slide or poster with the phrase “Trinity Sunday” and another slide or poster with God the Father; God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. You might like to display some artwork that represents the Holy Trinity. You could include classical works from history, contemporary art (possibly even from people in your congregation) or your denomination’s symbols to represent the Holy Trinity.

Keep any explanations short as this is just an introduction. Perhaps speak with the person who is preaching or giving the “Early Word” (Children’s talk) about using any of these images and work together on who might say what about the Holy Trinity.

Be careful of the use of imagery like three legged stools or the like. In a way the Holy Trinity is beyond our understanding and our limited human ability to explain. It may be best to gather all those leading worship to discuss helpful and appropriate explanations and teachings around the Holy Trinity for your congregation.

WELCOME

SAY

We acknowledge the _____ people, the first inhabitants and custodians of this place from time beyond remembering.

Today we celebrate Trinity Sunday! **[Show first slide].**

Does anyone know what Trinity means? Or what Trinity Sunday is about?

[Take answers from the congregation]

Trinity means a group of three people or things. Let’s hold up three fingers. We’ll be counting lots of threes in today’s service. You can put your hand down now.

Trinity Sunday is when we celebrate the Holy Trinity – the three persons of God – God the Father (Creator); God the Son in Jesus Christ; and God the Holy Spirit. **[Show slide and any artworks]**

SONG TiS 675 “Lord the light of your love is shining”

SAY

Our opening song today refers to Jesus and the Father and the Spirit. As we sing this song, think about how we’re singing to the Holy Trinity and what the song words are saying about each person of the Trinity. In the Chorus, when we sing ‘Jesus’ raise one finger, when we sing ‘Father’ raise

two fingers and when we sing 'Spirit' raise three fingers. [As you explain this raise your hand and count with your fingers 1 - 2 - 3]

Let's sing "Lord the light of your love is shining."

DO

Sing "Lord the light of your love is shining" and raise three fingers to count for Jesus, Father and Spirit during the Chorus.

CALL TO WORSHIP

PREPARE

Prepare a slide or poster with the Call to Worship and include numbers 1, 2 and 3 as shown below.

SAY

I invite you to get into groups of 3, if possible with people from different generations.

[Allow time for this]

Work out who in the group will be number 1, 2 and 3. **[Allow time for this]**

As we say today's Call to Worship, I invite the **number 1 people** to read the lines with number 1, **number 2 people** to say number 2 line and **number 3 people** to read the number 3 line.

We'll read the last lines together.

DO

Leader:

Let us worship God!

1:

O God, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

2:

The heart of creation throbs with your glory!

3:

Glory revealed in the vast reaches of the universe;

1:

in the stars shining in the eyes and songs of children.

2:

Awesome God, our lives seem insignificant

3:

but we know how deeply you care for us and all creation!

All together:

You trust humanity with caring for your wonderful creation.

O God, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

SAY

In your group, finish this sentence: My favourite thing in creation is... It could be stars or ladybugs. Share together briefly, I'll count to 3 when it's time to stop. **[Allow time then count aloud to get everyone's attention 1- 2 - 3]**.

Now share in your group how you care for God's wonderful creation or something you'd like to do to care for God's creation. It could be picking up rubbish or composting or planting trees. I wonder how you care for God's creation. **[Allow time then count aloud to get everyone's attention 1 - 2 - 3]**.

Now in your group, finish this sentence of Praise to God: Awesome God, you are... Amazing or Majestic or... **[Allow time then count aloud to get everyone's attention 1 - 2 - 3]**.

Let's say the last 2 lines of our Call to Worship together again.

You trust humanity with caring for your wonderful creation.

O God, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

As we stand to sing our next song, feel free to stay in your Group of Three or move back to your original seat. Whichever option you choose, please remember your number.

SONG TiS 132 "Holy, holy, holy"

SAY

As we sing "Holy, holy, holy" let's count again with our fingers. Each time we sing "Holy, holy, holy" count each **'Holy'** and raise three fingers **[As you explain this and say "Holy, holy, holy" raise your hand and count with your fingers 1 - 2 - 3]**

DO

Let's sing "Holy, holy, holy"

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

PREPARE

Have a slide or poster with the Prayer of Confession and number the three parts 1 - 2 - 3.

SAY

We're going to read the Prayer of Confession together. Those who are **number 1** will read the first part, **number 2** people will read the second part and **number 3** people will read the last part. We will all say the end phrases in **orange and bold** together.

Let us pray.

1:

**Holy and triune God, you alone live in perfect relationship;
one God in three persons, mutual and loving; always seeking
reconciliation and unity.**

When we fail to live in loving relationships: God forgive us:

God forgive us

2.

**Triune God, you have called us to live in loving relationship with you.
Yet we confess that our relationships are flawed.**

We are selfish and greedy; we are anxious and resenting.

**With our foolish behaviour and our broken relationships,
we can separate ourselves from each other and you. God forgive us:**

God forgive us

3.

**Triune God, forgive us and restore us;
draw us close and bind us together in your mercy.**

**Heal our brokenness, and help us to live in loving relationships with
you and each other.**

**In the name of your son, Jesus Christ,
By the power of your Holy Spirit.**

Amen.

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

SAY

Those who are in Christ are a new creation everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God with whom we have been reconciled through Christ. (based on 2 Corinthians 17:18)

Your sins are forgiven; **Thanks be to God!**

DOXOLOGY TiS 716 "Father we adore you"

FIRST READING 2 Corinthians 13: 11-13

PREPARE

Explain to the Bible reader that they will not be needed for this passage.

Have the verses on display.

SAY

Our first reading today is the final verses of 2 Corinthians. These are Paul's final words to the church at Corinth.

Let's read these words together. Do you remember if you were a number 1, 2 or 3 person? **Number 1 people** will read verse 11, **number 2 people** read verse 12 and **number 3 people** read verse 13 please.

DO

Lead the Bible reading and if needed prompt number 1, 2 or 3 people.

Let's read 2 Corinthians 13: 11-13.

v11:

Goodbye my friends. Do better and pay attention to what I have said. Try to get along and live peacefully with each other. Now I pray that God, who gives love and peace, will be with you.

v12:

Give each other a warm greeting. All of God's people send their greetings.

v13:

I pray that the Lord Jesus Christ will bless you and be kind to you! May God bless you with his love, and may the Holy Spirit join all your hearts together.

SAY

Let's pass the peace of the Holy Trinity because as verse 12 encourages, let's give each other a warm greeting – we could do this with a high 5, a handshake or a friendly wave and say "hello"

DO

Pass the peace.

TAKE HOME

PREPARE

Prepare three strands of wool tied together ready to plait, sufficient for each person in your congregation.

SAY

When you leave today, please take home 3 strands of wool to plait or twist together and to pray for the other 2 people you formed a group with in today's service. You could turn it into a bracelet and wear during this week or just hold during your prayer time to remind you to pray for the people in your group.

EARLY WORD

SONG TiS 465 "Father in heaven"

GOSPEL Matthew 28:16-20

SERMON

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

SONG TiS 453 "We limit not the truth of God"

OFFERING AND DEDICATION

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

SONG TiS 432 "Christ is made the sure foundation"

COMMISSION & BLESSING

SONG TiS 768 (tune ii) Praise God, from whom all blessings flow

WELCOME

As we gather for worship today, we acknowledge the _____ people, the first inhabitants and custodians of this place from time beyond remembering.

CALL TO WORSHIP

PREPARE

Prepare the words of the Call to Worship for display (eg. on ppt)

SAY

Good morning! It's so good to gather as part of God's family today. Speaking of family, I wonder if there is anyone here who is a brother? If so, give me a wave... **[wave]** ...how about any sisters?... **[wave]**...mothers?... **[wave]**... grandmas/grandpas? ... **[wave]** ...uncles/aunties/cousins ... **[wave]**... anyone else?... **[wave]**...welcome everyone!

In our Call to Worship this morning, I invite you to join in not just with words but – as you are able – with your bodies as well. At the appropriate time – I think you can work it out – like this... **[throw both arms in the air]** or, if you're really not quite that energetic, like this... **[wave]**

Leader Let us worship God!

All Brothers and sisters, come and worship!

Leader For we are a chosen people,

All Mothers and fathers, come and worship!

Leader God's very own family!

All Grandmas, grandpas, uncles, aunties, cousins, come and worship!

Leader Let us proclaim together the goodness of God,

All Who calls us*, blesses us and invites us to be a blessing to others!

*=encourage everyone to raise arms on "us"

SONG TiS 154 Great is Your Faithfulness

SAY

As we sing this great song together, I invite you to join in – as you feel comfortable to do so – like this when we sing the refrain...

Great is your faithfulness

[raise left arm with palm outstretched]

great is your faithfulness,

[raise right arm with palm outstretched]

morning by morning new mercies we see;
[slowly turn around with both arms raised, looking at the congregation as you do so]

all we have needed your hand has provided:
[lower left arm until it is parallel to the ground, elbow tucked in, palm facing upwards]

your hand has provided:
[lower right arm until it is parallel to the ground, elbow tucked in, palm facing upwards]

great is your faithfulness, Lord God, to me.
[raise both arms with palms outstretched]

DO

Let's sing together...

Prayer of Confession

SAY

As we come to say sorry to God in our prayers of confession, when I say "Lord, have mercy", I invite you to respond with "Christ, have mercy"... Lord, have mercy...Christ have mercy.

DO

Let us pray:

O God, when we live half-heartedly, brooding over life's setbacks and our own inadequacies; when we forget that every moment is alive with the energy that raised Jesus from the dead and poured out the remarkable Spirit on unremarkable believers.

Lord, have mercy: **Christ, have mercy**

When we live anxiously, complaining and fussing, making mountains out of mole hills; when we forget that there is no problem, large or small, that is beyond the care of God.

Lord, have mercy: **Christ, have mercy**

When we live selfishly, hoarding our time, compassion, ability, and even our faith; when we forget that life is found when we give it away, and that through Christ we are already heirs of the kingdom of heaven.

Lord, have mercy: **Christ, have mercy**

Loving God, you know us as we are and yet you forgive us. Help us to believe that through the love of Christ Jesus on the cross we have a new start in life. Help us by your Spirit to accept your forgiveness, and take up the challenge of each new day. Through Christ Jesus our Redeemer. **Amen!**

Declaration of Forgiveness

Nothing can defeat the mercy of God to those who call on the name of Christ Jesus. Through Christ we can know our sins are forgiven and we are free to live new lives with him.

Hear then Christ's word of grace to us:
Our sins are forgiven: Thanks be to God!

First Reading Genesis 12:1-9

PREPARE

Prepare the Bible reading for display (eg. using ppt)

SAY

In our first Bible reading today, God calls an old man of faith, Abram, to go on a journey. A long journey. God also makes a promise to Abram. God promises to bless Abram so that Abram can be a blessing to others. God promises that, somehow, everyone on earth – brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, grandmas, grandpas, uncles, aunties, cousins, everyone...**[encourage people to wave/throw both arms in the air as per the Call to Worship]** - will be blessed because of Abram.

To get us into a journey mode as we read this passage together, I'm going to invite you to pat your legs like this... **[start patting your thighs rhythmically]**...or, if you prefer, tapping the seat in front of you...let's practice that...**[resume patting]**...When I raise my hand **[raise right hand]**...you can take a break and when I lower my hand... **[lower hand]**...we can start patting again...**[resume patting]**...Let's get started with our reading from Genesis Chapter 12 verses 1-9...

DO

The LORD said to Abram:

Leave your country, your family, and your relatives and go to the land that I will show you. I will bless you and make your descendants into a great nation. You will become famous and be a blessing to others....**[raise right hand]**...I will bless those who bless you, but I will put a curse on anyone who puts a curse on you. Everyone on earth will be blessed because of you...**[lower hand, resume patting]**

Abram was 75 years old when the LORD told him to leave the city of Haran. He obeyed and left with his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all the possessions and slaves they had acquired while in Haran.

When they came to the land of Canaan, Abram went as far as the sacred tree of Moreh in a place called Shechem...**[raise hand]**...The Canaanites were still living in the land at that time, but the LORD appeared to Abram and promised, "I will give this land to your family forever." Abram then built an altar there for the LORD...**[lower hand, resume patting]**

Abram traveled to the hill country east of Bethel and camped between Bethel and Ai, where he built another altar and worshiped the LORD. Later, Abram started out toward the Southern Desert...**[pause for a few seconds and then raise hand]**... Well done everyone, you deserve a rest!

Early Word

Pre-prepare two people (one older and one younger) to lead the prayer and arrange for the prayer to be displayed for all to read.

Have some large flat rocks, or blocks of wood or cardboard boxes of different sizes spread out at the front of the worship space.

SAY

Abram understands that God is telling him to leave Haran. This is not only the home of Abram, and his wife Sarai, but where his people are located, his father's extended family household, and everything familiar and safe. God has promised Abram that he "... will be blessed and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

I wonder how it felt for Abram and Sarai to leave the security of Haran and head into the desert?

I wonder how they built altars at Shechem and Bethel?

I wonder how we are blessed through Abram?

DO

Encourage people to cluster into groups of three where they are sitting, with each cluster ideally containing at least two different generations. Invite people to share with-in their cluster what it was like for them when they left something familiar for something new. For example, starting at a new school or job, moving house or moving from one country to another.

What did it feel like? What was hard about it? What helped make it easier?

After the time of sharing, invite people to come forward, as they are able, and choose a rock (or wooden block or cardboard box, depending on what you have made available) to use in building an altar.

As they hold the rock (or wooden block or cardboard box) encourage them to reflect on how they felt in their time of change, allowing the rock (or wooden block or cardboard box) to become a symbol of their feelings. As people add their rock (or wooden block or cardboard box) to the growing altar*, suggest that this could be a way of acknowledging and remembering God's presence in our times of change. This can be done without speaking, without people having to explain.

During this time appropriate music, with a theme of blessing, could be playing quietly and, to draw the time to a close, a simple prayer like the following could be prayed...

Leader 1 (older person) Thank you God for calling Abram

All Thank you God for calling us

Leader 2 (younger person) Thank you God for blessing Abram

All Thank you God for blessing us

Leader 1+2 (together) Thank you God for the blessing that came though Abram

All Help us to be a blessing to others, Amen.

**The resulting altar could also be used as later in the service as a focus for prayer. For example, time could be allowed for people to write down or draw ways in which they have been blessed and leave them at the altar. Corporate prayer (eg. Offering prayer, Prayers of the People and Sending Out blessing/prayer) could be led from next to the altar, linking people's prayers to our inheritance of blessings through Abram.*

TAKE HOME

PREPARE

Have available a collection of small rocks/stones (or maybe Lego bricks), enough for everyone to have one each, for distribution either here or before the final song.

SAY

During our next/final song we're going to be passing around a collection of rocks/stones (or Lego bricks). As you choose one to take home, the invitation is to think about one specific person you can bless this week, and some of the ways you might bless them (you might even want to pray for them now). When you get home, place the rock/stone (or Lego brick) somewhere prominent as a reminder. During the week you might choose to take time to add to your rock/stone (or Lego brick), making a mini-version of the altar we built together today.

DO

Begin passing around the rocks/stones (or Lego bricks) as the song is introduced

SONG TiS 129 "Amazing Grace" or [Amazing Grace \(My chains fell off\)](#)

SAY

God showed amazing grace in calling, blessing and sustaining Abram and Sarai through their long journey of faithfulness.

DO

Let's sing together...

GOSPEL READING Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26

SERMON

SONG TiS 665 "Jesus Christ is waiting"

OFFERING AND DEDICATION

NOTICES

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

SONG TiS 409 "O, Breath of Life, Come Sweeping Through Us"

COMMISSION AND BLESSING

SONG TiS 749 "Thuma mina"

Pentecost 3A

18 June 2023

WELCOME

SAY

We acknowledge the _____
people, the first inhabitants and custodians of this place from time beyond
remembering.

CALL TO WORSHIP (based on Psalm 100)

SAY

When you're really excited, or perhaps really happy, I wonder what you like
to say – perhaps Hooray?. Let's give that a go together

1, 2, 3...**Hooray!**

How about "Yes" – perhaps with a bit of a fist pump

1, 2, 3...**Yes**

What about "You beauty"

1, 2, 3...**You beauty!**

This time, choose whatever you like

1, 2, 3...**Hooray!/Yes/You beauty!**

Excellent!

Our call to worship this morning is a call to celebration. As well as joining in
with the words in bold, whenever I say "1, 2, 3" you're invited to join in with
"Hooray", "Yes", "You beauty" or whatever words that express joy for
you. Sound OK?

1, 2, 3...

DO

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth!

1, 2, 3...

Together

We will worship the Lord with gladness.

We will come before God with joyful songs.

The Lord is God. It is God who made us and we are his.

We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

We enter God's gates with thanksgiving.

We come to God's courts with praise.

1, 2, 3...

The Lord is good and his love endures forever.

God's faithfulness continues through all generations.

1, 2, 3...

Amen

SONG TiS 111 "Praise To The Lord"

PREPARE

Invite a small multi-age group (perhaps 4 people) or a family/household to prepare a simple prayer/ litany beforehand along the lines of

Person 1

We praise you God for... _____

Person 2 ...

Person 3 ...

Person 4 ...

Person 1

We praise you God for... _____

Person 2 ...

Person 3 ...

Person 4 ...

Make sure you liaise with the person/s responsible for leading music regarding the process as outlined below.

SAY

I wonder what you would like to praise God for this morning? In a moment, I'm going to ask you to cluster into groups of three or four people to share with one another. During the song, I'm going to give you an opportunity to call out the things you want to praise God for. Make sense?

Please get into groups of 3-4 and share what you would like to praise God for and when the music starts, I'll invite you to stand.

[Allow time for this]

DO

Please stand and sing...

Between Verse 1 and 2:

As the music continues to play, pause the singing here and have the multi-age group say the first cycle of their prayer

Between verse 3 and 4:

As the music continues to play, pause the singing here and have the multi-age group say the second cycle of their prayer

Between verse 4 and 5:

As the music continues to play, pause the singing here and invite the congregation to respond by calling out their response to **“We praise you God for...”**

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

PREPARE

Ensure there is sufficient plasticine/play-dough distributed appropriately throughout your space for people to easily access. Arrange for some suitable music to be played as the background to this time.

SAY

As we enter our time of Confession this morning, I invite you to take some plasticine/play-dough and roll it into a ball. As you do, you might want to think about your past week – all that has happened, the good and not so good **(pause)**.

You might like to turn your ball into a face – by spreading it out like a pancake or adding some eyes, ears and, perhaps, a nose. As you do, you might want to think about the people that know you well and what you have done with them across your week **(pause)**.

Sometimes things don't turn out as we expect. Sometimes things can end up in a bit of a mess - we might hurt others, others might hurt us. Squash your plasticine/play-dough so it becomes a bit out of shape **(pause)**.

As we join in prayer together, I invite you to roll your play-dough/plasticine back into a ball - back the way it was - as we join in prayer together.

DO

Let's pray...

Merciful God, Creator and Redeemer,
you know us completely and love us utterly.

There is not a thought or feeling,
word, action, memory or hope,
that you do not see and understand.

Please forgive our sins and remove our shame,
heal our diseases and redress our distortions,
reinforce our faith and enlarge our love.

Let all that is true, beautiful and compassionate
find a new lease of life in our character.

For your name's sake.
Amen.

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

SAY

Christ Jesus did not arrive in this world to condemn us,
but that the world through him might be rescued and healed.
Hear with confidence as I declare to you

Our sins are forgiven, **Thanks be to God**

As we sing this next song together, you might like to continue to feel the
plasticine/play-dough in your hand. At the end of the song, I encourage you
to place the plasticine/play-dough back where you found it.

SONG TiS 607 "Make me a channel of your peace"

FIRST READING Romans 5:1-8

PREPARE

Make sure the text (as set out below) is available for everyone to read. If
you are not the person leading the reading, make sure the person who is
has practiced and is confident with facilitating this kind of engagement.

SAY

As we read the Bible together today, there are two ways I want to invite
you to join in. There are some points in this reading where it is appropriate
to celebrate, where there is good news for us. At these points I'd like to
encourage you to respond with **"Yes"** – and a **fist pump or fist bump with
the person next to you**. Let's practice that.

1,2,3... **"Yes"**

You'll know when to do this by following the words and watching out for a
"!". Other parts of this reading might seem surprising at least at first and
cause us to wonder.

At these points, I'd like to encourage you to respond by saying **"What?"**
and **holding your hands out, palms upward** – like this [**model "What?"
and action**]. Let's give that a go.

1,2,3... **"What?"**

Well done. The sign for this in the text will be a **"?"**

DO

[Reading from Romans 5:1-8...](#)

By faith we have been made acceptable to God ! And now, because of our

Lord Jesus Christ, we live at peace with God !. Christ has also introduced us to God's undeserved kindness on which we take our stand. So we are happy, as we look forward to sharing in the glory of God !. But that's not all! We gladly suffer ?, because we know that suffering helps us to endure ?. And endurance builds character, which gives us a hope that will never disappoint us !. All of this happens because God has given us the Holy Spirit, who fills our hearts with his love !.

Christ died for us at a time when we were helpless and sinful ?. No one is really willing to die for an honest person, though someone might be willing to die for a truly good person. But God showed how much he loved us ! by having Christ die for us, even though we were sinful ?.

TAKE HOME

PREPARE

Have small zip lock bags for people to put a ball of play-dough/plasticine in and take home. For larger families/households perhaps provide a larger bag rather than individual bags.

SAY

As you leave today, please take your ball of plasticine/ play-dough home. May it remind you to think about your day. As you make a happy face with it, say prayers of thanks to God about your day. As you make a sad face, say prayers of confession to God about your day. End by rolling it back into a ball ready for the next day and you could pray: I praise you God for your faithfulness each day.

EARLY WORD

SONG TiS 129 "Amazing Grace"

GOSPEL READING Matthew 9:35-10:8

SERMON

SONG TiS 454 "Worship The Lord in the beauty of holiness"

OFFERING & PRAYER



PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

SONG TiS 635 "Forth in your name O Lord I go"

COMMISSION & BLESSING

BLESSING SONG TiS 755 " You shall go out with joy!"

Pentecost 4A

25 June 2023

PREPARE

Put together a multi-age singing group and/or band to lead the congregation in TiS 607 “Make me a channel of your peace” and TiS 655 “O let the Son of God Enfold You”. Feel free to prioritise diversity of age over musical experience – and make sure the group has opportunity to rehearse together prior to the day.

Have one of the younger members of the singing group and/or band prepared to introduce the song with something as simple as “We begin our worship today with the song “Make me a channel of your peace”....

DO

We begin our worship today with the song “*Make me a channel of your peace*”....

SONG TiS 607 “Make me a channel of your peace”

WELCOME

We acknowledge the _____ people, the first inhabitants and custodians of this place from time beyond remembering.

Welcome to our worship on this 4th Sunday of the Pentecost Season!
A warm welcome to _____!

CALL TO WORSHIP

PREPARE

Prepare an image (poster or ppt) for “Summer” and “Winter”. Also prepare a slide with the call to worship words

SAY

I wonder which Season you prefer “*Summer*” **[show poster/ppt and pause]** or “*Winter*” **[show poster/ppt and pause]**. Take a moment to share with someone else which is your preference – and why (*allow time for people to share in pairs*). Let’s see how we went. Who preferred “*Summer*”? **[invite people to raise their hand]**. Who preferred “*Winter*”? **[invite people to raise their hand]**.

In our Call to Worship this morning, I invite those **who prefer Winter to read the plain words** and those **who prefer Summer to read the words in bold** (alternatively, depending on your graphic capacity, you might want to place the **Winter words in a cool colour, like blue**, and the **Summer words in a warm colour, like red**). We can all join in with the final line (choose a different font or colour).

DO

Winter:

Let us worship God!

The winter deepens and the days are short

Summer:

but the long summer of Christ's light remains.

Winter:

A cold wind blows outside

Summer:

but the warmth of God is around us and within us.

Winter:

We are indeed a most privileged people.

Summer:

God is our God and we are God's people!

Everyone:

The joy of Christ Jesus be with us all.

SONG TiS 447 "Lord your almighty word"

PREPARE

Collect a range of light emitting objects (eg. torches, battery-powered lanterns and, safety- considerations/risk management permitting, cigarette lighters). Place the torches/lanterns under the seats/pews at random and, if you have chosen to use them, prior to the service commencing hand out the cigarette lighters to adults who can use them safely.

SAY

The last phrase of each verse in the song we are about to sing is "Let there be light." When we get to this point, I want to invite everyone who is 15 (or a higher age, depending on your congregation) or under to stand up and enthusiastically call out "**Let there be light**" – and then sit down. Also, if you have a light-emitting object under your seat – or were given a lighter prior to the service – the invitation to you when we sing "Let there be light" is to shine/wave the light around. Let's practice...on the count of 2, "Let there be light"..1, 2... **Let there be light** (all together). Well done!

Nb. If you have the capacity to do so, you might also choose to darken the church at this point.

DO

Let's begin by remaining seated as we sing together "Lord your almighty word"

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

PREPARE

Arrange for four people (ideally, from four different generations – but definitely with the greatest spread of age possible for your context) to lead this prayer. Encourage them to practice together beforehand, either the week before or immediately prior to the service. Display the congregation responses as listed below.

Leader:

Lord Jesus Christ, we call you Lord, yet we can easily worship other things

Person 1 :

other activities

Person 2

other relationships

Person 3

other gods.

Leader:

Lord have mercy

Lord have mercy *(All, including congregation)*

Leader:

Lord Jesus, you tell us we cannot serve two masters, yet we can focus our energies elsewhere. We can divert our time...

Person 1:

our energy

Person 2

our money

Person 3

our attention

Leader:

...away from you. Christ have mercy

Christ have mercy *(All, including congregation)*

Leader:

Lord Jesus,

Person 1:

when our hearts are led astray

Person 2

when we serve other gods

Person 3:

and when we worship them.

Leader

Lord have mercy

Lord have mercy (All, including congregation)

Leader, Persons 1,2 & 3 together:

Gracious God, forgive us, we pray. By your Spirit, help us to turn away from our distractions and sin. Strengthen us to set our faces toward Jerusalem, to take up our cross and follow you.

Amen (All, including congregation)

SAY

As we pray our Prayer of Confession today, I invite you to join in with the words in orange and bold...

DO

Lord Jesus Christ, we call you Lord, yet we can easily worship other things other activities, other relationships, other gods.

Lord have mercy **Lord have mercy**

Lord Jesus, you tell us we cannot serve two masters, Yet we can focus our energies elsewhere. We can divert our time, our energy, our money, our attention away from you.

Christ have mercy **Christ have mercy**

Lord Jesus, when our hearts are led astray; when we serve other gods and when we worship them.

Lord have mercy **Lord have mercy**

Gracious God, forgive us, we pray. By your Spirit, help us to turn away from our distractions and sin.

Strengthen us to set our faces toward Jerusalem, to take up our cross and follow you. **Amen**

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

God is merciful and just. God can be trusted to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all our sin . Hear then Christ's word of grace to us

Our sins are forgiven **Thanks be to God!**

DOXOLOGY TiS 655 "O let the Son of God enfold you"

PREPARE

See "Make me a channel of your peace" (above). Have one of the younger members of the singing group and/or band prepared to introduce the song with something as simple as "We continue in worship as we sing the song "O let the Son of God enfold you".

DO

We continue in worship as we sing the song “O let the Son of God enfold you”...

FIRST READING Genesis 21: 8-21

PREPARE

Consider whether a brief introduction to the key characters in the story (as to their relationships with one another) and context is required. Practice with the Bible Reader to ensure they understand the task/process.

SAY

In our Bible Reading today from Genesis 21:8-21, there are at least four key characters – Abraham, Sarah, Hagar and Ishmael (*provide any further introduction/context you think is required*). As we engage the Bible together I’m going to invite the females here today to imagine what it was like for Abraham and the males to imagine what it was like for Hagar (*or you could be more conservative and go with males/Abraham and females/Hagar*).

At certain points in the story I’m going to pause and invite you to mime – as enthusiastically as you can – how either Abraham, if you’re female, or Hagar, if you’re male, might be feeling. I’ll say ‘**Abraham**’ – or ‘**Hagar**’ **emote**. (*Each time this happens, encourage the “non-emoting” participants to observe the different expressions. You might also like to highlight, with due pastoral sensitivity, any particularly enthusiastic/interesting “emoters”*).

DO

The time came when Sarah no longer had to nurse Isaac, and on that day Abraham gave a big feast. **[Abraham – emote]**

One day, Sarah noticed Hagar’s son Ishmael playing, and she said to Abraham, “Get rid of that Egyptian slave woman and her son! I don’t want him to inherit anything. It should all go to my son.” **[Abraham – emote]**

Abraham was worried about Ishmael. But God said, “Abraham, don’t worry about your slave woman and the boy. Just do what Sarah tells you. Isaac will inherit your family name, but the son of the slave woman is also your son, and I will make his descendants into a great nation.” **[Abraham – emote]**

Early the next morning Abraham gave Hagar an animal skin full of water and some bread. Then he put the boy on her shoulder and sent them away. **[Abraham – emote]**

They wandered around in the desert near Beersheba, and after they had run out of water, Hagar put her son under a bush. Then she sat down a long way off, because she could not bear to watch him die. And she cried bitterly. **[Hagar – emote]**

When God heard the boy crying, the angel of God called out to Hagar from heaven and said, “Hagar, why are you worried? Don’t be afraid. I have heard your son crying. Help him up and hold his hand, because I will make him the father of a great nation.” Then God let her see a well. So she went to the well and filled the skin with water, then gave some to her son. **[Hagar – emote]**

God blessed Ishmael, and as the boy grew older, he became an expert with his bow and arrows. He lived in the Paran Desert, and his mother chose an Egyptian woman for him to marry. **[Hagar – emote]**

TAKE HOME

PREPARE

Print out for each household or person a copy of the adapted Call to Worship below. You might like to laminate them or print on card.

The winter deepens and the days are short
but the long summer of Christ's light remains.

A cold wind blows outside
but the warmth of God is around us and within us.

We are indeed a most privileged people.

God is our God and we are God's people!

The joy of Christ Jesus be with us.

SAY

As you leave today, please collect a copy of today's Summer and Winter Call to Worship. Blu tack it to your bathroom mirror or inside your car or leave on the kitchen table. Each day, pray this prayer and reflect on God's presence with you. Pray for members of our church community and our local community that they may know God's warming presence with them.

EARLY WORD

SONG TiS 650 "Brother, sister let me serve you"

GOSPEL Matthew 10: 24-39

SERMON

SONG TiS 658 "I the Lord of sea and sky"

OFFERING AND DEDICATION

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

SONG TiS 609 "May the mind of Christ my saviour"

COMMISSION AND BLESSING

SONG TiS 755 "You shall go out with joy"

Pentecost 5A

2 July 2023

PREPARE

Images of sharing drinking water, this could include people drinking at village water pumps, mountain springs, kitchen drinking taps, picnics, hiking etc.

DO

As people enter the building, have slides or posters displayed of people drinking and sharing water.

SONG TiS 703 "As the deer pants for the water"

WELCOME

SAY

We acknowledge the _____ people, the first inhabitants and custodians of this place from time beyond remembering.

Welcome to our worship on this 5th Sunday of the Pentecost Season! A warm welcome to any visitors!

CALL TO WORSHIP

PREPARE

A PowerPoint or poster of the call to worship, as outlined below

SAY

In our Call to Worship today please join in with the words in bold and orange, and there will be two invitations to welcome others.

DO

Let us worship God!

Jesus said that whoever welcomes one of his followers, welcomes Jesus himself.

Welcome to our worship.

Welcome a person near you and ask them "What is your favourite type of drink?"

Whoever welcomes Jesus, also welcomes God.

Welcome to our worship.

Welcome other people, particularly welcome someone you haven't met before or someone who is at least 20 years different in age to yourself. Ask them "Who do you enjoy sharing food or a meal with?"

Whoever offers even a cup of cold water to one of God's children will be blessed by God.

All are welcome here! Let us worship God.

SONG TiS 477 "Jesus calls us here to meet him"

PREPARE

Have jugs of water on tables/stands around the church and plastic cups (*or biodegradable disposable cups*). Identify a few people of different generations to assist with distributing the water. Only half fill cups to limit spillage. Have the prayer displayed on ppt or poster.

SAY

As we sing, cups of water will be handed out, please ensure everyone gets a cup. Please hold on to your cups and not drink from them yet.

DO

During the singing, fill cups halfway and hand out to congregation.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

SAY

When you say each response, please pass your cup of water on to someone else so during our prayer of confession we will share cups of water three times. Again, please refrain from drinking the water yet.

Let us pray:

For our slowness to recognize your gifts in other people and their calling to be children of God:

Lord, have mercy: **Lord, have mercy.**
[pass your cup of water to someone]

For our reluctance to accept your free gifts and your gracious call to play our part in your ministry:

Christ, have mercy: **Christ, have mercy.**
[pass your cup of water to someone]

For any cause of division in your body for which we are responsible:

Lord, have mercy: **Lord, have mercy.**
[pass your cup of water to someone]

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

SAY

The good news is that all who trust in Christ will have their sins forgiven and receive eternal life. Hear then Christ's word of grace to us:

Your sins are forgiven; **Thanks be to God**

I invite you to dip your finger into your cup of water and make the sign of the cross on someone else's forehead or on the back of their hand. Please check with the person first.

You are then welcome to drink your water.

DOXOLOGY TiS 655 "O let the Son of God enfold you"

FIRST READING Genesis 22:1-14

PREPARE

This is a difficult passage to understand and doesn't feel child-friendly. The focus of this service is hospitality and a key part of this story is that God will provide.

Prepare different people to read the Bible story:

- Narrator
- The LORD/LORD's angel
- Abraham (older man)
- Isaac (young boy)

Invite congregation to say last line (verse 14b).

Prepare the following slides:

And even now people say, "*On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided.*"

Choose one or two of the following questions to talk about and prepare them on a slide:

- How does this story make you feel?
- Do you have any questions about this story? (no one needs to answer the questions, it's important to provide space for sharing our faith questions)
- How might you have felt if you were Abraham or Isaac? What might this story tell us about God?
- What might this story tell us about ourselves and how God wants us to live?

SAY

Our Bible story today is not an easy one to understand. After we have heard it there will be time to talk together about it.

DO

Read the Bible story.

SAY

Turn to someone near you, where possible someone who is 20 years older or younger than you, and chat about the questions on the screen.

DO

Show the questions and allow at least 5 minutes for conversation.

SAY

Some things in the Bible leave us with more questions than answers and that is okay. Let us pray:

Mysterious God, we know that we can trust you even when we do not understand. We know that we can ask you questions even if we don't hear answers quickly. We know that you are an amazing and loving God. We ask you to please help us to keep exploring what it means to live by faith and to trust that you will provide. Amen.

TAKE HOME

SAY

When you leave the service today, think about who you could invite over to share a meal or a cuppa with or who you could take a meal or afternoon tea to.

Perhaps turn to the person next to you and say who that person is or just say **"Yes!"** to affirm that there is someone who you will extend hospitality to this week.

Remember to also pray for that person this week too.

EARLY WORD

SONG TiS 607 "Make me a channel of your peace"

GOSPEL Matthew 10:40-42



SERMON

SONG TiS 629 "When I needed a neighbour.."

OFFERING AND DEDICATION

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

SONG TiS 665 "Jesus Christ is waiting"

COMMISSION AND BLESSING

SONG TiS 755 "You shall go out with joy"

Pentecost 6A

9 July 2023

WELCOME

SAY

We acknowledge the _____ people, the first inhabitants of this place from time beyond remembering.

Welcome to our worship on this 6th Sunday of the Pentecost Season! A warm welcome to you all in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord!

SENTENCE

SAY

Jesus said to his followers: *“Come to me, all you who are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest... Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”*

CALL TO WORSHIP & SONG

PREPARE

Liaise with the person/s leading worship regarding the process (see below) for integrating the Call to Worship with the Song. Arrange for the music to begin whilst the worship leader is speaking, continue through the Call to Worship and keep on playing for a short time after the refrain has been sung for the final time. Have the call to worship on a ppt or poster.

SAY

In the busyness of life it can be hard to learn to be still, to appreciate stillness. When so much of our time can be spent rushing from one thing to the next, it can be hard to find peace (or at least experience the absence of stress). As we join in this morning's Call to Worship we'll say together the words in **orange and bold** and sing the refrain three times **“Be still and know that I am God”**. I invite you to focus on being as still as possible. To help you be still place your hands in your lap or hold your hands together.

DO

Let us worship God!

Jesus says to us: Come to me, all of you that are weary
And God says, **“Be still and know that I am God.”**

Sing

“Be still and know that I am God.” 3X

Jesus says: Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me;
And God says, **“Be still and know that I am God. ”**

Sing

“Be still and know that I am God.” 3X

Jesus says: for I am gentle and humble in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls.

And God says, **“Be still and know that I am God. ”**

Sing

“Be still and know that I am God.” 3X

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.
And God says, **“Be still and know that I am God.” 3X**

Sing

“Be still and know that I am God.” 3X

SONG TiS 585 “I heard the voice of Jesus say”

SAY

As our next song speaks of hearing the voice of Jesus, I thought it would be a good idea to play a listening game. Firstly, I need two volunteers who think they are good listeners to come up the front here (at this point choose two volunteers of vastly different age or, if you think it more appropriate, arrange for the “volunteers” prior to the service. Invite them to the front and have them stand side by side). I also need another four volunteers, who think they are good talkers to come up here (again, choose a diversity of ages and have them stand in a line facing the initial pair).

In a moment, these two “good listener” people will turn away from the others and close their eyes. Their task will then be to listen carefully and guess which of these four people has spoken. Make sense? Great, here we go **[at this point, they turn and close their eyes]**.

DO

Explain that the first phrase is **“Come unto me and rest”** and identify, by pointing, which person will speak. Ask them to say the phrase. Ask the two people facing away if they were able to recognise the voice. Whatever their response, ask them to listen carefully whilst the same person repeats the phrase. Check with the volunteer pair (*who should still be facing away with their eyes closed*) whether they’re ready to identify the person. Hopefully they will say “Yes”, but if they don’t then have the phrase repeated one more time by the same person. Now invite them to open their eyes, face the line of four people and, in turn, say whose voice they thought they heard. Affirm/encourage as much as you can whether they choose correctly or not.

Repeat the process, with same volunteers, this time with the phrase **“Behold I freely give”**. You might also like to encourage the person you identify to speak to disguise their voice in some way (eg. *with an accent*).

Repeat the process for a final time, with the phrase **“I am this dark world’s light”**. This time you might like to encourage the whole congregation to participate by closing their eyes, listening carefully and seeing if they can identify the speaker.

Finally, thank everyone for their participation and announce the song...
“I heard the voice of Jesus say”

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

PREPARE

In the week prior to the service, arrange for a small, multi-age group (or perhaps household) of four people to arrange a soundscape (recording), backed with visual images (digital projector or pictures) to accompany their leading of the Prayer. For example, the sound of babbling voices (*played loudly*) for the first section, heavy ominous music for the second (eg. from Orff’s *Carmina Burana* – www.youtube.com/watch?v=QEILCo4OM), something pastoral for the third (eg. Grieg’s *Morning Mood* - www.youtube.com/watch?v=YVa91sJUutA from the *Peer Gynt Suite*) and a repeat of the babbling voices (*gradually quietening*) for the final section. Ensure the sound lasts a little longer than the spoken words for each section to allow reflection. Make sure the group arrives early enough on the day to ensure the technology required is in order and to practice in the space.

Pray-er 1:

O God, we hear so many voices within us and around us weighing us down with burdens too great to bear.

When we fall short of the ways you want us to live:

Lord have mercy, **Lord have mercy**

Pray-er 2:

Lord Jesus, when you call us to carry your easy yoke, when you tell us your burden is light, yet we choose other burdens to carry and leave your work undone.

Christ have mercy, **Christ have mercy**

Pray-er 3:

Compassionate God, when we try to do good and yet end up doing the opposite, when we let you down and fail to live your ways of love and peace, and justice towards all people.

Lord have mercy, **Lord have mercy**

Pray-er 4:

Gentle loving God, quiet the voices that distract us from loving you, still our minds, and keep us focused on loving and serving you, in the name of Christ.

Amen.

SAY

As we get ready for our time of confession, I want to say thank you to **[name those who contributed]** for their amazing creativity and their careful thought. As they lead us in prayer, I invite you to join in by repeating, at the appropriate time, Lord Have Mercy or Christ Have Mercy – I think you will be able to work out when... Let us pray...

DO

Pray-er 1:

...Lord have mercy

Lord have mercy

Pray-er 2:

... Christ have mercy

Christ have mercy

Pray-er 3:

... Lord have mercy

Lord have mercy

Pray-er 4:

... in the name of Christ.

Amen.

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

Jesus said: *“Come to me, all you who are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest... Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”*

Hear then Christ’s word of grace to us:

Your sins are forgiven: **Thanks be to God!**

DOXOLOGY TiS 753 “You are holy, you are whole”

FIRST READING Romans 7:15-25a

PREPARE

Identify beforehand three confident readers (*ideally from three different generations*) to present the Bible Reading, and arrange for them to practise together before the service. For the service, ensure they are sitting in the body of the church, but a reasonable distance apart. Explain that, rather than coming up the front, when it’s their turn they simply need to stand up to read, and remain standing until the end of the reading.

DO

Worship Leader:

Our first Bible reading this morning is from Romans chapter 7, verses 15 to 25...

Reader 1 (youngest person):

In fact, I don't understand why I act the way I do. I don't do what I know is right. I do the things I hate. Although I don't do what I know is right, I agree that the Law is good. So I am not the one doing these evil things. The sin that lives in me is what does them.

Reader 2 (next youngest person):

I know that my selfish desires won't let me do anything that is good. Even when I want to do right, I cannot. Instead of doing what I know is right, I do wrong. And so, if I don't do what I know is right, I am no longer the one doing these evil things. The sin that lives in me is what does them.

Reader 3 (next youngest person):

The Law has shown me that something in me keeps me from doing what I know is right. With my whole heart I agree with the Law of God. But in every part of me I discover something fighting against my mind, and it makes me a prisoner of sin that controls everything I do. What a miserable person I am. Who will rescue me from this body that is doomed to die? Thank God! Jesus Christ will rescue me.

Readers 1, 2 and 3 together:

So with my mind I serve the Law of God, although my selfish desires make me serve the law of sin.

TAKE HOME

PREPARE

Provide one rock per person to take home. Try to get rocks that are as large as possible to carry in the palm of your hand but within reasonable budget. If necessary use garden stones (pebbles) but larger will assist to emphasise the “heavy burdens” theme in today's service. You may also like to provide simple instructions and prayer prompts as outlined below.

SAY

As you leave today, please collect a rock to take home. Put your rock inside your house where you will see it each day. May it remind you of Jesus invitation, “Come to me, all you who are weary and carrying heavy burdens.” When you see this rock, come to Jesus, pray and give him that day's burdens.

As the week progresses, when you feel ready, put your rock outside. Thank Jesus for “giving you rest” whether that's feeling good about life or that day or just a quiet cup of tea or a few hours of sleep. Remember taking our burdens to Jesus is an ongoing part of being his disciple – as is thanking him for rest.

We also encourage you, at least once during this week, to share with others in your home or to call a friend or member of your Bible study/ small group (use wording appropriate for your context) about that day's burdens or moments of rest and pray for one another.

EARLY WORD

SONG TiS 607 "Make me a channel of your peace"

GOSPEL Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

SERMON

SONG TiS 647 "Comfort, comfort all my people"

OFFERING AND DEDICATION

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

NOTICES

SONG TiS 665 "Jesus Christ is waiting"

COMMISSION AND BLESSING

SONG TiS 755 "You shall go out with joy"

Pentecost 7A

16 July 2023

WELCOME

SAY

We acknowledge the _____
people, the first inhabitants of this place from time beyond remembering.

Welcome to our worship at _____
Welcome to any visitors. Today is the 7th Sunday in the Season after
Pentecost, where the focus is on learning and growing in our faith!

CALL TO WORSHIP

PREPARE

Have the following displayed on ppt or poster

SAY

Let's worship God! Please say the responses in orange bold.

God, we gather with expectation,

Hungry to worship you, eager to hear your Word.

May the seeds of your Word scatter among us and fall on fertile soil.

May they take root in our hearts and lives, and produce a fruitful harvest.

**We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ,
the Divine Sower, our teacher and our Lord. Amen.**

SONG TiS 182 "Bring many names"

PREPARE

Prepare a list of "names of God" (eg. from *Got Questions?* – www.gotquestions.org/names-of-God.html) and meanings of common first names (or, ideally, the names of those in your congregation) using a site such as this one (www.businessinsider.com.au/first-name-meanings-2014-7?r=US&IR=T) or Behind the Name (www.behindthename.com/). Liaise with the person/s leading music around the process, as described below, for the song.

SAY

A challenge for many parents is to decide on a name for their children. My parents chose **[name]** for me, which means **[meaning]**. Here's a list of some common, or not so common, names and their meanings **[display and read some names that pique your interest]**. I wonder, do you know what your name means? I invite you to gather in groups of 3, ideally with people of different ages, to talk about your name/s – what they might mean and, if you know, why your parents chose those name/s for you...

[Allow time]

...Did you know that there are many different names for God in the Bible? I wonder how many we can think of together? **[gather responses from the congregations]**. That's fantastic! Here's a list that I prepared earlier (display names with their meanings). Again, in your threes, I encourage you to have a chat about these names – which had you heard before? Which do you like the sound of? Do you have a favourite?...

[Allow time]

...Our first song this morning includes many “names” or ways of thinking about God. After we sing the third verse, while the music keeps playing, we will pause to allow space for you to call out some of the names – or ways you like to describe – God. We will then sing the final three verses of the song “Bring many names”

DO

Between verses 3 and 4 pause to call out names of, or ways of describing, God.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION & DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

PREPARE

Set up a number of “stations” (*appropriate to your space and the anticipated number of people*) where each station includes a pile of seeds, a collection of rocks/large stones, a large container of soil, a bowl of water, paper towels and a source of heat (*most likely a candle – with a box of matches – but if you can come up with a safe – and less clichéd source of heat – go for it!*)

SAY

As you arrived today, you might have noticed a number of tables set up through the church. I invite you to move to a table now as we get ready for our Prayer of Confession. As you move, you might like to begin thinking about another image we find of God in the Bible – that of a Gardener (*allow time for people to move to the tables*).

As you arrive at your table, please take a few seeds and rub them between your fingers, or hold them in your palm. Notice how they feel – their lightness, their texture – their fragility, their vulnerability. As we pray together, at various points I will invite you to pause and engage with some of the other elements on your table.

I will also invite you to say the response **Lord have mercy** or **Christ have mercy** at the appropriate point.

DO

Let us pray...

The Divine Gardener cannot sow seeds of justice and peace where there is nothing but hearts of dry, hard rocks.

As we pause, please return the seeds and pick up a rock or two, notice its weight, its texture, its hard bits – how different it feels to a seed (allow a time of silence).

I invite you to return the rock and pick up a handful of soil as we continue...

We confess that our hearts may need tilling and the digging out of the deeply rooted sins that crowd out seedlings planted with divine compassion.

Lord have mercy: **Lord have mercy**

As we pause, rub the soil in your hands, notice its texture, its smell, its feel against your skin (allow a time of silence). I invite you to return your soil to its container and then all place your hands in the bowl of water...

God of steadfast love, you change bitter tears of remorseful hearts with raindrops of mercy.

Help us germinate a new life, growing with integrity!

Christ have mercy: **Christ have mercy**

As we pause, gently rinse your hands in the bowl. Notice the coolness, the cleansing, the difference the water makes. Remove your hands from the bowl, have one person light the candle/s and carefully hold your hands close enough to feel the warmth of the flame without being burnt...

God of steadfast love, you change the cold shame of contrite hearts with sunrays of mercy.

Help us to sprout a new life, growing with honesty!

Lord have mercy: **Lord have mercy**

We say together...

God of steadfast love, you change the stony edges of repentant hearts into landscapes of mercy

Help us to branch out into new life, growing with generosity, in Jesus' name.

Amen.

God the Divine Gardener, tends us with generous love,

Through Christ, this love is planted in our hearts.

So we are cultivated to grow in God's boundless forgiveness.

Our sins are forgiven; **thanks be to God!**

As we return to our seats, we sing "Lord I come to you".

FIRST READING Romans 8:1-11

PREPARE

Prepare a version of the text for the congregation to read (ideally ppt, but a printed version is also fine) with all the words beginning with **S** printed in blue, **L** printed in orange and **C** printed in green (or whatever colours work best in your context). Practice the reading process with the designated Bible Reader.

SAY

Three key elements in our Bible reading this morning from Romans 8:1-11 are the **Spirit**, **Christ** and the **Law**. We're going to read the Bible together, and I invite you to join in – enthusiastically - with all the words starting with “**S**”.

DO

If you belong to Christ Jesus, you won't be punished. The Holy **Spirit** will give you life that comes from Christ Jesus and will **set** you free from **sin** and death...

[Pause at this point and affirm how well people have joined in. Say that because they have done so well, you're going to step it up a level. Divide the group into two, with one half to still read the words in blue beginning with S and the other half to read the words in green, beginning with C. Return to the beginning and read again...]

If you belong to **Christ** Jesus, you won't be punished. The Holy **Spirit** will give you life that **comes** from **Christ** Jesus and will **set** you free from **sin** and death...

[Pause again, affirming how exceptionally talented the congregation is. Say that you are going to make it more challenging again. This time divide the group into thirds, with one third to still read the words in blue, one third to read the words in green and the final third to read the words in orange. Return to the beginning and, this time, proceed to the end of the passage.]

If you belong to **Christ** Jesus, you won't be punished. The Holy **Spirit** will give you **life** that **comes** from **Christ** Jesus and will **set** you free from **sin** and death. The **Law** of Moses **cannot** do this, because our **selfish** desires make the **Law** weak. But God **set** you free when God **sent** his own **Son** to be **like** us **sinners** and to be a **sacrifice** for our **sin**. God used **Christ's** body to **condemn sin**. He did this, **so** that we would do what the **Law commands** by obeying the **Spirit** instead of our own desires.

People who are ruled by their desires think only of themselves. Everyone who is ruled by the Holy **Spirit** thinks about **spiritual** things. If our minds are ruled by our desires, we will die. But if our minds are ruled by the **Spirit**, we will have **life** and peace. Our desires fight against God, because they do not and **cannot** obey God's **laws**. If we follow our desires, we **cannot** please God.

You are no **longer** ruled by your desires, but by God's **Spirit**, who **lives** in you. People who don't have the **Spirit** of **Christ** in them don't belong to him. But **Christ lives** in you. **So** you are alive because God has accepted you, even though your bodies must die because of your **sins**. Yet God raised Jesus to **life!**

God's **Spirit** now **lives** in you, and he will raise you to **life** by his **Spirit**.

Extra Tip

It can be really helpful if the Reader pauses slightly before each coloured word and points to the relevant group.

TAKE HOME

PREPARE

Consider if all of the elements you have provided on the tables for the Prayer of Confession can be taken home eg the bowl for water, the candle (or heat source you choose). If not, provide extra seeds, rocks and soil at the door as people leave. You could also provide tea-light candles to take home and use a larger candle at the prayer table. Having some zip-lock bags could also assist people to take home some seeds or soil.

You may also like to provide a copy of the "Prayer of Confession" for each person or household to take home.

SAY

As you leave today, you are invited to return to one of the tables we used during our "Prayers of Confession" with the garden elements. Choose an element to take home with you - perhaps a few seeds, or a rock or some soil. **[List the elements they can take or explain what they can collect at the door as they leave.]** Please make sure everyone is able to choose something to take home.

May these elements prompt you during this week to pray to the Divine Gardener for hearts to be tilled, sin to be dug out, seeds of justice, peace and compassion to be sown and cold hearts warmed with mercy. May new life sprout in us this week through Jesus Christ.

EARLY WORD

SONG TiS 154 "Great is Your Faithfulness"

GOSPEL Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

SERMON

SONG TiS 129 "Amazing Grace"

OFFERING & PRAYER

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

SONG TiS 531 " Sent forth by God's blessing"

COMMISSION AND BLESSING

SONG TiS 779 "May the feet of God walk with you"

Pentecost 8A

23 July 2023

WELCOME

SAY

We acknowledge the _____ people, the first inhabitants of this place from time beyond remembering.

Welcome to our worship at _____
Welcome to any visitors. Today is the 8th Sunday in the Season after Pentecost, where the focus is on learning and growing in our faith!.

CALL TO WORSHIP

PREPARE

Have the following displayed on ppt or poster.

SAY

As we gather together today, I invite you to join in with the words in **orange and bold** and the liturgical gestures as indicated...

[place hands on either side of where you are sitting]

God, you search me and know me

Before I sit, you know when I will rise.

[place hands to lips]

God, you search me and know me.

Before I speak, you know what I will say.

[place hands on chest]

God, you search me and know me,

in my joy and sorrow, my breathing in and out.

[place hands on head]

God, you search me and know me.

Your knowledge is too deep to reach, too vast to understand.

[place hands on heart]

God, you search me and know me.

Search me, O God, and know my heart.

SONG TIS 188 "Where wide sky rolls down"

PREPARE

This song speaks of some of the distinctives of our Australian landscape. Identify some people (of multiple ages) from the congregation who have travelled throughout Australia. Invite them to provide photos (ideally connected to images in the song) for people to see on their arrival and to be included in a PowerPoint. Also invite them to be prepared to share, briefly, their favourite place in Australia.

SAY

Our first song this morning speaks of some of the distinctives of our Australian landscape. When you arrived this morning, I wonder whether you noticed the photos taken by **[name the relevant people]** when you arrived this morning? As they come and tell us a little about some of their favourite places in Australia, you might like to think of some of yours. **[Briefly interview the relevant people, and thank them].**

During the song, you will have the chance to share your favorite places with those sitting near you. After the third verse, we will take a break from singing (*though the music will keep playing*) so that you can listen to the person next to you and then tell them your favourite place. We will then stand together to sing the final verse.

DO

Please remain seated as we sing “Where wide sky rolls down”

Between verse 3 and 4 share your favourite place in Australia with the person sitting next to you.

Encourage people to stand for verse 4.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

SAY

(As people remain standing, if you have used the previous song idea). I invite you to remain standing as we begin our time of Confession. During our prayer time, you are encouraged to respond to the phrase “God forgive us” by repeating “**God forgive us**”. I also invite you to close your eyes and imagine yourself as a seed – full of life, full of potential, awaiting the nurturing soil (pause)...

DO

Let us pray...

Loving God, you plant each of us like seeds in the field. We are nourished and nurtured by the soil. We are drawn toward the warmth of the sun.

We sway in the wind and are refreshed by the rain. We are blessed as we grow towards what you call us to be (*please be seated and feel free to open your eyes as we continue to pray*)

When we deprive others of that growth: God forgive us:

God forgive us.

When we want to uproot those whom we believe do not belong in our part of the field, God forgive us:

God forgive us.

When we label others as good or bad rather than accept them for who they are, God forgive us:

God forgive us.

When we are reluctant to acknowledge that we ourselves are a mixture of weeds and wheat, God forgive us:

God forgive us.

When we are afraid to look into the fields of our own lives to see what is growing there, God forgive us:

God forgive us.

God, we pray that you will help us to reach out to the uprooted and rejected, the lonely and the outcast, and to develop and grow the good in ourselves, in others and in the world. This we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

PREPARE

Prior to the service place containers of gum leaves in strategic places under the seats/pews. You might also like to add some eucalyptus oil to the containers to increase the aroma.

SAY

Please take a gum leaf from the container near you. Again, I invite you to close your eyes. Breathe in the aroma of the leaf. Imagine the smell and feel of the bush after a shower of rain. Experience the sense of cleansing, of refreshment, of life re-invigorated...(allow a time of silence).

If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God to whom we have been reconciled by Christ. Rejoice in the Good News:

Your sins are forgiven: **Thanks be to God!**

FIRST READING Romans 8:12-25

PREPARE

Arrange for a child and an older adult (*or, if this is not possible, two people born at least two decades apart*) to prepare to interview one another.

Invite the child to ask the three questions of the adult first, and then swap roles.

- What do/did you like best about being a child?
- Is there/was there anything you are/were scared of ?
- As a/when you were a child, what do/did you like about your parents/ those who cared for you?

Nb. Make sure you have asked two people for whom this last question is not inappropriate or a source of pain.

Prepare a slide (or include in a printed form) these questions...

- What do/did you like best about being a child?
- Is there/was there anything you are/were scared of ?
- As a/when you were a child, what do/did you like about your parents/ those who cared for you?

Have the Bible reading ready to display, eg in PPT, with the words in orange and bold as shown below.

SAY

Today's Bible reading speaks of those who are led by God's Spirit as God's children, about us becoming and being God's children by God's Spirit's action. To help us think about being children, I've invited **[name]** and **[name]** to come up the front here and ask each other a few questions...

[once they have finished, thank them and continue]

In a moment, I'm going to invite you to find a partner who is very different to you in age.

This will probably work best if those who think they are younger move to someone they think is older. Once you've paired up, I invite you to "interview" one another as **[name]** and **[name]** have just done. The questions are on the screen (or in a printed form) for you. Make sense? Good, let's go then...

[after allowing sufficient time, continue]

Please stay where you are as we read the Bible together. As we read, you are invited to join in with the words in **orange and bold...**

DO

Reading from Romans 8:12-25...

My dear friends, we must not live to satisfy our desires. If you do, you will die. But you will live, if by the help of God's Spirit you say "No" to your desires. Only those people who are led by God's Spirit are **God's children**. God's Spirit doesn't make us slaves who are afraid of him. Instead, **we become God's children** and call him our Father. God's Spirit makes us sure that **we are his children**. God's Spirit lets us know that together with Christ we will be given what God has promised. We will also share in the glory of Christ, because we have suffered with him.

I am sure that what we are suffering now cannot compare with the glory that will be shown to us. In fact, all creation is eagerly waiting for God to show who **God's children are**.

Have the Bible reading ready to display, eg in PPT, with the words in orange and bold as shown below.

Meanwhile, creation is confused, but not because it wants to be confused. God made it this way in the hope that creation would be set free from decay and would share in the **glorious freedom of God's children**. We know that all creation is still groaning and is in pain, like a woman about to give birth.

The Spirit makes us sure about what we will be in the future. But now we groan silently, while we wait for God to show that **we are God's children**. This means that our bodies will also be set free. And this hope is what saves us. But if we already have what we hope for, there is no need to keep on hoping. However, we hope for something we have not yet seen, and we patiently wait for it.

Conclude by saying something like "Thanks for joining in with the reading today. Before we continue on, feel free to look the person you chatted with in the eye and say **You are a child of God [pause while people say this]**, shake their hand and say **Thanks for sharing with me today [pause while people do this]** and, as people return to their seats, wave goodbye and say **See you later.**"

TAKE HOME

SAY

When it is time to leave, you are invited to take your gum leaf home with you. Perhaps leave it in your car or purse or sock drawer. When you see it or smell the eucalyptus this week may it prompt you to confess your sins and also to thank God for forgiving your sins. You are cleansed, refreshed, life re-invigorated as a child of God. You could also pray for the person that you 'interviewed' about being a child.

Perhaps also this week may this gum leaf's presence challenge you to offer forgiveness more readily to others

EARLY WORD

SONG TiS 135 "All things bright and beautiful"

GOSPEL Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

SERMON

SONG TiS 693 "Come as you are"

OFFERING & PRAYER

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

NOTICES

SONG TiS 613 “Lord of all hopefulness”

COMMISSION AND BLESSING

SONG TiS 779 “May the feet of God walk with you”

Pentecost 9A

30 July 2023

GREETING

Sisters and brothers in Christ, the Lord be with you!

SONG TiS 745 "Seek ye first the kingdom of God"

WELCOME

We acknowledge the _____
people, the first inhabitants of this place from time beyond remembering.

PREPARE

Have a large candle and matches on the table at the front of the worship space. Organise for an older and younger person to light the candle together during the Welcome.

Also have battery operated candles or glow sticks in baskets at the front (enough for everyone or every family/household group). This is for later in the service.

SAY

Welcome to our worship on this the 9th Sunday in the Season after Pentecost. A warm welcome to you all in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

Today we light this candle to remind us of the presence of God's Spirit here with us.

Light the candle.

DO

CALL TO WORSHIP

PREPARE

Prepare the following on ppt or poster.

As we gather together today, I invite you to join in with the words in **black**

SAY

and bold and these liturgical gestures.

As a gesture of giving, move your hands from your chest outwards **[model the action as you describe it]**. Let's do that together...1, 2, 3 a gesture of giving **[again, model action]**. Good.

As a gesture of receiving, move your hands in towards yourself in a gesture of receiving **[model the action as you describe it]**. Let's do that together...1, 2, 3 a gesture of receiving **[again, model action]**. Well done.

Our third gesture is one of praising, lift up your hands in a gesture that praises God **[model the action as you describe it]**. Let's do this one together...1, 2, 3 a gesture of praising **[again, model action]**. Excellent.

Let's put that all together...giving **[do action]**, receiving **[do action]**, praising **[do action]**. Fantastic!

DO

Let us worship God! (Romans 8: 35-39)

We are gathered together in the presence of God

We come to offer our praise and our prayers.

[move your hands from your chest outwards in a gesture of giving]

We come before God with confidence,
knowing that even when we can't find the words,

God's own Spirit is right here with us, praying in us and for us,

[move your hands in towards yourself in a gesture of receiving]

Giving shape to our wordless hopes and longings, and pleading for us
before the throne of grace.

So let's come with joy to offer our worship to God who knows and loves us all.

[lift up your hands in a gesture that praises God]

SONG TiS 53 "Come sing praises to the God above"

SAY

During the singing of our next song, we invite one person from each row/section of seating to come forward, take a basket of candles or glow sticks and return to your seat.

Pass along the row/section the basket of battery operated candles or glow sticks and as we sing turn on your candle or glow stick.

During the refrain hold your candle or glow stick up and wave from side to side.

Let's sing...

DO

Sing the song and have a couple of people oversee the distribution of candles/glow sticks, ensuring everyone gets one.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

PREPARE

Think about how to divide the congregation into seven sections and with each response in the prayer invite one section to turn off their candles or hide the glow from their glow sticks.

SAY

Please turn on your candle/glow stick and hold it up in front of you.

What can separate us from the love of Christ?

Can the darkness in our days, or the depression in our soul?

[invite people in one section to turn off their candles/hide glow stick]

That won't do it! What can separate us from the Love of Christ?

Can the trust we put in the powers of this town, or world?

[invite people in one section to turn off their candles/hide glow stick]

That won't do it! What can separate us from the Love of Christ?

Can our avoidance of a broken friendship?

[invite people in one section to turn off their candles/hide glow stick]

That won't do it! What can separate us from the Love of Christ?

Can a lack of commitment to our local faith community?

[invite people in one section to turn off their candles/hide glow stick]

That won't do it! What can separate us from the Love of Christ?

Can "have" countries stopping aid to have-nots?

[invite people in one section to turn off their candles/hide glow stick]

That won't do it! What can separate us from the Love of Christ?

Can the rejection of a refugee, or suspicion of minority groups?

[invite people in one section to turn off their candles/hide glow stick]

That won't do it! What can separate us from the Love of Christ?

Nothing in all creation can separate us from the Love of God,
in Christ Jesus our Lord.

[Pause for a time of reflection]

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

SAY

The love of God as we know it in Christ Jesus is an unsurpassed power for good. To be aware of that power is to see our own faults and failings in perspective. The Holy Spirit will give us insight, will give us determination to begin afresh, and will renew our church.

Your sins are forgiven; **Thanks be to God**

I invite you to turn your candle on again/ bring out your glow stick and wave them above your head in celebration.

DOXOLOGY TiS 716 "Father we adore you"

FIRST READING Romans 8:26-39

PREPARE

Put the Bible reading on a slide with words highlighted in different colours to have different voices read them. (see "Do")

SAY

We are going to read today's Bible reading together. **[display bible reading at this point]**

If you are wearing red/yellow/orange/brown clothes please say the words in **Red**.

If you are wearing purple/pink/white clothes please say the words in **Purple**

If you are wearing green/blue/black please say the words in **Blue**

If you are wearing a variety of colours, please choose one **"colour"** to read aloud.

DO

Romans 8:26-39 (CEV)

In certain ways **we are weak**, but the **Spirit is here to help us**. For example, when **we don't know what to pray** for, the **Spirit prays for us** in ways that cannot be put into words. All of our thoughts are **known to God. He can understand** what is in the **mind of the Spirit, as the Spirit prays** for **God's people. We know** that **God is always at work for the good of everyone who loves him**. They are the ones **God has chosen for his purpose**, and **he has always known who his chosen ones would be**. He had decided to let them become like his **own Son, so that his Son** would be the first of **many children. God then accepted the people he had already decided to choose, and he has shared his glory with them**.

What can **we say** about all this? **If God is on our side, can anyone be against us? God did not keep back his own Son, but he gave him for us. If God did this, won't he freely give us everything else?**

If God says his **chosen ones are acceptable to him**, can anyone bring **charges against them**? Or can **anyone condemn them**? No indeed! **Christ died and was raised to life, and now he is at God's right side, speaking to him for us**. Can anything **separate us** from the **love of Christ**? Can trouble, suffering, and hard times, or hunger and nakedness, or danger and death? **It is exactly as the Scriptures say,**

**“For you we face death
all day long.
We are like sheep
on their way to be butchered.”**

In everything **we have won more than a victory because of Christ who loves us. I am sure that nothing can separate us from God's love – not life or death, not angels or spirits**, not the present or the future, and **not powers above or powers below. Nothing in all creation can separate us from God's love for us in Christ Jesus our Lord!**

TAKE HOME

PREPARE

Have Romans 8:35-39 and some prayer prompts printed on a card for people to take home as written below.

Have spare battery operated candles or glow sticks at the church door for people to take home (depending on what you choose to use in the service).

Romans 8:35-39 (CEV)

Can anything separate us from the love of Christ? Can trouble, suffering, and hard times, or hunger and nakedness, or danger and death? It is exactly as the Scriptures say,

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Offer a prayer to God

- A prayer of thanks for God's never-ending love.
- A prayer requesting God's forgiveness.
- A prayer for help to live as a follower of Christ.
- A wordless prayer of adoration and worship to our amazing and almighty God.

SAY

We invite you to take your candle home and, if possible each day this week, for a few minutes, turn the candle on and read Romans 8:35 – 39 and offer a prayer to God in response.

OR

We invite you to light a candle at home, if possible each day this week, for a few minutes and read Romans 8:35 – 39 and offer a prayer to God in response.

It could be a prayer of thanks for God's never-ending love. It could be a prayer requesting God's forgiveness or help to live as a follower of Christ. It could be a silent prayer of adoration and worship of our amazing and almighty God.

EARLY WORD

SONG TiS 590 "What a friend we have in Jesus"

GOSPEL Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

SERMON

SONG TiS 572 (i) "O thou who camest from above"

OFFERING AND DEDICATION

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

LORD'S PRAYER

SONG TiS 609 "May the mind of Christ my saviour"

COMMISSION AND BLESSING (Romans 8:35-39)

SONG TiS 755 "You shall go out with joy"

Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania

29 College Crescent, Parkville, Victoria, 3052

(03) 9340 8800

www.victas.uca.org.au

Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of South Australia

312 Sir Donald Bradman Dr, Brooklyn Park, South Australia, 5032

(08) 8236 4243

www.sa.uca.org.au



Uniting Church in Australia
ASSEMBLY



Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA



The Uniting Church in Australia
Synod of South Australia
Mission Resourcing